PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993-94

COMPRISING PERIOD
21 March - 31 March 1994

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 240**

EIGHTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 21 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Freight

1. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage freight to be moved by rail rather than by road.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): From April, we are introducing an enhanced rail freight grant regime. This, together with privatisation, open access for new operators and substantial investment in the infrastructure, freight terminals and rolling stock for the channel tunnel service, amounting to some £450 million, will provide a significant boost for the rail freight industry.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. He may know that my constituents and I had the great good fortune to hear our right hon. Friend the Minister of State make an excellent speech covering the issue on Friday night. After that, I spent some time talking to some of the senior management at Preston station. Does my right hon. Friend agree with me—and with them—that the opening of the channel tunnel will provide one of the great opportunities to put more freight on rail?

Mr. MacGregor: Very much so. I think that it will be a big market opportunity, not least for the north-west. As my hon. Friend may know, the opening of the tunnel will greatly reduce the travelling times from, say, Manchester or Liverpool to places on the continent, particularly in Mediterranean areas; travel will also be much quicker than by road. I agree with my hon. Friend that the channel tunnel offers a big opportunity for switching freight from road to rail.

Mrs. Dunwoody: How does the Secretary of State manage to keep a straight face while he says that? How can he seriously imagine that the imposition of astronomical charges on rolling stock and Railtrack can improve any form of transport, let alone encourage anyone to use it?

Mr. MacGregor: I think the hon. Lady will find that Railtrack will seek commercial contracts for freight. As for passenger transport, as the hon. Lady knows, the passenger franchisees will receive a subsidy to meet the Railtrack costs. I am absolutely clear about this; I think that the opening of the channel tunnel offers a major marketing opportunity. If the hon. Lady examines the times involved in travelling from the north-west to major continental centres, she will see that, with the channel tunnel, carrying freight on rail gives just that hope.

Mr. Nigel Evans: As my right hon. Friend knows, Castle Cement is in my constituency. It used to transport much of its freight by rail; now, unfortunately, it has switched to the roads, because they are more competitive. Will my right hon. Friend give the people of the Ribble valley some assurance that, when the new system is in operation in 1995, there will be greater incentives for firms such as Castle Cement to switch their freight transport back on to the railways?

Mr. MacGregor: Indeed; in fact, there are some recent examples of freight going back on to rail. I believe that opportunities for open access, coupled with the rail freight

grant regime, which will allow the provision of subsidies to meet Railtrack costs where there is an environmental benefit to be gained—I might have made that point to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)—will encourage the switch back to rail.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Secretary of State convey our regret that Question 8, concerning the choice of rail privatisation, has been prudently withdrawn?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is pure nonsense to talk about benefits to Railfreight, or any other rail services, against the present background? From 1 April, railway subsidy will have to be doubled to maintain existing services, solely because of the artificially inflated access charges that the Treasury has forced on Railtrack. Does the Secretary of State accept—

Mr. MacGregor: A third question?

Mr. Wilson: Well, there are many things to accept before anyone can believe this nonsense.

In the light of that settlement, the rate of subsidy may be doubled. The Government are seeking to create the impression of a highly subsidised railway—twice as highly subsidised after 1 April as before that date. Is not the scene being set for the rundown of our railways?

Mr. MacGregor: I expressed surprise only because I understood that I was not expected to answer a large number of questions. I regret more than the hon. Gentleman that Question 8 is not to be asked. I was looking forward to it, and to demonstrating what privatisations have achieved. The hon. Gentleman, by his questions, showed that he does not understand how the new grant and access charging regimes will work.

International Station, Stratford

2. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of Union Railways to discuss the case for an international station at Stratford.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I look forward to meeting the hon. Gentleman and representatives of the Stratford promoter group on 24 March to discuss their revised proposals for a Stratford station.

Mr. Banks: The Minister knows that the promoter group intends to make a bid for an intermediate international station at Stratford. Will he give a guarantee that no decision will be taken on the disposal of railway lines at Stratford that would prejudice the group's ability to make that bid to the Minister? Will the right hon. Gentleman also explain the likely disposition of the lands around Stratford in terms of ownership after the channel tunnel fast rail link has been constructed?

Mr. Freeman: It is important that the railway lands at Stratford—from the southern extremities, close to the existing Stratford station, all the way to Temple Mills—are retained in public sector ownership and available to help progress that great project.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: When my right hon. Friend meets Union Railways, will he bear in mind the possibility of an international railway station at Ebbsfleet in Kent, which would be very much more convenient?

Madam Speaker: Order. I try to be tolerant, but the question relates to a station at Stratford.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister agree that it would contribute immeasurably to the economic regeneration of east London and the east London corridor if there were an international station on the channel tunnel link at Stratford? Does he further accept that it would add immeasurably to the value of crossrail if that project also had a connection with the channel tunnel link at Stratford?

Mr. Freeman: We have not ruled out a connection between crossrail and the channel tunnel rail link—there are powerful arguments in favour. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State merely ruled out one particular intersection. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman laughs, but my right hon. Friend's announcement was welcomed by Opposition Members representing the area ruled out, so that statement was helpful. As to the importance of a station at Stratford, there is a difference between an international station and a domestic station. I hope that the promoter group will argue the case for both.

Mile End Road

3. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in improving traffic conditions along the Mile End road.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): The proposed red route measures for Mile End road will bring improvements for all road users in traffic and environmental conditions.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is vital for the progress of his excellent plans for the Mile End road, which is on the way to my constituency, that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary should fight to retain the veto over Brussels bureaucracy, which might otherwise overrule my hon. Friend's excellent plans—as happened when Brussels introduced 44-tonne lorries to the United Kingdom? That caused enormous congestion throughout the country, as bridges had to be strengthened.

Mr. Norris: I admit that I had not covered that part of my background briefing. In so far as I understood the portent of my hon. Friend's question, I am sure that she is right. If I did not understand it, I instantly withdraw that remark. More to the point, the measures being taken on the principal route to my hon. Friend's constituency will add considerably to her ability to reach it quickly.

Ms Glenda Jackson: What is the point of making improvements to the Mile End road or any other in London, when the Minister intends to lift the current London lorry ban, which will allow 44-tonne lorries to use virtually any road in the capital?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Lady knows that the Government have no intention whatever of lifting the London lorry ban, but we have every intention of lifting the weight of GLC-inspired bureaucracy—the mountain of utterly needless and pointless paperwork that currently surrounds the ban—and in that respect we shall earn the gratitude of every business in London.

Traffic Calming

4. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has that traffic calming schemes have reduced accidents in urban areas.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): Preliminary research indications are that traffic calming reduces accidents by an average of 70 per cent. There have also been small reductions on surrounding roads. Such measures seem to be especially effective in reducing accidents to child pedestrians and child cyclists.

Mr. Legg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that response. Has he any idea what the effect on road accidents would be if motorists in built-up areas voluntarily reduced their speed below 30 mph?

Mr. Key: If average speeds were voluntarily reduced below about 20 mph in appropriate residential streets, it is likely that we would save some 500 lives a year.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that, although traffic calming measures have been extremely successful —certainly in Tameside and Stockport in my constituency —the key is to reduce the number of cars on the road? Does he accept that, particularly in Greater Manchester, the decision to take staff off the stations has frightened a large number of passengers away from those stations? Would not it be far better to ensure that public transport was effective in the area?

Mr. Key: Public transport already receives 40 per cent. of the Department's budget for only 10 per cent. of the journeys, and the massive investment in the Manchester metro has been widely welcomed. More significant than the number of cars on the road is the number of journeys that they make. That is something which local authorities have the power to influence through the traffic calming schemes that have been described.

Roads (Planning)

5. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to speed up the planning process for new and improved roads.

Mr. MacGregor: We are making good progress with the package of measures that I announced last summer. We are setting up the new Highways Agency in April and I hope to make an announcement about the review of the road programme soon. We are also consulting on changes to the inquiry rule; and two trial planning conferences have been held.

Mr. Shaw: May I express the grateful thanks of my constituents for the fantastic new road—the A20—which is dual carriageway all the way between Dover and Perth? It has been of tremendous benefit to those working at the port, on the ferries and in the hovercraft industry. As that road has been so good to Dover, could not we speed up the process of making the A2 a dual carriageway as well?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the A20 and the effect of the A20, the M20 and the motorways thereafter, which benefit not only Dover, through its port, but businesses and individuals throughout the country. As to the A2, my hon. Friend may have in mind the Lydden to Dover improvement. The public consultation plan for 1993 was delayed, as the traffic and engineering issues proved more complex than anticipated. Consultants are continuing their work to identify a scheme that is acceptable in acceptable in environmental, engineering and economic terms.

Mr. Flynn: Has the Secretary of State seen the reports that there are 10,000 deaths every year from a previously unidentified source—particulate emission, known as PM10, from motor vehicle exhausts? That is in addition to the suffering caused by asthma and other health problems. Is not the insane rush for new roads being paid for by our children in premature deaths?

Mr. MacGregor: There is no insane rush for new roads. There is a determination to ensure that our road network enables businesses to be fully competitive and individuals to exercise their choice in sensible ways. One of the ways that is not sensible is for traffic to be constantly congested and almost at a halt, which is certainly environmentally unattractive. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we are doing everything that we can to improve emissions from vehicles to offset any adverse effects.

Road Building

6. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of road building in England.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend intends to announce the results of his review of the road programme shortly.

Mr. Burns: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has given such joy and pleasure to the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), will my hon. Friend the Minister give equal joy to my constituents? Will he ensure that a statement is made before we rise for Easter so that my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) can discover whether the unloved—indeed, the hated—proposed M12 from the M25 to Chelmsford will be ditched, thus ending the uncertainty and the blight of the green belt around that area?

Mr. Key: It is not surprising that my hon. Friend is so much loved in his constituency given that he makes such powerful representations. I must not pre-empt the outcome of the review by commenting on individual schemes. I hope that we shall be able to announce the result of the review before Easter.

Mr. Harvey: Does the Minister agree with the Secretary of State for the Environment that we cannot continue to see the number of motor cars increasing so that life becomes dominated by them? Does he agree also that the car should be our servant and not our master? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that building roads leads to increased traffic? Will he introduce a comprehensive White Paper on all aspects of transport policy and use it as the foundation for a concerted transport policy?

Mr. Key: It goes without saying that there is not a chink of light between us on these issues. That was demonstrated last week by our announcement in planning policy guidance note 13. Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman has missed the point. The problems lie not with the stock of cars but with the journeys that they make, the times of day when those journeys are made, their purpose and the

standards of emissions. Those are the important matters. If the hon. Gentleman reads the Transport Report of 1994, which was published 10 days ago, he will learn that there is no need for us to publish yet another paper to make that point.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is an urgent need to clarify whether an outer orbital road leading west from the A120 through Essex and Hertfordshire will be built as there is considerable apprehension in villages in my constituency and others in west Essex and Hertfordshire about the destruction that such a road could cause?

Mr. Key: Yes, I do.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister say now what proportion of the present road building plans will be abandoned and how many will be deferred?

Mr. Key: No. I cannot pre-empt the review that my right hon. Friend will seek to conclude before Easter.

Road Crashes

7. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will repeat the research into the comparative contributions to injury road crashes of the road environment, road user behaviour and vehicle condition.

Mr. Key: No. There is no reason to believe that such a project would produce significantly different results from the earlier research. It would not, therefore, be the most effective use of road safety research funds.

Mr. Bottomley: I would not dispute that, but if we have managed virtually to halve the number of fatalities on our roads over the years, it would surely be worth while moving on to consider the interrelationship between the vehicle, the road environment and the road user. Will we continue to undertake detailed research to assertain what further measures can be taken that will have a practical effect? One reason why we have done so well is that we have based various measures on research findings.

Mr. Key: Yes. I pay tribute to the work that my hon. Friend has done over many years on road safety. He is right to stress that what matters is solid research and the basing of policies on the statistical evidence that is provided. My hon. Friend is right to suggest that there could be some merit in further research, especially on vehicle standards, in which substantial improvements have taken place over the past 20 years. We might expect those improvements to be reflected in the percentage of accidents that are due to vehicle defects. That is why my Department will continue to spend a substantial sum on road research.

Mr. Barnes: Could such research tell us which are the responsibilities of the European Union and which are those of the United Kingdom? Transport obviously goes throughout Europe and we need clearly determined divisions. Such research could be disseminated throughout Europe. The results of research undertaken in other parts of Europe could be made available to us so that we know what action needs to be taken.

Mr. Key: Only last Thursday, I opened a conference in the Methodist central hall in London on access to European research by more than 200 British research institutes, university departments and private sector researchers as well as local authorities. There is no difficulty in defining what is European and what is British in many areas of research. The issue is straightforward. If the hon. Gentleman would like to know more about that, I am sure that I could help him.

Mr. Mans: In answer to Question 4 on traffic calming, my hon. Friend said that calming measures have substantially reduced pedestrian and cyclist deaths. Will he consider again the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) that further research be undertaken to ascertain whether specific sums could be allocated to schemes that have clearly been successful in the past and would be more successful in future if there were more of them?

Mr. Key: It was my hon. Friend's Bill that brought in traffic calming measures, so we all have a great deal for which to thank him. I give my hon. Friend my word that there is a substantial amount of ongoing research in these areas which will continue to be undertaken. By the expenditure of modest sums, many lives can be saved—that is a fact we cannot ignore.

Ms Walley: If the Minister is telling the House that research is so important, why can we not have a real commitment to independent research? Why is he going ahead with the proposal to privatise the Transport Research Laboratory in Crowthorne? Will he tell us that he will do exactly what he has done with the Vehicle Inspectorate? Do we not owe it to all those families who have had people injured or killed in road accidents to do everything possible in terms of transport research?

Mr. Key: Yes, but it is a matter not just of research but of driver behaviour. That is why we are undertaking a whole range of measures which will ensure that there are safer drivers on our roads. Those measures include the theory test, the engineering of better roads and the manufacture of safer cars. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it quite clear what he is minded to do about the future of that excellent organisation, the Transport Research Laboratory, and he will be announcing the way forward shortly.

Sir Anthony Grant: As most motor vehicle accidents are caused by the lunatic practice of vehicles driving too close to each other, and as research in other countries has shown that technologically it is perfectly possible to put a stop to that practice, what are the Government doing about this matter?

Mr. Key: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend as an acknowledged member of the Guild of Experienced Motorists. Such research has been done not only overseas but in this country at the Transport Research Laboratory as a joint European research project. I have been in vehicles at the research laboratory and it is perfectly possible to do as my hon. Friend suggests, but it is quite expensive and the research is in its early stages. That does not mean that we should stop now, and we will not stop. We will continue the research because it can save lives and lead to better management of traffic, which means better use of the roads that we have.

Station Staffing

9. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many stations within the Network SouthEast operating region are unstaffed after 6 pm and at weekends; and if he will provide comparable figures for 1979.

Mr. Freeman: There are approximately 1,000 stations in the Network SouthEast operational area. British Rail management informs me that approximately 80 per cent. of Network SouthEast stations are unstaffed after 6 pm, approximately 30 per cent. are unstaffed on Saturdays, and 50 per cent. are unstaffed on Sundays.

Mrs. Prentice: Is not it an absolute disgrace that four out of five of our stations are unstaffed after 6 o'clock in the evening, given that, as the Minister must be aware, at least two assaults take place every day on Network SouthEast stations? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, at stations such as Lee in my constituency, women are frightened to travel on trains because there are no station staff and that British Rail is losing money because there are no staff in the booking halls either?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady is right. I think that British Rail is losing revenue because of the perception of fear. That is the situation in the public sector. Once we begin to franchise railway services, matters will improve because there will be more commercial activity at the stations and because private sector operators will want to see more passengers using the trains and will be likely to have more staff and use the existing staff more flexibly.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister stop trying to run away from his responsibility? After being in power for 15 years—during which time they have run down the staffing of so many stations—why do the Government not now accept their responsibility in this area and get the staff back to ensure that the public are safe and can pay their fares, that Network SouthEast can increase its revenue and that we can have a better rail service now?

Mr. Freeman: That will happen if the hon. Gentleman and his supporters back the principle of passenger rail franchising.

Natural Gas Vehicles

10. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has carried out into the effectiveness as a form of transport of vehicles powered by natural gas.

Mr. Key: Two studies are already in hand. I am announcing a third study today, involving trials of natural gas and other popular alternative fuels.

Mr. Lidington: I am grateful for that reply. Is my hon. Friend aware that gas-powered vehicles produce far fewer noxious emissions than vehicles powered by internal combustion engines? Will he talk with his right hon. and hon. Friends at the Treasury to see whether the present excessively high rates of duty on natural gas as a vehicle fuel could be reduced to allow those environmentally friendly vehicles to gain in popularity?

Mr. Key: Rates of fuel duty are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, Customs and Excise is considering a fresh approach by which duty would relate to weight rather than to volume and to unleaded rather than leaded petrol. That would provide a simple and equitable taxation framework as the energy content of compressed natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas are similar when related to weight.

Heavy Lorries

11. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the relative friendliness to the environment of 44-tonne lorries and 38-tonne lorries.

Mr. MacGregor: I see a positive advantage to the use of 44-tonne lorries for combined road-rail transport. That means fewer lorries, it transfers freight from road to rail and so benefits the environment.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. Friend realise that my constituents are concerned about the increasing size of lorries, and are particularly concerned about the way in which lorries use side streets as short cuts? Should not we be doing more about encouraging rail-road routes?

Mr. MacGregor: That is precisely what the increase to 44 tonnes for combined road-rail transport will do. It is also important to underline that that does not actually mean larger lorries. Those lorries will, in themselves, get more freight back on to rail and, in so doing, assist the process. However, in themselves, they do not mean larger lorries.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Secretary of State agree that the history of increases in lorry weight and size is one not of a reduced number of lorries, but of an increase in larger lorries on our roads? Although the increase to 44 tonnes may not involve much greater external dimensions, will not it mean potentially greater axle weights and more damage to our roads? Does not the Secretary of State realise that, if we do not want those juggernauts going to every nook and corner of our country, we must keep a right of veto in the Common Market because this is about standardisation of lorry weights throughout the Common Market and has nothing to do with the advantage of the United Kingdom?

Mr. MacGregor: The decision about 44-tonne combined road-rail transport, which was entirely mine, was taken to encourage more freight on to rail. With regard to road wear, a 44-tonne vehicle on six axles has the same effect on a road as a 38-tonne vehicle on five axles. We are insisting that 44-tonne vehicles have six axles.

Lower Thames Crossing

12. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the lower Thames crossing study.

Mr. Key: Consultants were appointed in May 1992 for a two-year study of the need for, and feasibility of, a lower Thames crossing downstream of Dartford. They are making good progress and their final report is expected this summer.

Dr. Spink: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. The A130 Canvey Island link dualling and the Saddlers Farm roundabout improvements form part of the lower Thames crossing consideration. Is my hon. Friend

aware that the Lib-Lab pact in Essex county council has recently suspended all design work on those two important schemes? Is not that shameful?

Mr. Key: I am surprised in one sense because I know that the A130 was a contender for transport supplementary grant. That means that it will not be available later. On the other hand, I am not surprised because I happen to have two newspaper headlines from different ends of the country, one of which refers to the Liberals describing a bypass as an "environmental obscenity" and the other which states:

"Liberals back call for a motorway."

There we are.

Airport Privatisations

13. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it is his policy to encourage local authorities to privatise their airports.

Mr. Norris: Yes. It is indeed our policy to encourage local authorities to privatise their airports.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Does my hon. Friend agree that Manchester airport has been a great success story? Does he further agree that perhaps if Manchester airport were privatised, it would be an even greater success story?

Mr. Norris: I am delighted to see my hon. Friend here this afternoon and I confirm that I agreed with absolutely every word he said. There is a benefit there measured literally in hundreds of millions of pounds available to the hard-pressed charge payers in Manchester.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that the reality with Manchester airport is that the local authorities in the area have been prepared to invest in that airport over many years? There is no information, or anything else, to show that that success will not best continue in the public sector. In view of that, would not privatisation be absolute nonsense?

Mr. Norris: One has only to look at the success of the British Airports Authority to see how wrong is the hon. Gentleman. However well Manchester airport is doing in the public sector, it will do a damn sight better for all concerned in the private sector.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that if Manchester airport is to continue its successful expansion, it has no place whatever in the local authority sector?

Mr. Norris: It is a general proposition that private operators are better at operating companies such as Manchester airport than local authorities, which are sensibly constituted for a different purpose. On that basis, my hon. Friend is entirely right. The great thing is that it would be very much in the interests of the people of the region not only that the airport flourishes but that the proceeds are devoted more appropriately to the many pressing needs in that area.

Mr. Gunnell: Is not it the height of hypocrisy for Tory Members, including the Prime Minister, last week to slag off Manchester city council because of its capital debt and then to take measures to get rid of one of the council's major assets, which has achieved its quality because of the superb work done in Manchester? Why do not the Government end the hypocrisy and show that they are willing to pay tribute to local authority enterprise, which has given us the positive airport in Manchester that exists there?

Mr. Norris: I shall quietly tell the hon. Gentleman later what the link is between slagging off Manchester for its large public debt and the sale of an asset that could reduce that debt. I should have thought that that was obvious to most people. Certainly, in this case, if the council were serious about running its financial affairs prudently, it would welcome and, indeed, promote the sale of Manchester airport as a valuable asset.

Rail Services (Competition)

14. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect he expects the introduction of competition to have on improvements in rail services.

Mr. Freeman: We expect the introduction of competition to result in increased frequencies of service in response to more extensive marketing, and lower fares for certain services.

Mr. Robinson: Once again, my right hon. Friend is talking about getting more passengers back on to the track. Will he join me in condemning the scare stories that are being put about, especially by the Liberal Democrats in towns such as Frome and Bruton, that stations are to close on 1 April, when we have improved the procedures and made it more difficult to close stations?

Mr. Freeman: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The Liberal Democrats in the south-west of England are deliberately engendering fears in the minds of passengers by forecasting station closures that will not happen.

Mr. Olner: In these days of increased competition, is the Minister aware of the disastrous route on the west coast main line? Today, literally thousands of passengers from early in the morning until early this afternoon have been delayed, yet again, by signalling problems? How does he think competition will assist that line without the Government putting money into the infrastructure?

Mr. Freeman: We confidently expect resignalling work on the west coast main line, to be done by a consortium of private sector companies, to begin next summer, and that the work will be done faster than the public sector would have been able to do it.

Transatlantic Air Routes

15. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made towards liberalisation of transatlantic air routes.

Mr. MacGregor: Now that the United States Secretary of Transportation has renewed the BA-USAir code sharing —a move which I welcome—I hope that we can resume the talks on liberalisation.

Mr. Robertson: In view of the substantial liberalisation package that the United Kingdom has tabled, which includes the opening of all regional airports including Aberdeen in the north-east of Scotland, is not it totally unreasonable for the United States Government, who purport to support liberalisation, to refuse further to negotiate in order to achieve it?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that we tabled proposals that took liberalisation substantially further than anything that we had previously offered. He is right to draw attention to the fact that we proposed immediately completely to open up regional airports everywhere, and also offered further improvements at Heathrow and Gatwick. I greatly regretted that the United States called off the talks. I have been trying to get them going again. Now that the United States has given the 12-months continuation of the BA-USAir code sharing, I hope that we can take up the cudgels and try to reach agreement.

British Rail Maintenance Depot, Eastleigh

16. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to maximise orders for the British Rail maintenance depot in Eastleigh.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's plans for transferring British Rail Maintenance Ltd. to the private sector offer the best prospects for the future of the Eastleigh depot. A privately owned company will be free to bid for railway rolling stock maintenance throughout the railway industry and for other business.

Mr. Denham: Is not the Minister aware that yet another 180 jobs were lost at BRML in Eastleigh last week and that many jobs at BRML could be secured if work that has been done there in the past continued to be allocated to Eastleigh? Does he accept that he has never given any instructions to the British Rail board to maximise the work that is being done at Eastleigh depot? Are not those workers, that community and my constituents suffering from the Government's dogma, which insists on pushing work out to other companies rather than continuing to be done at BRML?

Mr. Freeman: It would be highly improper for the Government to issue instructions to British Rail to place contracts anywhere. That is what the Opposition would do, and look at the problems that they faced in the 1970s.

I invite the hon. Gentleman to agree that the reason for the reduced work load at Eastleigh and at other BRML depots is that modern technology in building railway rolling stock means that less heavy maintenance is needed halfway through their lives. Why does not the hon. Gentleman adopt a positive rather than negative attitude to the future of the Eastleigh depot?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

29. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions in the past 10 years his Department has issued to the courts a variation of the standard form public interest immunity certificates.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): No record has been kept of the number of public interest immunity certificates signed by a Law Officer over the last 10 years. Any certificate would have been specifically drafted for the particular case.

Mr. Rooker: If that is the case, and as it appears that certificates are made up as we go along and that there is no standard form, how can some Ministers stand up in public and say that they had no discretion but to sign what was put in front of them while other Ministers are allowed to write their own certificates? Surely that is an abuse of power which the Attorney-General has failed to bring to heel. Does not the evidence that has been published and put before the Scott inquiry this morning condemn the right hon. and learned Gentleman for negligence in that respect?

The Attorney-General: I do not think that any one of the points made by the hon. Gentleman on the subject is correct. I am to give evidence to the Scott inquiry on Thursday and I look forward to doing so.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the purpose of public interest immunity certificates is simply to put the facts before the judge and that it is for the judge to decide whether those should be disclosed to the defence?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If a balance is to be struck—unless it is in a clear case—it is to be struck not by a Minister, but by the judge.

Mr. Fraser: Can the Attorney-General say whether the President of the Board of Trade was correct when he said that the attention of the judge and the defence would be drawn to his specially abbreviated form of public interest immunity certificate?

The Attorney-General: As the hon. Gentleman knows well, those matters are being investigated by Lord Justice Scott.

Prosecutions (Victims' Interests)

30. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Attorney-General whether the interests of victims are taken into account by the Crown Prosecution Service when deciding whether to prosecute.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): When the Crown Prosecution Service is deciding whether to continue proceedings the interests of the victim are an important factor in determining the balance of the public interest.

Mr. Coombs: My hon. and learned Friend will be well aware of the strong public feeling on the recent Roberts case in Plymouth. Is he absolutely satisfied that the interests of the families of people such as Jonathan Roberts are sufficiently taken into consideration by the judicial system?

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has already called for the papers in that case and in another case in which the same judge sentenced the following day. My right hon. and learned Friend will receive advice from Treasury Counsel and will then make up his mind whether the sentences were unduly lenient. If he comes to that conclusion, he will refer the cases to the Court of Appeal for review.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Solicitor-General agree that many of the problems could be resolved if, from time to time, the Court of Appeal reviewed tariffs in general?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman will agree that that is one of the functions that the Court of Appeal carries out from time to time when my right hon. and

learned Friend the Attorney-General refers sentences to it as unduly lenient. It also does that in other appropriate circumstances, as it sees fit.

Mr. Nicholls: Is not it a fact that even where a tariff exists, the judge still has the ultimate responsibility to set a sentence between the minimum and maximum prescribed by law? Ultimately, it is his job to make that decision and to stand by it.

The Solicitor-General: The judiciary is independent of political influence. Anyone who has had any experience as a judge in court knows that sentencing requires sense and sensibility. It is one thing to sentence as a paper exercise and another to do it when one can see the whites of the defendant's eyes.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Solicitor-General aware of the concern throughout Britain about the rarity of the preferring of charges of manslaughter where death has been caused by careless or dangerous driving? Will he look into the exceptional circumstances that are deemed to be necessary to bring such charges? Will he have some discussion about the matter with the Crown Prosecution Service?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman is a little behind the times. Recently, we increased the maximum sentence for causing death by dangerous driving and other similar offences from five to 10 years. In any event, in the case of Seymour, a House of Lords decision made plain what are the appropriate circumstances for preferring a charge of manslaughter.

Bail Objections

31. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Attorney-General what matters are taken into account by the Crown Prosecution Service when deciding whether to object to bail.

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service takes into account the considerations and exceptions to bail set out in the Bail Act 1976 and any other relevant information available to it, including material from the police, the probation service and other sources.

Mr. Ainsworth: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the widespread public concern about the number of people who re-offend while out on bail? Is not that a dangerous loophole, which law-abiding people throughout Britain have a right to see closed as soon as possible?

The Solicitor-General: It is, and we are closing it. The first measure that we have taken is already on the statute book. The Bail (Amendment) Act 1993, which is the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen), will give the prosecution the right of appeal against the decision of a magistrates court to grant bail. Also, two provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, if enacted, will remove the presumption of bail for defendants charged with indictable and either-way offences and refuse bail in cases of persons charged with homicide or rape, if they have previously been convicted of either offence.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

32. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what re-assessment he is making of the operation of public interest immunity certificates.

The Attorney-General: Public interest immunity certificates are one of the subjects under investigation by Lord Justice Scott. The Government will give careful consideration to any conclusions and recommendations in his report.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Attorney-General realise that in asking the House to believe what he told my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) earlier—that the Department has not kept records of the number of people who signed the certificates in the past 10 years—he must be guilty of either a cover-up or incompetence? When the President of the Board of Trade refused to sign the certificate, did not it cross the Attorney-General's mind that he should have told those people who were heading for the court that it was wrong for them to be sent to gaol when he was bending the law on their behalf?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman would do well to wait for my evidence on Thursday.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my right hon. and learned Friend turn his mind to the best guidance on the use of public interest immunity certificates, which is contained in footnotes in a law book in print so small that most people commenting on that, whether in the House or in the press, have not been able to read it? Will he consider whether an enlarged version of what is in the law book could be made available to everyone?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right that the footnotes to the "Supreme Court Practice" are in print suitable for a prayer book. An enlarging photocopier might be of considerable assistance.

War Crimes

33. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to bring prosecutions under the War Crimes Act 1991.

The Attorney-General: The Metropolitan police war crimes unit is still actively pursuing its inquiries under the War Crimes Act 1991. Those inquiries are not yet complete and the question of a possible prosecution or prosecutions cannot be considered until they are concluded.

Mr. Townsend: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that when that legislation came before the House, many Conservative Members voted against it, including Cabinet Ministers? Does he appreciate that it is costing millions of pounds? About 10 detectives are being employed pursuing it, and would not they be much better employed seeking serious villains in Greater London?

The Attorney-General: I understand my hon. Friend's point of view, but the House passed the Bill by a large majority and it is now being followed through.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Population Initiative

39. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made by the Overseas Development Administration since 1991 in implementing its population initiative.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): Forty-five new bilateral projects have now been funded, involving commitments of £37.5 million. A further £54.6 million of additional multilateral aid has been committed.

Sir David Knox: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the progress that has been made. What steps are being taken to encourage other countries, especially those in the European Union, to give further assistance to population initiatives?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, we promote population initiatives wherever we can. We must press the idea more on the European Community. The ODA helped to plan and present a population seminar in Brussels on 28 February, which was attended by a large number of senior EC officials. We are also helping the Commission to plan new programmes in Egypt and in Kenya.

Aid Criteria

42. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes he proposes to the criteria for the choice of countries to receive overseas aid from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to give aid in the light of need and to promote economic and social development.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is not Dr. Mahathir's letter to the *Financial Times* confirmation of the damage done by the persistently negative character of our media, aided and abetted by Her Majesty's official Opposition, who are, with cavalier disregard, prepared to put, in the one case, proprietorial profit and, in the other, partisan political advantage, ahead of British people's jobs? Will my hon. Friend make it clear that the money for the Pergau dam was in the form of a loan, that that loan, with a British project, would have gone towards paying a British company and that, in the world we live in, such assistance makes every kind of sense?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I can confirm that it was in the form of a loan on concessional terms. Of course we are proud of the fact that we have a free press in Britain, but I have to agree with my hon. Friend that some newspapers have written nonsense and made some serious inaccuracies. As for the role of the Opposition in that, I can conclude only that they somehow seem to believe that there is good politics in destroying British jobs.

Sir David Steel: Will the Minister consider the example of the Governments of Japan, of the Netherlands, of Denmark and of other countries, all of whom make the spending of the recipient country on military matters one of the criteria for deciding their aid budget? If they decide that Indonesia is rich enough to spend vast sums on armaments, why do we alone decide that it should receive large quantities of aid?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong to allege that Indonesia is spending such a high percentage of its gross domestic product on armaments. It is spending less than 2 per cent. of its gross domestic product on armaments. Indonesia is a fine example of a country with a sound record of economic management. In 1970, about 60 per cent. of the population was living below the poverty line; by 1990, only 15 per cent. were. When we speak about what other countries are doing, I should like the right hon. Gentleman to bear in mind the fact that 5 per cent. of the British aid budget is for aid and trade provision projects such as Pergau, compared with the 14 per cent. of the German aid budget and the 28 per cent. of the Austrian aid budget spent in that way.

Mr. Wells: Will my hon. Friend include in the criteria that he is developing countries whose economies have been ruined by policies pursued by the European Community —for example, the banana protocol and banana GATT arrangements, which will undoubtedly undermine the Caribbean banana industry?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We shall consider in any part of the world countries with the right criteria—those with a per capita income of less than $700 a year—for ATP projects that would benefit the country, the aid programme, British industry and British jobs.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister accept that the Opposition will always support projects that are developmentally sound? If so, I trust that he will dismiss the views of Sir Timothy Lankester, which have been disowned by the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert). On the allocation of limited aid funds, does the Minister accept that some countries are absolutely crippled by debt? For instance, a third of Uganda's revenue is being used to service debt at the expense of health, education, pure water and other important needs. Will he therefore encourage the International Monetary Fund and the World bank to take a more reasonable view of those appalling problems than that taken by some Conservative Members?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman supports the ATP programme, because it was invented by the last Labour Government. I am glad to say that the Pergau project will be worth 29,000 man years for British workers and that 110 British subcontractors and suppliers will gain business from it. The hon. Gentleman knows that Britain has led the way in debt relief. In 1990, we launched the Trinidad terms—18 countries, 13 of which are in Africa, have benefited so far from that—and we have relieved developing countries of more than £1 billion of the aid debt burden.

Environmental Sustainability

43. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Overseas Development Administration takes to ensure that all aid projects are assessed for their environmental sustainability.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All projects are subject to environmental assessment according to the guidelines and procedures set out in the ODA manual of environmental appraisal.

Mr. Deva: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that environmental concerns in developing

countries will be further strengthened by the recent signing of the global environmental facility? Will he elaborate on how that might help?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes. Following the recent negotiations in Geneva, I am delighted to report that the GEF was successfully restructured and replenished. Britain pledged £89.5 million worth of support. The global environmental facility will help to alleviate global environmental threats. The agreement must be good news for the implementation of the climate change and biodiversity conventions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When the Pergau dam proposal was first put to the ODA, did not it fail the appraisal procedure to which the Minister referred? On the so-called "loan" given to the Malaysians, who is paying the difference between the rate at which the Malaysians received the money and the cost of borrowing the money in the United Kingdom? Is not the difference paid by British taxpayers?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The environmental and social impacts of the Pergau project are negligible compared with other dam schemes. The review of environmental information concluded that there were no environmental issues that would prejudice funding. The project has incurred minimal adverse impact on primary rain forest and rare wildlife species. Obviously, taxpayers, through the aid budget, fund the concessional nature of the loan.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Are not the various projects funded by Britain in the tropical rain forests in Brazil precise examples of the fact that our aid programme is devoted to environmental sustainability?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A great deal of care is taken to ensure that all projects are appraised for environmental impact. The ODA has an environmental appraisal manual, which was first published in 1989. Some 1,800 copies have been distributed, all staff are trained in using the manual and training is on-going.

Pergau Dam

44. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given to withdrawing from the Pergau dam project.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. Construction is on schedule for completion in 1996.

Ms Eagle: Given that it is now clear that the ODA contribution to the Pergau dam project has been used to facilitate the accumulation of massive profits from privatisation for a few rich Malaysian individuals, will the Minister consider asking the Malaysian Government whether they believe that overseas aid is being abused?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Some £4 billion worth of British exports have been assisted by the aid and trade provision. I have set out the benefits that have derived from the Pergau contract. Ministers have nothing whatsoever to be ashamed of.

Mr. John Marshall: Is my hon. Friend aware that most people are amazed at the Opposition's campaign against a project that has resulted in the trebling of British exports to Malaysia and that they regard the campaign against the project as stupid and inane? The campaign is putting at risk tens of thousands of jobs in this country. The Opposition should, instead, be commending the Government for helping British industry.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I have said, Malaysia provides a prime example of a Government who have pulled themselves out of poverty as a result of some measure of project aid.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware that, under Standing Order 127, the Select Committee on European Legislation has a duty to report to the House when there arise matters of legal and political importance with regard to documents that have been laid before the Council of Ministers. The Standing Order refers also to documents laid by one institution of the Community with another. You will be aware also that, unlike the treaty on European Union, which was signed at Maastricht, the negotiations between the Union and membership applicants are a matter not for intergovernmental negotiations but for decision by the institutions of the Community and its Council within its own treaties. Documents relating to the blocking minority figures 23 and 27 have been laid before the Council and, indeed, were discussed last week and will be discussed tomorrow.

Are you, Madam Speaker, aware that no report relating to the matters placed before the Select Committee on European Legislation has been made by memorandum? As hon. Members are under the impression that the resolution of the House of 24 October 1990 requires Ministers not to take decisions before such scrutiny has taken place, are not the Government beholden to report by memorandum and by placing those documents before the House so that hon. Members may have an opportunity to debate their merits and, indeed, their importance before a Minister indicates accession or agreement? Will you, Madam Speaker, so rule?

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his intention to raise this matter. I can only repeat to him and to the House what I have already said to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash): that no text relevant to the issue he wishes to debate is available for scrutiny by the Select Committee on European Legislation. The chapter entitled "Institutions" in the document that has been made available is not yet agreed, but the document itself relates to a process that is actually taking place between national Governments. National Parliaments are not, therefore, yet involved, and nothing has happened that involves the responsibility of the Chair of this House. I regret that at this stage I am unable to help the hon. Gentleman further.

Mr. Spearing: I am much obliged to you, Madam Speaker, for your ruling relating to that resolution. Will you please confirm that, whereas the Government may have—indeed, have—laid before the House documents concerning legislation relating to tobacco advertising, to the social matters that are to be debated this Wednesday and to harmonisation of postal services, and whereas the House may debate those, the Government will not be required to take this action unless the resolution is changed? But nor does the resolution debar the Government from placing the documents if they so wish.

Madam Speaker: I think that my statement is absolutely clear, if the hon. Gentleman will look at it.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to raise with you the important subject of the accountability of Ministers to this House. Information from the evidence of Mr. Alan Moses to the Scott inquiry became available to hon. Members only this morning. The subject was raised during questions to the Attorney-General and he brushed aside questions by saying that the House will have to wait until Thursday, when he gives his evidence to the Scott inquiry.

Although the Attorney-General has a duty to give evidence to the Scott inquiry, surely he has a more important duty to give evidence to this House. Will you, Madam Speaker, rule that the accountability of Law Officers to this House is supreme and indivisible?

Madam Speaker: Ministers are of course free to reply to questions in their own way; it is not for the Speaker to put words into their mouths. But if Members are not satisfied, they can seek to pursue issues by way of debate. They cannot, however, insist on being given information in the form that they would like at Question Time. It is up to a Minister to answer as he thinks fit at Question Time.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and I, at business questions last Thursday, raised the issue of the treatment of asylum seekers by the Home Office, and the fact that more than 100 people are on hunger strike. I understand that they have been dispersed to prisons throughout the country—their only crime, seeking asylum in this country.

May I ask whether the Home Secretary has given you any intimation of his intention to hold a meeting with hon. Members who have written to him asking for such a meeting, or of his intention to come to the House to make a statement on the appalling travesty of justice that is taking place in this country?

Madam Speaker: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's first question—I do not know the intentions of the Home Secretary—but I can tell him that I have not been informed that any Minister is seeking to make a statement on that issue.

Orders of the Day

Insolvency (No. 2) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is short but it is technical. Although I shall need to be precise in some areas, I hope that I shall be able to address the broad issues without becoming enmeshed in too much detail.

First, I should outline the circumstances in which we have found it necessary to introduce this Bill. The Insolvency Act 1986 contains two measures, administration and administrative receivership—the latter is known in Scotland simply as receivership—which are used frequently to rescue financially troubled companies or to save viable parts of their businesses. For the sake of convenience, I shall refer simply to receivers and receivership, but the reference will be to administrative receiver and administrative receivership in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and receiver and receivership in Scotland.

Putting together a rescue package and seeing it through to a conclusion often takes several months—if not longer. During this time the business has to be kept going and the administrator or receiver will need to keep on at least part of the work force. The legislation, however, gives him a period of grace of only 14 days before he has to decide whether to adopt their contracts of employment. In the case of administration, the effect of adoption is that in practice the obligations under the contracts of employment become expenses of the proceedings. In an administrative receivership, however, in addition to the company's continuing liability the receiver also becomes personally liable under the contract.

Fourteen days is not a long time. It will rarely be long enough to effect a rescue or conclude a sale. Administrators and administrative receivers were clearly concerned about the implications of adopting contracts of employment right from the time the legislation came into force at the end of 1986. As early as February 1987 the receivers, in the case of Specialised Mouldings, obtained directions from the High Court that it was possible to avoid adopting such contracts but to continue to employ the employees.

From this there developed a practice whereby receivers would send letters to employees whom they wished to retain saying in essence that they were not adopting their contracts and that they accepted no personal liability, but that they would continue to pay wages, salaries and pension contributions as before. In due course this seems to have become standard practice in cases of administration too, although the legislation does not provide for an administrator to have personal liability.

On this basis, matters proceeded—apparently satisfactorily—for more than six years. However, in July 1993 a decision of the High Court in the case of Paramount Airways Ltd (No. 3) cast doubt on the effectiveness of the disclaimer—if I may call it that—which by then was being routinely used. There was an appeal to the Court of Appeal in February this year which upheld the decision of the High Court. Moreover, although it was an administration case, the judgment also raised serious doubts about the effectiveness of the disclaimer in receivership cases. Since then, the general perception has been that it is no longer safe to place any reliance on the use of disclaimers, with the result that if employees are not dismissed within the 14-day grace period their contracts will be held to have been impliedly adopted.

The consequence of the Paramount judgment is that the contractual rights arising from the termination by administrators of contracts of employment that they had adopted, even unwittingly, constitute a priority charge on the company's assets. Insolvency practitioners concluded that the effect of that might be so to encumber the company that there would be no substance left upon which to base an effective rescue package. Understandably, they were even more alarmed at the prospect, in receiverships, of incurring substantial personal liability. The result was likely to be that they would resort to wholesale dismissal of employees unless the business could be sold within 14 days. That would not have been good for business, employment or the economy.

Right hon. and hon Members will recall that on 14 March my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade made a statement to the House on the issue. He said that he intended to bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity which would enable an administrator or a receiver to adopt a contract of employment with more restricted effects than at present. That commitment is now honoured in the Bill. The aim is to discourage administrators and receivers from dismissing employees simply because of the fear of the extensive liabilities which may be incurred—in the case of receivers, extensive personal liabilities—as a result of the adoption of the contracts. Under the proposals, only qualifying liabilities, which I shall shortly describe, would be incurred.

In the case of administration, that aim would be achieved by the amendments to section 19 of the Insolvency Act 1986 contained in clause 1 of the Bill. Those amendments provide that only qualifying liabilities would in future be covered by the statutory priority charge over a company's assets. Qualifying liabilities are defined broadly as wages or salary or contributions to an occupational pension scheme in respect of services rendered after the adoption of the contract. That would also cover rights to holiday pay and sickness pay arising after adoption.

In the case of administrative receiverships, the aim is achieved by amendments to section 44 of the Act, which are contained in clause 2 of the Bill. Those amendments also restrict the receiver's personal liability—and consequently his statutory right of indemnity from the company's assets—to only qualifying liabilities as I have just described them.

Clause 3 of the Bill makes provision for amendment of section 57 of the Act. It introduces the limited personal liability of the new scheme into the Scottish system of receivership. Clause 4 and schedule 1 provide for the Bill's effects to be brought about in Northern Ireland by amendment of the relevant provisions of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

There will be, of course, entirely understandable concern that the proposed amendments should not disadvantage employees whose contract is terminated by an administrator or receiver. They do not.

Liabilities, other than qualifying liabilities, arising from a contract of employment will remain, but they will be treated as an unsecured claim against the company. Moreover, the proposals will not affect the employee's position under employment law.

This measure is not intended to overturn the decision in the Paramount Airways case, which may go to appeal. It would apply only to contracts that are adopted on or after 15 March 1994. Any contract adopted before then will not be affected by the changes.

It is hoped, of course, that the proposals will be adopted and that as a result it will prove possible more often to return companies to viability or to sell their businesses as going concerns. In that way, employees will keep their jobs. They would not be affected by the proposals because their contracts of employment would not have been terminated.

That brings me back to the concerns that have caused us to act so quickly to resolve the difficulty. Those concerns are recognised on both sides of the House. In that context, I should like to thank the Opposition for their constructive approach in facilitating the measure. It cannot be in anyone's interests for administrators or receivers to feel constrained to close businesses and dismiss employees because they cannot risk an otherwise viable rescue plan being subverted by the burden of rights that arise when they find it necessary to terminate a contract of employment that they have adopted, or because they would be personally liable for those costs.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Bill is very narrow and I suppose that it will remain so. As I am suspicious about what the Government might do, however, and as I have read in the newspapers that many Tory Members of Parliament are heading for bankruptcy, can the Minister assure us that this narrow Bill will not be amended here or in another place to ensure that they are rescued from bankruptcy? He says that he does not believe in intervening in the market, so will he give us an assurance that, in the life of this Parliament, no Tory Members who have got up to their necks in debt with Lloyd's will be rescued by the Government, which means by the taxpayer?

Mr. Hamilton: Like the hon. Gentleman, I wear my badge of poverty with some pride. I am not one of those people who have ever been a part of Lloyd's or a party to any other investment in which I stood to lose any substantial sum. I cannot foretell the circumstances in which the House or another place might amend the Bill. As a general rule, Ministers are not too keen on their legislation being amended. I do not propose to amend the Bill and my proposals are before the House. I think that I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he requests, but it is not for me to foretell the future.

It cannot be in anyone's interests for businesses that might otherwise be saved to be closed down as a result of the adventitious circumstances that gave rise to the need for us to legislate in this form today.

The statement by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 14 March was welcomed on both sides of the House. The Bill will give effect to his proposals, and on that basis I commend it to right hon. and hon. Members.

3.46 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to the Minister for his short and technical introduction to our Second Reading debate on what he describes as the broad issues. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) brought to the attention of the House one of those issues by mentioning one of the great difficulties that may lie ahead for the Government. They may find that they are forced into different streams and torrents, and that they have to distort the meaning of the Bill.

When the President of the Board of Trade, who is not here today, made his statement last week, he reminded me of the opening of the first motorway in Lancashire. Harold Macmillan, who was then Prime Minister, opened it, but two weeks later it was closed for repairs. At the time, Harold Wilson said that it was a pity that the Prime Minister had been invited to the opening but not to the closure.

We cannot lay the blame for the Insolvency Act 1986 at the door of the President of the Board of Trade. He was on a short trek through the wilderness at that time and was writing such lively and entertaining books as, "Where There's A Will" and showing us what a real interventionist in the economy can do. However, the right hon. Gentleman had to tell the House about the difficulties that resulted from the 1986 Act.

The Under-Secretary of State took us a little way through the variety of legal circuits that have had to be followed. The Bill came about because of a court ruling in the case of Nicoll *v.* Cutts, followed by that in the case of Specialised Mouldings Ltd. on 13 February 1987. The latter judgment was never properly reported, which is astonishing. There was no report or transcript of the judgment, no note of the reasons why Mr. Justice Harman reached his conclusions and no details of the facts of the case were given. No helpful authority was given for the judgment; and that is not merely my view, but that of the Court of Appeal.

Since 1987, the Government and practitioners of insolvency law have known that they had little authority for allowing receivers to escape their liabilities by sending a letter saying that they had not adopted the contracts of employment. Everyone knew that that was bad and unsafe law, yet the Government did nothing about it. That says a lot about the Executive; it also says something about our legislature.

The legislation had its Committee stage, and experts served on the Committee. Time and again, Tories with expertise and knowledge are metaphorically bound and gagged in Committee: they are not allowed to say a single word that might delay the proceedings. Notwithstanding all that was said by insolvency practitioners at the time, the Bill reached the statute book—with a hidden timebomb ticking away under every insolvency practitioner in the country.

On 14 March, on the Floor of the House, the President of the Board of Trade promised this legislation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has said, Opposition Members are concerned about the public interest, and will facilitate the Bill's passage; nevertheless, we are anxious about certain omissions. One such omission—with which we may deal

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

later, in Committee—relates to law-of-property receivers who are sent in, on behalf of banks and building societies, to recover big single assets such as hotels and office blocks.

The Minister and his Department may well have accepted that hotels and office blocks do not necessarily employ staff, and that contracts of employment will not be involved in such cases; if they are not involved, they should not be included in the legislation. As has been said, however, when staff are involved they may need to remain involved. That suggests that an appropriate amendment should be tabled to cover the provisions of section 37 of the 1986 Act.

I listened with interest to the Minister's clarification of the Government's position on retrospection. He said that the Bill would not be retrospective but would take effect from 15 March. In 1964, we had a Labour Government, whose first act was to pass retrospective legislation in respect of Burmah Oil, to reverse a decision of the Law Lords in the national interest. I believe that the President of the Board of Trade is somewhat exercised by the question whether to start from the position of 14 or 15 March, or whether to go back to 1987: he said last week that there was a question of retrospection, and I believe that he was thinking very deeply about that.

The Bill raises a serious issue. The Minister seemed to be saying that he did not wish to overrule the decision of the Court of Appeal. However, he is doing what should have been done years ago—rectifying an error that turned up in the Insolvency Act 1986. I fear—as do insolvency practitioners—that a number of law suits may result from the legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover mentioned Lloyd's of London; but professional indemnity insurers, who may have to pick up the tab, must be worried about the possibility of consequential claims on the insurance market. The hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), with his knowledge of insolvency matters, may wish to help us in that regard.

Perhaps the Minister will give us a fuller explanation in Committee, but I am not entirely sure that it is wise to make the Bill retrospective only to 15 March, rather than taking the retrospection back to 1987. The former date may create uncertainty among lawyers, insolvency practitioners and those who have lost their jobs in the past few years, and who may suddenly feel that they have a claim that can be honoured.

Let me deal with some of the points made last week. The Minister has rightly said that this is a narrow, technical Bill. However, my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and for Livingston (Mr. Cook) are still concerned about a matter that they raised then—the £205 redundancy money. That is not a huge sum in this day and age; it is certainly less than the average industrial wage. We feel that statutory redundancy money should be increased to bring it into line with that average.

As we are amending the 1986 Act, we should ask how that Act came to be such a disappointment. Was it overwhelmed by the number of insolvencies and bankruptcies that occurred in a recession that lasted three years? Was it overwhelmed by the number of firms that went into administration and receivership, or was the Bill simply flawed? Do those flaws still confront the House and insolvency practitioners?

We are pleased that the number of insolvencies is reducing, from the high of 5,734 appointments in administration and receivership in 1991 and 3,266 in 1992, but the target of 2,000 in 1994 hardly gives the impression that the economy is thriving.

More than 4,000 firms were wound up and more than 6,000 individuals were declared bankrupt in 1992-93 as a result of actions brought by Government Departments. Those figures came from the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs. Many of those actions were taken by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise. I fully accept that they must both look after taxpayers' interests, but these may be equally served by keeping men and women in work and businesses viable and solvent.

Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue specialised units involved in debt recovery take into account a variety of factors, such as the company's tax history, the need to ensure future compliance and expectations if a business continues to trade. Perhaps we will learn later today, or after publication of the Government's consultation paper on the future of insolvency law, whether the United Kingdom will go to the lengths of Australia, Denmark and Canada in reducing the preferential status of the taxman.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I share the suspicions of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Has my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) considered the case of Unicorn Heritage plc, which took £200,000 from the Government and subsequently went bankrupt? That put many other firms into bankruptcy, yet Unicorn Heritage's investors were again awarded money direct from the Government in tax returns. People employed by that company, and also those who were on its board and who played a leading part, are still able to conduct other profitable businesses and have important jobs in the Treasury. Should not that scandal be put right in future, if not by the Bill?

Mr. Bell: I entirely agree. We have expressed concern on many occasions about phoenix companies that go into liquidation but whose directors rise from the ashes, whereas the work force pay a heavy penalty—which is aggravated by statutory redundancy money not being as much as it should be.

We will extend as much co-operation as we can to the Minister in the preparation of a proper insolvency Bill that can be appropriately debated at every stage. We want to identify how, out of the morass of insolvency, there may be more management and worker buy-outs and employee share ownership schemes, and how those could be developed as a first option for any company in difficulty. Employees who have invested their working lives in a company should enjoy a return by having some say in the company's survival and future.

We are looking, not for a technical Bill that modifies a weakness in the law that was perceived way back in 1987, but for a comprehensive review of insolvency law, to make it easier and cheaper to obtain an administration order, to abolish the law of distress, encouraging creditors and Government Departments to use accountants to look at alternatives before closing a business, and looking more closely at the moratorium aspects of business debts. We must move away from the concept of closing down viable businesses. We must establish a culture in which troubled companies, professional advisers, creditors and

Government are committed to ensuring that troubled businesses, when essentially sound, survive periods of economic downturn.

As we said earlier, in the public interest and that of workers, management and business who may be uncertain, we are happy to give the Bill latitude in the House after it has been given due debate on Second Reading, in Committee, on Report and on Third Reading. Nevertheless, the matter should have been brought to the House and the weakness in the law rectified a long time ago. We welcome the fact that the Government have now brought it to our attention.

4 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): The hon. Member for Middlesborough (Mr. Bell) referred to my background as an accountant. I remind the House that I served on the Committee that considered the Insolvency Bill in 1985. The hon. Gentleman referred to, perhaps, the too hasty passage of that Bill. It was anything but hasty. It was an epic occasion, as I remember it, with more than 1,000 amendments tabled in the House. The debate went on for weeks and months. The Bill came out in a somewhat better form than many of us who served on the Committee thought likely as there had been so many amendments.

It might be helpful if I explain some of the background to the situation that we now face. It was nearly 10 years before the matter came before the court; in fact it came before the court shortly after the 1986 Act came into force on a case involving Specialised Mouldings Ltd. That case did not have the full hearing that the recent Paramount Airways case did. The receiver went to the judge and said, "I am faced with a difficult decision here. This is what I think I ought to do, but will you tell me whether I am right?" The judge told him that he was right and upheld the situation that had previously prevailed for employee claims up until that time. That decision does not seem to have counted in the way that it might have, because, as I understand it, no transcript was made of the proceedings as has been done in the Paramount Airways case.

It was on the basis of the Specialised Mouldings decision that the rescue operations for thousands of companies have taken place in the past few years. It is the doubt over the situation in those rescued companies—or cases where attempts were made to rescue companies—that gives me most concern tonight. I congratulate my hon. Friends on their speedy action in putting the situation right for the future in the light of the Paramount Airways decision. I know that there are cases throughout the country, such as the one mentioned recently in my local paper, where an attempt to save a firm will get a boost from the action now being taken. But for that action being taken, I believe that we would have seen the end of recovery situations, which is the principal aim of the insolvency legislation—to try to rescue companies and preserve jobs. We are right in putting the Bill through speedily tonight to remove the doubt and uncertainty that there would otherwise be.

The Paramount case may well go to the Lords on appeal, but we do not know what the outcome of that would be. Three learned judges in the Court of Appeal have decided as they have. I am not sure whether they had the benefit of a full explanation of the thinking in the House during the Report stage of the Insolvency Bill when the matter came up for consideration. If one reads *Hansard*, one sees that it is quite clear that the aim was not as interpreted by the Court of Appeal in the recent case. It was to

"catch the case where a receiver knowingly allows an employee to contribute his services and says nothing to him for more than 14 days about payment for those services."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 544.]

The consequences of that would have been that an individual could have been employed by a receiver and never paid for being employed by him. The section was supposed to deal with that situation. No intention was ever outlined in Committee to bring about the consequences that the judges in the Paramount Airways case have held to be the law.

I believe that the Government are right in what they are seeking to do today, but I have grave doubts about what will happen if the need to clear up the situation for the intervening years from 1985-86 to now is not tackled. The seriousness of the situation must be stressed. Many companies are involved and, potentially, many claims could be made on the basis of the interpretation of the law in the Paramount Airways judgment, which was completely different from what the law used to be before the 1986 Act, from what was said to be the intention that lay behind that measure, from the interpretation that was applied in Specialised Mouldings and from what everyone thought the position to be in the interim, including the Department of Employment, which confirmed recently that it believes that the decision in Specialised Mouldings to be the right one and will continue to apply it.

I am supportive of the amendment that, technically, has been tabled at the last moment. If it had not been that I was on the train travelling down from Tynemouth, I would have signed it. We should give great consideration to the need to correct the situation back to 1985-86.

Similarly, I would have been happy to support the amendment that would bring section 37 of the 1986 Act within the proposed provision if I had been able to do so. Why should the receivers who are covered by section 37 be treated differently from other receivers? We are talking of receivers or managers who are appointed under powers that are contained in an instrument for certain contracts. They have always been treated in exactly the same way as other receivers in respect of the priority of debts. I can see no reason why that should not be the position now. I am happy to support the relevant amendment.

The aim of all insolvency legislation is to preserve jobs. The action that we are taking—I have suggested previously that we should take it—will be helpful in preserving jobs in future. Without it, rescue operations will not be mounted. It is in all our interests that they should take place wherever possible, and those involved should be given every assistance to ensure that the operations are successful and preserve jobs for the future.

4.16 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): There is more or less unanimity in the Chamber this afternoon. Anyone who recognises the positive role that receivers have played in company rescues in the years since the Insolvency Act 1986 will welcome the Bill and appreciate that the major disruption in the work of receivers that has been caused by the recent judgment warrants an immediate response. We have before us an attempt to restore what was perceived to be the position before the Paramount Airways judgment.

[Mr. John Gunnell]

Will the Minister confirm that it was the Government's intention when they introduced the 1986 Act—I think that that happened in 1984-85—to make the law as it will become when the changes that are set out in the Bill take effect? That is a key question. Our response to other issues, including those raised by the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) in relation to past receiverships, will perhaps hinge on the Minister's answer. Given the speed of the Government's reaction, it seems that a serious drafting error was made in the past. There should not be such major ambiguity in company law.

The error was not so transparent that it became quickly obvious, otherwise the present practice would not have continued for so long. It cannot be certain, therefore, that the Paramount Airways judgment will survive following appeal to the House of Lords. The Government are right not to wait to find out what will happen there, assuming that the matter goes to the House of Lords, but I would think that the receivers will insist that it does.

Am I right in thinking that confusion hangs on the meaning of "adoption" as used in present legislation? Is it possible that the word is interpreted differently in English and Northern Ireland law from Scottish law? Why is there no definition of "adoption"? It reappears in the Bill, and the provision of a definition would bring an end to any confusion. Presumably, those who drafted the Bill considered the meaning to be so well known that a definition was not required. In that case, I think it might be helpful to practitioners if, in his summing up, the Minister would define very clearly what is meant by the word "adoption". Should a receiver or an administrative receiver adopt the contracts of employees if he is not necessarily aware of them at the time? For example, at the time that a contract is dealt with there may be employees on extended sick leave or maternity leave who are not on the payroll. Despite this fact, are those employees "adopted" in the sense of the Act? I think it is important for people to know what the Act means in this regard.

I raised the question about on-going receiverships in the discussion which followed the announcement by the President of the Board of Trade and I accepted his explanation that he could not introduce retrospective legislation. As hon. Members know, that news has cost jobs already. A company called Michael Mayes—I think the Minister will know of it—is trading at Thurnscoe in south Yorkshire in the Dearne valley and its chances of survival beyond the next day or two are now remote. We were given a ruling that this legislation could not be retrospective and, therefore, the receiver had to act within 14 days. However, it was not possible for him to do so, which is a tragedy because that company may have survived. There is a real shortage of jobs in the Dearne valley, as the Minister will know, and it is far easier to lose jobs than find them. The loss of that company is significant and we are all sad about it.

The key to the way in which we deal with the past—the hon. Member for Tynemouth said correctly that he hoped that the Minister had some constructive thoughts about this matter—lies in my original question: did the Government always intend the law to operate as it has operated for the past seven years? If that is so, I think some account must be taken of what I would call the fallout from the Paramount judgment. That fallout is the implications for those who have been conducting receiverships for the past seven years.

As has been said already, there have been thousands of receiverships and hundreds of administration orders. Businesses have been kept going and workers kept in their jobs as a result of reliance on the court judgment already referred to—the 1987 case of Specialised Mouldings Ltd. Reasons have been given why the present judgment supersedes the 1987 judgment. Many jobs have been saved in that time. In some companies it has not been possible to save all jobs and in other companies a receiver has traded for far more than 14 days, taking on the contracts of employees on the assumption that they would not fall on himself, but has found it impossible to maintain the company in the long run. Therefore, receivers face considerable debts if the Paramount judgment is not reversed.

In those circumstances, is it reasonable that receivers should be liable for the contracts of all those people who have lost their jobs, despite the fact that it was the receivers' intention to keep them in their jobs if possible? Neither the receiver nor the employees concerned were under any illusions about who was picking up the bill—neither expected that the bill would finally pass to the receiver.

Press speculation suggests that the debt for receivers could run into millions of pounds. It seems obvious to me —I hope that the Minister will confirm this point—that this was never intended to happen. Receivers did not believe that they were liable and employees were never led to believe that the receivers would be liable. I understand that the Government will await the result of an appeal to the House of Lords, on the pretty certain assumption that there will be one. However, I very much hope that constructive thinking is taking place at the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of how to deal with a potentially messy situation should the need arise. After all, to a certain extent, the more constructive the receiver has been in his attempt to save jobs and to rescue companies, perhaps the greater is his possible exposure. That surely cannot be right.

It is regrettable that the timing of the Paramount judgment, and this House's correction of it, catch some companies which are in the middle of a constructive receivership and companies which, like RFS Doncaster, are trading well. Will the Minister be able to say anything in the debate about possible additional intentions if the need for those should arise? The Minister might be able to say something about the Government giving the matter constructive thought and that might help to keep running businesses which are on the edge at the moment only because of what has happened through the Paramount judgment.

Ironically, the seven-year time scale of the operation of what seems now to be unclear drafting, which must have taken place in the DTI, could well threaten our most experienced receivers and mean that they end up in receivership themselves.

4.15 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): As Members in all parts of the House have welcomed the Bill, I hope that the Government will accept that the comments have been made in the spirit of ensuring that an amendment to an Act made necessary by a court hearing is passed quickly and

correctly. That is why amendments have been tabled which have been signed by myself, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter). Although the hon. Member for Tynemouth has had to leave the Chamber, I am grateful to him for saying that the amendments have all-party support. The amendments have been tabled in a spirit of helping the Government to ensure that we pass a Bill that meets the needs raised by the court case about which we are concerned.

There is no doubt that we need a rescue culture in this country. That means not a culture which seeks to put good money after bad when a business encounters difficulties, but a culture that recognises that with careful management, a fresh approach and some reorganisation, companies which get into difficulties can be rescued and continue, albeit in a remodelled format, to generate income and to employ people.

The core of this legislation and of the problem relates to the continuation of jobs and employment. That is the single reason why there is such cross-party support for the Bill. It has been said that if a Leyland DAF situation had arisen subsequent to the Paramount Airways Ltd. case, and before this Bill had become law, a rescue operation could not have been mounted successfully and would not have been mounted. The consequences of that to the United Kingdom would have been catastrophic.

When we recall the speeches of the President of the Board of Trade at the Dispatch Box during the debates on Leyland DAF, it is clear that he must recognise that this Bill is designed to ensure that there is time for a rescue operation to be determined on proper business grounds where the Government can stand back and allow it to happen without being placed under undue pressure to intervene when that might not be the most appropriate thing to do. I hope to persuade the Minister that if he is not prepared to accept the point he may run the risk of finding himself or his boss back at the Dispatch Box in future to deal with a potentially serious situation.

The hon. Member for Tynemouth advised me that one of the reasons why he has had to leave the Chamber is that he has to meet a Minister about Swan Hunter. The Swan Hunter receivership has been a long and ongoing problem which would have been threatened by the Paramount judgment. *The Independent* today reported that, according to Howard Davies of the Confederation of British Industry, the CBI is concerned that the uncertainty which the ruling has created in relation to outstanding claims and possible new claims threatens claims of up to £1 billion and could result in the bankruptcy of many medium-sized accountancy firms, with the consequential loss of a substantial number of jobs in the future. The Minister will recognise that that is only one person's opinion, but if it has any basis in substance it needs to be addressed.

Reference has been made to the fact that there may be an appeal to the House of Lords. I understand that Touche Ross has not yet decided whether to submit an appeal to the House of Lords. Even if an appeal is made, and is successful, however, it would be many months before it was finally processed and in the meantime a whole queue of similar claims may be made. That is a further reason why it is necessary to have a debate on the issues. The Minister must make the Government's position clear and the issues need to be addressed, not least because the courts are not only entitled but are required to look behind the Bill, and presumably the Act that it seeks to amend, to see what was the objective and the intention of both the Government and the House of Lords at the time.

The hon. Member for Tynemouth made it clear that the 1987 case—the Specialised Mouldings case—was decided soon after the Insolvency Bill became law. It was not a published ruling but clear guidance which until now was accepted by everyone as the definitive practice on which normal receiverships and administrations could be modelled. There is no doubt, therefore, that the judge thought at the time that he was clarifying the clear intention of Parliament. This Bill shows that that was the clear intention of Parliament and Parliament is passing amending legislation as a direct result of the judge's ruling to make that clear. One hopes that the courts will take the ruling into account when any further appeals are presented to them.

I hope that the Minister will address the issue because the fact that the courts should take the ruling into account at present does not remove the immediate uncertainty. It has been reported, for example, that claims of up to £10 million are being lodged in the case of Olympia and York —the Canary Wharf development—and it has been suggested that some of the Maxwell companies may lodge similar claims. In a sense, I can see both sides of the situation. Having a former Maxwell company in my constituency, which is now British International Helicopters, I can understand employees wanting to take advantage of a ruling that might give them some benefit. One can hardly blame them for taking advantage of the ruling that the court has made available to them.

The trouble is that the consequence of the ruling going through, and the uncertainty that it creates, will inevitably lead to a situation where receivers will simply say that they do not intend to put themselves at risk in mounting a rescue operation, that 14 days is much too short a time for them to determine whether a company can be rescued and the liability to which they could be laying themselves open is much too great, so they will simply sell off the assets and completely liquidate the company, and the rescue will be abandoned. It would be for the greater good to ensure that that does not happen. We must get clear guidance and a clear ruling as quickly and as early as possible.

It is perhaps a little surprising that Mr. Justice Harman could have said that a practice that had been established for seven years, of issuing a letter saying that a contract will not be adopted, was only so much wind. That was a somewhat dismissive ruling by a judge on something which was clearly an accepted practice and which clearly reflected the wishes of Parliament.

There are amendments tabled in my name and that of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough which are tacitly and openly supported by the hon. Member for Tynemouth and on which we may have an opportunity to address the specific points in a little more detail. I shall therefore not detain the House any further, except to say that the Government have responded extremely quickly and it is appreciated that they needed to do so. It is understood that the consequence of that quick response is that there was little time to prepare the legislation—from a statement on Monday to publication of the Bill on Friday and debating it the following Monday. In those circumstances, I hope that the Government will approach the amendments and the comments that are being made in a constructive spirit and recognise that we are trying to ensure that the

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

legislation, when it goes through both the Houses of Parliament, delivers the goods, meets the intention of the House and avoids any further misunderstanding.

4.24 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) in welcoming the fact that legislation has been introduced in such a short time to deal with the particularly knotty problem which has been caused by the judgment.

Although I understand the reasons for the speed with which the legislation was drafted and brought to the House, it is perhaps a missed opportunity. There are areas of insolvency legislation which give cause for concern and, where opportunities exist, they are often not fully exploited. I would like to use the opportunity of the Second Reading debate to flag up some of the issues based on my experience as a Member of Parliament dealing with constituency problems.

The first issue which concerns me—it is directly connected with the Bill—is employee rights during the period of insolvency. I am aware that, for example, there are a number of unfair dismissal claims which are outstanding and are waiting to go before tribunals which have arisen out of the lack of clarity about the rights of an employee in that situation vis a vis the administrative receiver or, if it moves on, the liquidator.

As a result of the legislation, those rights—that is, to be able to go to a tribunal and to claim unfair dismissal—must be looked into further. The case law on the matter—Leyland DAF, which has been referred to, and the case of Bowden v. Bowden—adds up to an area where there is concern which needs to be clarified further. It is a pity that we have not taken the opportunity to try to clear up that concern now.

My main point is the issue of what have been referred to as phoenix situations, where either the work force, the management or some part of the structure of an existing company—it may even be some of the directors—decides to try to rescue something out of a company which is in liquidation.

Let me state my experience briefly. For a fair part of the early to mid 1980s, prior to coming to the House, I was employed first by an organisation called CDS Training in Liverpool, and secondly by the Wales Co-operative Centre, which was set up by the Wales TUC. The main purpose of my employment during that period was to try to promote and set up plans for work-owned enterprises.

We were not prescriptive about it. We were involved with worker co-operatives, although often there might be just a partnership. In some cases, there was an employee share ownership plan, otherwise known as an ESOP. During that period, I was probably involved with attempts —in many cases succesful attempts—to set up 40 to 50 firms. Those mostly arose out of industrial closures and cases where the company was already in receivership.

I have some experience, and I realise the difficulties that the people in those situations are up against. However, I want to concentrate on my more recent experiences as a Member of Parliament. The Minister is familiar with at least one of the cases which I am about to mention.

In 1988, I think—so hurried has the process been, I have not had the opportunity to check everything—there was a company in my constituency called Greenberg. It employed about 95 people and was a long-established firm which made glass products such as patio and industrial windows. Largely through bad investment in new buildings—it was a time of high interest rates—the firm could not carry on servicing its debt and went into receivership.

I, the work force and various people advising me, including the local authority, worked for about six weeks to set up an employee share ownership plan. We raised the finance from the work force, from loans and from grants from the Department of Trade and Industry. We set up the business. It was a difficult time for the people running the business. It was badly under-capitalised, as many business start-ups find themselves, but after about a year, despite all the difficulties, it was still going, although it still had financial problems. It was taken over by another firm. It has been a success.

About 25 to 30 people now work for the firm. That is considerably fewer than in the first instance, when the company was Greenberg. Nevertheless, we managed to save something out of the company. We had difficulties confronting the receivers and making them understand what was involved and in convincing everyone else that there was a business worth saving.

The second example occurred in 1993. A company in my constituency in Kirkby which had been known as Lyons Maid and at the time was known as Clarke Foods went into receivership. Sixty seven employees worked at the factory. The administrative receiver, Robson Rhodes, dismissed the work force almost immediately. The receivers managed to sell most of the Lyons Maid operation to Nestlé. There followed a period during which we tried to convince Nestlé to keep the factory in Kirkby going. We failed in that. However, at an early stage, Nestlé told us that the plant and equipment at the factory could be passed on to the work force. So we had that assurance, but that was about all.

I had Adjournment debates in the House on the matter and tabled early-day motions. I negotiated directly with the shop stewards and Nestlé and the receivers to see what we could retrieve. After many months of work, we succeeded. I pay tribute, above all to the work force, but also to Knowsley council and the Transport and General Workers Union. The Department of Trade and Industry Minister also had a direct hand in the matter. We succeeded in saving more than 30 jobs.

We were defeated in the space of about six months not by the insolvency legislation but, first, by a rather bad summer last year. The firm makes ice cream products and the grim summer did not help to sell ice cream products. However, that was not all the story. The second difficulty was Walls's virtual monopoly on freezer cabinets, which makes it difficult for any other company to break into the market. That monopoly is currently the subject of a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry. The monopoly stopped us promoting the products of Pendletons, as it had become known. At that time, I became—on an unpaid basis, I hasten to add—the chairman of that company.

Thirdly, we were defeated by the tight margins that the supermarket chains can extract from manufacturers. Although we were able to supply notably the Co-op, we were in hot competition with people who had more resources than us. Those were the difficulties that we had once trading, but we also had difficulties in negotiating and

obtaining any useful assurance or decision about the future of the company from first the receivers, Robson Rhodes, and latterly, the liquidators, Arthur Andersen.

I will tell you how we did it, Mr. Deputy Speaker; it was not necessarily the recommended course of action. Early in the dispute the work force occupied the factory. They were taken to court and a writ was served on them to vacate the premises. They did so and then set up a picket line on the gate.

The only thing that we had going for us in all those negotiations was that Arthur Andersen & Co. knew that if we did not reach some accommodation a picket would immediately have been mounted on the gate. That is not necessarily the best way to deal with matters, but if a group of workers who feel that they can take over the company are reduced to that, inevitably they will take such action. It should not be like that. Let me explain what I think should happen.

For the benefit of the people who work for the company, whether they are managers or employees, and for the benefit of the economy, there should be a duty to try to achieve employee ownership or management ownership, or a combination of ownership, which may involve direct investment from entrepreneurs, before other options are considered.

I move on to my third example. After the experience with Pendletons, otherwise known at various times as Lyons Maid and Clarke Foods, I made an attempt, with two Conservative councillors, to do a rescue operation concerning a firm called J. De Roma. It was a short-lived attempt. After a couple of weeks, it drifted into sand. The first thing that happened was that, after a few weeks, the receiver sold off the blueprint for the product—a chill cabinet in which the National Blood Transfusion Service used to store blood—to a company in Warwickshire, so that there was no product left. All that that company had to do was to employ one of the engineers who knew the manufacturing process of the cabinets, and he bought the business. I think that that was grossly negligent on the part of the receiver. The whole business, complete with the work force and their skills, could have been sold if more time had been given. It may even have been bought by the work force. Yet all the receiver did was to sell off the blueprints, fairly cheaply. The purchasing company simply recruited one engineer and had a going concern.

There is much potential for legislation instructing receivers first to attempt to get something going on the basis of the existing business, or part of that business, involving the local management and employees. Perhaps a quarter of the 2,000 companies that go into receivership could be saved by such means. At the moment, I doubt that 1 per cent. are saved by those means. For the good of the economy, and of people who work in companies who find themselves in such a position, there is a strong case for an amendment to the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough and I tried to table a new clause to the Bill, which would have succeeded in putting that duty into the Bill. Having consulted the Clerks, I realise that the scope of the Bill is perhaps too narrow for that new clause to have been accepted. However, I hope that in the near future—even perhaps as a result of a conversion today—the Minister will seriously consider my arguments. I have good cause for believing that the economy as a whole—never mind those who work in firms that go into liquidation—could benefit from reorientation of the way in which receivers function.

4.37 pm

Mr. Bell: With the leave of the House, may I say that I am grateful for the opportunity to sum up some of the points that have been made for the Minister and to follow up on the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). My hon. Friend argued, from his own experience, the importance and significance of employee share ownership schemes and schemes of that nature, in which the worker in the place of work participates in addition to drawing a salary.

It has always been the policy of the Opposition to extend protection and participation for workers in their place of work. We thought years ago that that protection and participation would come through nationalisation, which was perceived to be the simplest route to common ownership. One takes over an industry and, once it belongs to the state, the workers obtain the protection and participation that they had sought for years. Tomorrow we shall sit down and privatise, or go through the final stages of, the privatisation of our coal mines. We shall see the consequences of 14 years of Conservative Government on nationalised industry and the fact that a new Labour Government will have to find new concepts of common ownership. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North for drawing the House's attention to that matter.

The speech by the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) was useful in that he had served on the Committee that discussed the previous Insolvency Bill. I should point out that Mr. Justice Harman's judgment was considered to be obiter dicta only before the court. The hon. Gentleman referred to the Committee proceedings of the House, but those have no status in law and a judge in a court of law could not rely on them.

Great play has been made of the question of an appeal to the House of Lords against a Court of Appeal judgment. I noticed that the Minister was careful to say "may" appeal because the Court of Appeal has refused leave of appeal to the House of Lords and it is a question whether the matter can be included in another motion elsewhere. It is not entirely clear that an appeal to the House of Lords is possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) referred to RSF Doncaster, which was helpful. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred to Leyland DAF. The case of Swan Hunter is dear to my heart, so I see the significance in pushing the Bill through quickly tonight. We have discussed the consequences of it not being retrospective. In the Paramount case alone, some £600,000 may fall on the receivers' shoulders if the law or its interpretation is not changed tonight. Other cases may be lined up, depending on the statute of limitations, whether it tolls and whether the facts are different in those cases. Nevertheless, because there will be a great deal of uncertainty throughout the profession of insolvency practitioners, we shall return to that matter in Committee.

Some of the points that have been made show that we need a proper overhaul of the Insolvency Act 1986 and this may be a first shot at that. Although we wish the Bill well, we shall not leave the subject of insolvency to lie on the table, as it has done for so long. Obviously, the Minister is

[Mr. Bell]

aware of his Department's consultation paper and the fact that the consultation process comes to an end on 31 March. At that time, we shall seek some rapid conclusions from his Department.

4.42 pm

Mr. Nell Hamilton: It would have been easy for Opposition Members to turn this into a general debate on the state of the economy as reflected in the problems of insolvent companies. I congratulate them on resisting the temptation to trivialise the issue so that we can concentrate on the serious points in the Bill.

Many points have been raised by the hon. Members for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) and for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), who is, at this moment, meeting people who have come to lobby Parliament about Swan Hunter, which is important to his constituency. Most of the points have concentrated on retrospection, with which we shall deal shortly in Committee. I hope that it will be for the convenience of the House if I deal with those points in that context rather than repeat myself.

Various points were made about phoenix companies. I appreciate the public concern about the phoenix problem but we must act in a way that reflects due process. It is far from being the case that all collapses involve a degree of moral turpitude on the part of company directors. That matter was dealt with in detail during the passage of what became the Insolvency Bill 1986, when the approach, which is often enjoined upon me, of seeking to prevent company directors from going back into business after their companies have collapsed was decisively rejected by the House. Such an approach would be a slur on the vast majority of company directors whose companies fail not for reasons of design on their part. Were we to prevent company directors from continuing in business because they had been involved in a company that had unfortunately failed through no fault of theirs, it would be not only a significant injustice towards those individuals but no good for the economy in general.

Nevertheless, some draconian powers are available to us under current company and insolvency legislation, which enables us to fasten on those who are guilty of misfeasance. Naturally, we must prove to the satisfaction of a court that they have acted in a way of which the law disapproves. Those matters are often difficult to prove and suspicions remain, which gives rise to the public's feeling of resentment that certain individuals can take advantage of what are regarded as loopholes in the law. I do not regard them as loopholes, although I hope that we shall always catch wrongdoers and punish them for their acts. We all know that, in the nature of things, it is impossible to do that in every case, hard as we try. We must ensure that the business environment precludes such activities. Where they take place none the less, we must ensure that we have the means of bringing them to book if possible. We must beware of throwing the baby out with the bath water. To get at one problem, we may create many others.

The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South asked about the meaning of adoption. I shall put my view on record so that he can read it in due course. If he then still has questions, I shall be pleased to try to deal with them. Adoption of a contract means that a person procures the performance of a contract. In effect, therefore, the person refrains from repudiating it. In such circumstances, the person can be said to adopt the contract. A contract may be adopted by words—"express" adoption—or by conduct —"implied" adoption. The conduct constituting the adoption may be payment of wages, for example. It is impossible to be exhaustive and I do not wish to go into the full ramifications of the meaning of a term that might fall to be decided by a court in an individual case. I hope that my statement will help the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough was rather hard on me and my Department in respect of the length of time that we have taken to deal with this difficulty, which became acute only with the Court of Appeal's decision a short time ago. It is not true to say that the situation was identified back in 1987. It was addressed by the High Court in February 1987 in the Specialised Mouldings case. The result of the court's consideration seemed to provide a practical solution, if there was a problem at all. The problem with which we are dealing today is that the Court of Appeal took a different view. Hence, we are seeing a development of the law, which is why we are dealing with the problems in the Bill today.

I hope that I have dealt with the points that will not arise again in Committee. I am grateful to hon. Members of all parties for facilitating the passage of the Bill. I almost forgot the point made by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North. The one person whom he did not congratulate on the insolvencies in his constituency was himself. I know how hard he and the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara), who is also present, have worked in the interests of their constituents, especially in the Pendletons case in which I was invited to participate. I am sorry that, in the event, it was not possible to save the jobs that they worked so hard to save.

The argument about special treatment for employee share ownership schemes is not wholly open and shut. Although it is not relevant for the purposes of this Bill, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough asked me to give serious consideration to the argument. He knows that I shall always consider seriously any points that are put forward in good faith and schemes that might save companies that would otherwise fail. Particularly as the Minister with responsibility for the north-west and as the representative of a constituency not far from that of the hon. Gentleman, I am as interested as he is in saving jobs in the region and in facilitating improvement of the local economy. Thus, I shall be very happy to consider any points that the hon. Gentleman cares to raise in another context. As he accepted, it would not be appropriate, in the context of the Bill, to go too far down that avenue.

I am grateful to hon. Members on all sides for facilitating the speedy passage of the Bill and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Conway.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee.

Clause 1

ADMINISTRATORS: PRIORITY OF LIABILITIES UNDER ADOPTED CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT

4.51 pm

Mr. Bell: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 26, leave our '15th March 1994' and insert '31st December 1986'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 2, in clause 2, page 3, line 16, leave out '15th March 1994' and insert '31st December 1986'.

No. 3, in clause 3, page 4, line 11, leave out '15th March 1994' and insert '31st December 1986'.

No. 4, in schedule 1, page 6, line 31, leave out '15th March 1994 and insert '31st December 1986'.

Mr. Bell: These are probing amendments. We wish to elicit from the Minister a further and more detailed response based upon the statement made by the President of the Board of Trade on 14 March, which set out his own concern, and the concerns set out today by the Minister. We have had some clarification of the Minister's thinking. My understanding of what he told the House is that there is no wish on the part of the Executive to overturn the decision of the Law Lords—a matter to which I have referred briefly. At present, there is no provision to allow an appeal against a decision of the Court of Appeal to be sent to the Law Lords.

It emerged from a short exchange with the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) during the Select Committee's transactions that there was some concern among Committee members as to the wording—which ended up being included in the Bill—of contracts of employment. The Minister—quite rightly, in his view—took me to task slightly on the question of whether the Government had known about this interpretation difficulty. In the analysis contained in "Halsbury's Laws of England" the interpretive note contains this clear statement:

"There is room for some legislative revision here."

The point is that it was clear to practitioners and to lawyers that there was something askance in that interpretation. The hon. Member for Tynemouth, with his knowledge of the specific subject, seemed to confirm that if there were a weakness that could lead to difficulties in a court of law, that fact would be sufficient to justify making the clause retrospective to 31 December 1986. We have shown the mischief of the law. It is not a question of interpretation of judgments from either the High Court or the Court of Appeal, which, in my view, delivered sound judgments on the facts before them. The misfortune arises in the terms of the law.

That was pointed out to the Government when they were looking at the decision in the case of Nicoll *v.* Cutts, concerning payment of workers by the administrative receiver. Section 44(1)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 was then proposed. The petitioners tried to persuade the Government not to go along that line as it was clearly a case of taking a cannon to shoot a mouse. It was not necessary to modify the entire law of the land on the basis of one judgment.

As to Mr. Justice Harman's interpretive decision concerning the meaning of the law, administrative receivers took the matter to him. For an analysis under section 35 of the Insolvency Act 1986, they went to court and asked for clarification. It is clear that at that time the law required clarification. It is clear that the intention of the legislation had not been realised. It was argued that, whatever may or may not have been the intention of the legislator, the wording in the Insolvency Act 1986 constituted no change in the existing law. Therefore, it was clear to the practitioners that the 1986 Act was supposed simply to embody what had already come about in the practice of the profession. Since the passage of the 1986 Act, we have seen the receivers' letter—approved by Mr. Justice Harman—to the work force simply washing their hands of the employment contract and not adopting it.

In an entirely non-partisan spirit, we say that the law contained something that needed to be rectified. We are simply trying to amend the law in the light of decisions by the High Court and of the Court of Appeal. Our view is that the defect lies at the heart of the 1986 Act and that there should therefore be retrospection. The power that makes the House of Commons sovereign is its ability to pass retrospective legislation. It would certainly be wrong to pass retrospective legislation of a political nature, but this is not a political matter. That being the case, I submit that the Government should accept the amendment.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I was moved to table the amendment in conjunction with the hon. Members for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) partly by something that I read in *The Independent* this morning and a consequential telephone call I made to the Confederation of British Industry. I was also prompted by a question that the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) put to the President of the Board of Trade following the right hon. Gentleman's statement last Monday. The relevant remarks may be found in column 618 of *Hansard*. The President referred to the clear problem that the Paramount Airways decision raised in relation to all the cases of the past seven years. The amendment would eliminate that problem by making it clear from the outset that the practice established in the Specialised Mouldings case was the intention of the law and that that was the practice that would be the test of any disputes that might subsequently arise.

As the situation stands at the moment, there is clear concern. Howard Davies of the Confederation of British Industry says that, in his view, accountancy firms could face claims of up to £1 billion, even allowing for the Bill going through all its stages in both Houses of Parliament within the next two days. That is a substantial figure for claims for which, as things stand, the legislation does not appear to provide a solution. It is not surprising that Mr. Davies says that amendments such as the one that we are proposing would deal with the problem in a fairly straightforward way.

I should like to make it clear that we are all gravely concerned about retrospective legislation. Other members of my party and I have often railed against Governments who have attempted such legislation. It is not something to be done lightly. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough said that this was a probing amendment, but I hope that the Minister realises that an important point is at issue here, and one that needs dealing with.

The difference between the Bill and contentious retrospective legislation is that this does not present us with serious practical problems. If the amendment were

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

incorporated, that would be as much as to say that the practice adopted by the professionals as a result of the Specialised Mouldings ruling has in effect been the state of the law since that case—in which case, all claims that might arise as a result of the Paramount Airways decision would fall, and no one would waste time making them.

5 pm

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough, who knows more about these matters than I do, has already said that the avenue of going to the House of Lords may not be open in this case, although it is being referred to as a possibility. Even if it is opened up, it may not solve the problem. It will leave great uncertainty lingering over the profession for many months to come.

The problem cannot be shrugged off. Although the Minister has been clearly told that we do not intend to push the amendment, I hope that he will recognise that the issue is a live one. I am reliably advised that it will also be raised in another place, probably by Lord Reay. Everyone dealing with the matter is looking for a clear statement.

One of the problems appears to be that the Paramount Airways ruling, relating as it did to what seemed an acceptable practice, has been deemed a sham: it is being ignored. Unless an administrator or receiver dismisses the work force and then re-employs them on new contracts within 14 days, he can be held liable for all previous contractual commitments, and 14 days is often far too short a time to make such a decision.

If the Court of Appeal ruling in the case of Paramount Airways is correct, that implies that there was something wrong with the law in the first place. An amendment such as this would effectively deal with that problem by admitting that the law was badly drafted, but that the intention and practice have been clear until the latest ruling. We should now be able to put that to rest. The House has now made it abundantly clear how it wants such matters to be conducted in future and how they should have been conducted in the past. Thereupon £1 billion in claims, and all the uncertainty and threats of liquidation that go with them, can be put to one side.

I do not envy the Minister his task. I know that any statement that he may make in response to a debate such as this cannot of itself resolve the issue. Nevertheless, I hope that he will recognise the fact that people want clear guidance.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It is true that the Court of Appeal, in the case of Paramount Airways, has refused leave to appeal to the House of Lords, but it is always possible for the House of Lords, of its own motion, to allow an appeal. I have no idea whether there will be an appeal in this case; it therefore remains possible that the House of Lords will take a view different from the Court of Appeal's. It would be wrong to speculate on the outcome, and I do not propose to do so.

I understand that these are serious issues, and I assure Opposition Members who have spoken that I appreciate their arguments. I have not yet had the chance to read the article in *The Independent* to which the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred, as I have been working all day and have had little chance to catch up with the news —but I shall certainly read it and give more thought to the arguments in it.

I have always been a strident critic of retrospective legislation. On more than one occasion, in fact, I have made common cause with the Liberal party in this respect, not least in Finance Bill Committees, where the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) may even have supported me once in opposing retrospective tax legislation—before I joined the Government, of course.

This argument has always interested me. As hon. Members have said, the point came up during questions following the statement by my right hon. Friend the President last Monday. The hon. Member for Gordon referred to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste). There is a distinction that can be drawn between retrospective legislation and the impact of decisions in the courts. My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet asked my right hon. Friend whether he agreed that one of the problems with judge-made law was that it is retrospective. Now, constitutional purists will say that judge-made law is not retrospective because judges are only declaring a position as it has always been, even though the question has not been tested before.

In a sense, that is what we are dealing with today. It is likely that, following the Specialised Mouldings case of seven years ago, matters remained open to argument. The fact is that that case was on application for directions from the courts, so it was not speculating on the legal position in a way that could give rise to a precedent on which practitioners could then rely. Consequently, if there has been any doubt in the minds of practitioners, it has been because the law has not been authoritatively declared before. That in turn is qualitatively different from changing the law to give it an effect different from the one it has always been held to have.

In this legislation we are asked—I invite the House—to change the law for the future from that which the judges have now declared it to be, subject to an appeal to the House of Lords. My right hon. Friend clearly said, in answer to a number of interrogators last Monday, that we were not seeking to change the law retrospectively.

To the best of my recollection, when the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) spoke on Monday, he implied that he would oppose the retrospective application of this Bill, because he raised the case of the Paramount workers themselves. Although he did not explicitly state why he had done so, I took his meaning to be that he did not want us to change the law retrospectively in such a way as to disadvantage those who might otherwise have claims. I may have misunderstood him; perhaps this is another ambiguity which has been introduced into our proceedings and which needs to be resolved. Perhaps the hon. Member for Middlesbrough can resolve it.

We must recognise the fact that if we change the law with retrospective effect, we will change the rights and obligations of certain individuals. Some will benefit, others will be disadvantaged. It is a difficult balance to strike. My own prejudice is against retrospection in legislation on constitutional grounds, which, I am sure, will appeal to the hon. Member for Gordon.

In general, I do not think it would be right retrospectively to affect entitlements acquired before 15 March, the day after the President's statement last week, so each case will have to be considered by receivers on the facts. That is not to say that I do not recognise the genuine fears expressed by Opposition Members in respect of claims that might arise for closures during the period 1986 to 1994. It is obvious that there must be some risk of

claims, although it is difficult to say how many, and for how much. But we must recognise that many businesses were saved, with the result that employees continued with re-emerging businesses. It is unlikely that claims will arise from those cases, although there are some spectacular claims in this morning's newspapers, as the hon. Member for Gordon said. Those cases will have to be dealt with on the facts, and it would be wrong of me to speculate about them.

One always has to walk a tightrope in such cases. One appreciates that those who might be disadvantaged as a result of changing the law with retrospective effect will be just as loud in their protestations as those inviting us to make the retrospective changes. One cannot decide what is the right thing to do simply by counting how much money is involved on each side and favouring those who have the greater claim. No one would accept that that would be a sensible way to proceed. All I can do this afternoon is to seek refuge in the forceful argument that every time we introduce retrospective legislation, and therefore disturb the relationship that the courts have declared exists between parties, we make it easier the next time that we are invited or tempted to introduce it. But we should do it sparingly.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) referred to the Burmah Oil case. I well remember it from my constitutional law lectures many years ago. It resulted in the War Damage Act 1965. To its shame, the Conservative party, which was then in opposition, did not vote against or oppose the Act, although some hon. Members—among whom I would have been counted had I been here in those days—voted against the Bill, which was a pernicious measure. It disturbed the rights of individuals as declared, not by the Court of Appeal, but by the House of Lords, so there was no prospect of appeal. I imagine that the Act was passed principally at the behest of the Treasury, which otherwise would have had substantial claims laid at its door.

Although I am a great believer in constraining public expenditure, such constraint is not tolerable if it causes injustice to individuals, particularly if that injustice arises in circumstances that could not be foreseen.

The Burmah Oil case is not an inspiring example to justify retrospective legislation. I recognise that there is an argument for retrospection. I do not claim that there is is an open-and-shut or a black-and-white case. Ultimately, we should decide on the basis of the balance of advantage. So far, I am not persuaded that the arguments are overwhelming. It is always easy, on the basis of speculative articles in newspapers, to conjure demons that are not there or to exaggerate their importance.

Inevitably, as no one can be sure what the position is, we are dealing with speculative matters. If it appears that there is a serious problem, in this case or any other, the Government—being flexible and open to reasoned argument, as I am in particular—are prepared to consider it. I am not yet persuaded that there is a case to answer, but I shall always listen to those who feel that I am wrong.

As the hon. Member for Gordon said, the matter may be discussed again in another place. I have not yet been translated to that place, so I shall not participate in that debate. I am grateful for the presence of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, although it is intimidating to have noticed him only at this stage. I am sure that all hon. Members present would like to congratulate him on the celebration of his birthday today.

I hope that I have said enough to convince hon. Members that it would not be right at this moment to apply the Bill's provision retrospectively because we could not be certain who might benefit and who might be disadvantaged. Unless we could decide that with some precision, it would not be correct for us to apply the legislation retrospectively.

5.15pm

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the Minister for giving us a greater in-depth insight into the thinking of the Ministry than we had during the Second Reading debate. That is understandable because he knew that the Bill would be going into Committee.

I am grateful to him for reminding me of the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 14 March, in column 616 of *Hansard*. He was putting a specific question to the President of the Board of Trade on the legal rights of Paramount Airways employees, who were the subject of the Court of Appeal decision. He sought an assurance that others who had benefited from receivership would not see those benefits diminish. That clarifies my hon. Friend's position. We tabled a probing amendment to elicit a response from the Minister, which we have had.

In his comments on Burmah Oil, the Minister showed his free-market thinking. As he and I know, since we were probably studying at the same time, in 1964 the Government had a majority of four. Notwithstanding that majority, the House reversed the Law Lords decision on Burmah Oil. That decision shows that the House felt that a clear public interest was involved, but things have moved on since then.

The Minister told us—this is my interpretation—that the Court of Appeal decision is not a retrospective judgment, but one that is effective from the time that it was made. It is not retrospective or retroactive. Therefore, the size of claims that are being touted—I say that in the friendliest sense—in today's newspapers are not likely to occur. In any event, the decision in each case will depend on the facts of that case and on the statute of limitations' tolling. Dean Inge said many years ago:

"I have had a great many problems, most of which never happened".

With that in mind, I shall not move amendments Nos. 2, 3 and 4 and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

ADMINISTRATORS: PRIORITY OF LIABILITIES UNDER ADOPTED CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Gunnell: I have a question on clause 1(6), which inserts new subsections in section 19 of the 1986 Act. Subsection 7(b) defines a qualifying liability as

"in respect of services rendered wholly or partly after the adoption of the contract."

Why are the words "or partly" included? What would be the effect of that section if those words were not present? New subsection (8) relates to qualifying liability. Clause 2 inserts subsection (2B) into section 44 of the Act and clause 3 amends section 57 of the Act by inserting a new subsection (2B). There seem to be differences in the wording used in lines 24 and 35 and in the new subsection

[Mr. Gunnell]

(2B). Does the Minister have any explanation for the differences, given that all the clauses are designed to do the same thing?

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman lost me at the end of his remarks. Could he repeat his final point?

Mr. Gunnell: Compare page 2, line 8 of the Bill with line 30 in clause 2(2). The wording is different. Technical practitioners want to know whether there is any significance in the difference in wording in respect of the qualifying liability and its extent. There is a difference, which technicians do not quite understand. I thought that the Minister might be able to put them right.

Mr. Hamilton: I think that it is not only the technicians who do not understand. I am afraid that I am not able, off the top of my head, to answer the hon. Gentleman's latter point, although there does not appear to be a discrepancy in the meaning of the words in clause 1(8),

"so much of any qualifying liability"

and the words in clause 2 (2),

"to the extent of any qualifying liability".

I shall certainly take advice from my lawyers and I will write to the hon. Gentleman to ensure that the matter is put beyond doubt.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about subsection (6)(b), and the words

"in respect of services rendered wholly or partly after the adoption of the contract."

I do not think that there is any ambiguity or difficulty in that wording. The new section 19(7) of the amended Act defines a qualifying liability as

"a liability to pay . . . wages or salary",

or pension contribution, in respect of services rendered by the employee, whether

"wholly or partly after the adoption of the contract."

Accordingly, any liabilities arising under a contract of employment that do not fall within that description will rank as unsecured claims against the company. The provision is included simply for purposes of completeness: part performance of a contract in itself gives rise to a liability, and the drafting of the legislation must reflect that.

Employees may well be employed for only part of a period of receivership, rather than the whole period. The wording would aptly cover those circumstances as well.

I hope that I have been able to answer the hon. Gentleman's questions. If not—ah, I have been handed a piece of paper: the seventh cavalry has arrived. I am told that there is no difference in substance between the new section 19(8) and the new section 44(2B), although they are cast in slightly different terms for technical reasons. I shall ask what those technical reasons are, and whether there is any justification for them; and I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman is informed of the result of my inquiries.

Mr. Gunnell: I thank the Minister. I shall ensure that the technicians read his answer; if they are not satisfied, I shall write to him.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 1

LIABILITY OF CONTRACTS

'(1) Section 37 of the Insolvency Act 1986 (personal liability of receiver or manager appointed under powers contained in an instrument for certain contracts) shall be amended as provided by sub-sections (2) and (3) below.

(2) In sub-section (1)(a) (liability for contracts of employment adopted by him in performance of his functions) after "provides) and" there shall be inserted ", to the extent of any qualifying liability,".

(3) After sub-section (2) there shall be inserted—

"(2A) for the purposes of sub-section (1)(a), a liability under a contract of employment is a qualifying liability if—

(a) it is a liability to pay a sum by way of wages or salary or contribution to an occupational pension scheme,

(b) it is incurred while the receiver or manager is in office, and

(c) it is in respect of services rendered wholly or partly after the adoption of the contract.

(2B) Where a sum is payable in respect of a liability which is a qualifying liability for the purposes of sub-section (1)(a) is payable in respect of services rendered partly before and partly after the adoption of the contract, liability under sub-section (1)(a) shall only extend to so much of the sum as is payable in respect of services rendered after the adoption of the contract.

(2C) For the purposes of sub-section (2A) and (2B)—

(a) Wages or salary payable in respect of the period of holiday or absence from work through sickness or other good cause are deemed to be wages or (as the case may be) salary in respect of services rendered in that period, and

(b) A sum payable in lieu of holidays is deemed to be wages (or as the case may be) salary in respect of services rendered in the period by reference to which the holiday entitlement arose.

(2D) In sub-section (2C)(a), the reference to wages or salary payable in respect of a period of holiday includes any sums which, if they had been paid, would have been treated for the purposes of the enactments relating to social security as earnings in respect of that period.".

(4) This section shall have effect in relation to contracts of employment adopted on or after the 15th March 1994.'—*[Mr. Malcolm Bruce.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause is couched in exactly the terms of the Bill and has a simple but important purpose—to extend the terms of the Bill to receiverships and the terms of the Law of Property Act 1925. I would not describe this as a probing amendment and I hope that the Minister will accept it, or at least accept that it deals with an omission which can and should be readily dealt with.

As I understand it, the Government's current thinking is that property receiverships of this kind do not require the legislation. However, I have been told in the past few days that they do require it, and that if they are excluded the problems applying to general receiverships and administrations will also apply to them. That will leave not just a gap, but a gap to which attention has been specifically drawn.

We are talking of receiverships in which the issue in question is a single piece of property. I suppose that it might be argued that a single piece of property is not a business, but it does not take much reflection for hon. Members to recognise that if that single piece of property is a hotel, a block of flats or an office block, its subsequent valuation in any sale will depend on its continuing to function as such a building. That continued function will require the retention of staff. Selling a hotel that is closed,

vacant and empty of staff will clearly lower its valuation; the same applies to an office block which requires servicing and management, a block of flats, or similar properties.

This morning, I trawled around a number of receiverships dealing in property. I was told that all respondents claimed to have at least two cases currently on their books which would fall foul of the law if the new clause was not accepted. The Paramount ruling would apply and the net effect would be that what is currently operated as a receivership to rescue not just a building, but a building to which a business is attached, could fail. That would lead to an accelerated liquidation, and the loss of jobs, assets and a continuing business.

On Second Reading, I told the Minister that I appreciated the speed with which the Government had acted and we accept that, as a consequence, it has not been possible to consult as widely as might otherwise have been possible. I am assured that the new clause is sought by specialist practitioners—including the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, which is extremely concerned about the omission of such a measure, which it assumed was simply a technical oversight caused by the pressure to get the Bill through.

The new clause has been carefully drafted to accord with the Bill's current form, and I hope that it is therefore technically acceptable. Its acceptance would resolve the current problem. If the Minister does not wish to accept it, however, I hope that he will not slam the door, but will recognise the genuine lacuna which exists and could widen. I am led to believe that the matter will be raised in another place; I hope that that is so.

I ask the Minister to recognise that the new clause has been tabled in good faith—not by me as an expert, but on behalf of people who know more about the matter, and who have explained clearly to me that the consequences of its omission could be serious for a significant number of active current receiverships. If the Minister cannot accept the new clause, I hope that he will at least indicate his willingness to examine it again. Perhaps the Government will consider retabling it in their own terms.

I do not wish to detain the Committee any longer. This is a simple, direct matter: the Bill contains an omission that can be readily remedied and the new clause will achieve that.

Mr. Bell: I support what has been said by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). The Minister likes flexibility. Here we are dealing with property—hotels, for instance—lumps of bricks and mortar, but nevertheless important. Work forces may be involved, or may be required to be involved; they may find themselves in the same situation as others, with contracts of employment that may or may not be adopted.

I shall listen with interest to what the Minister has to say.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) recognised, the Bill was introduced quickly to remove any impediment to the rescue of businesses by administrative receivers and administrators. There is a difference between the capacities of such people and those of receivers or managers, to whom section 37 of the 1986 Act applies.

An administrative receiver is a receiver or manager of the whole, or substantially the whole, of a company's property, appointed by the holder of a charge which, as created, was a floating charge. A receiver or manager includes receiverships over part of the assets: that can include those appointed under the Law of Property Act 1925, to which the hon. Member for Gordon referred. But it is not simply a question of Law of Property Act receiverships; it goes much wider. Law of Property Act receiverships can involve the giving of a power to manage in the mortgage document, but will not necessarily control all the assets of a company. That situation is substantially different from that which is the subject of the Bill.

The Committee ought to be aware of a number of important distinctions. In particular, a receiver or manager does not have to be a licensed insolvency practitioner or to have any qualifications, so receivers and managers do not have the same powers and duties as administrative receivers. Extending the wide range of circumstances in which receivers or managers can be appointed needs careful consideration. Before opening a Pandora's box, we ought to be fully aware of the consequences of such a significant change.

5.30 pm

I shall be happy to consider the arguments for the provision that the hon. Member for Gordon advocates, but that would be better done in a wider review of the law relating to company rescues. The Bill is not the appropriate place to consider the wider change that the hon. Gentleman proposes. His proposal goes far beyond the Bill's narrow purpose. It would be better to consider the arguments for such a change in a more reflective mood than the time available today makes possible. If the hon. Members for Gordon and for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), and any other hon. Member who feels that such a change would improve the Bill, would like to pursue the matter with me, I shall be happy to discuss the issues. However, in the context of the Bill, I am not disposed to accept a change of which the ramifications may be far greater than hon. Members suspect.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I thank the Minister for his constructive reply. When legislation of a specialised nature is rushed through the House, hon. Members are somewhat dependent on outside advice. I appreciate the Minister's concern that the new clause could have wider ramifications, but his reply indicated that he acknowledges the genuine worry among surveyors that they have in effect been left exposed by the Bill. The Minister's perhaps justifiable non-acceptance of the new clause may create for surveyors a problem that requires urgent if not immediate attention.

I did not expect the Minister to accept the new clause. In fact, it was indicated that the Government would resist it. I am glad, however, that the Minister will consider the matter further. We are dealing with legislation that is moving fast and counter arguments may be presented to the Government, if not to the Minister, within 24 hours. It may be possible to consider the point further in another place. I am not qualified to take issue with the Minister's explanation—he probably hoped that I would say that—but I am concerned that the exclusion from this legislation of a significant group of people could leave them severely exposed.

I am grateful for the Minister's assurance that he will consider the matter further, if not in the context of the Bill

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

then as part of a wider review. I hope that the Government will keep an open mind so long as the Bill is on the Table in either House. To that extent, I will not press the matter.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedules 1 and 2 agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

5.34 pm

Mr. Bell: It is of the utmost importance that there be certainty in the law in relation to employers, employees, receivers and administrative receivers. In the public interest, we co-operated fully with the Government, with a view to rectifying what may have been a doubtful and uncertain position. I am grateful to the Minister for his co-operation and for the full explanations of matters raised on Second Reading and in Committee. We have no reason to detain the House further.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

5.35 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is required to ensure that the jurisdiction of British Transport police constables appointed under section 53 of the British Transport Commission Act 1949 is not inadvertently reduced in England and Wales from 1 April by virtue of the Railways Act 1993.

I am grateful to a number of individuals and organisations—among them, Lord Harris of Greenwich, my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), the chief constable of the British Transport police and the British Transport Police Federation—for drawing the issue to the Government's attention. I am also grateful to the police committee for providing helpful advice in recent weeks, and to the Opposition for facilitating thus far the passage of the Bill, which I hope will reach the statute book as quickly as possible.

The Government are committed to the British Transport police. We fully acknowledge their vital work in policing the rail network and ensuring the safety of the travelling public. The House will be particularly aware of the BTP's major role in anti-terrorist activities.

In the restructured railway regime, the BTP will continue, as a unified public force, to police Britain's rail network, performing the same range of duties as now—including providing services to the London underground and the docklands light railway. The core police services that the BTP provides will be laid down by the police committee. Those are the services undertaken by BTP so as to maintain law and order. They include services relating to safety; anti-terrorism; the prevention and detection of crime; keeping the peace; bringing offenders to justice; and rendering support to victims of crime. Railtrack and all licensed train, station and light maintenance depot operators will be obliged by the terms of their licences to use and to pay for core police services provided by the BTP.

The Bill is an indication of our commitment. We are concerned that there should be no reduction in British Transport police jurisdiction. The BTP's current powers in policing the railway should not be circumscribed, preventing it from continuing to be an effective public police force.

The Government are introducing the Bill because we recognise that the effect of the Railways Act 1993 on statutory provisions establishing the jurisdiction of BTP constables is inadvertently to reduce that jurisdiction from 1 April. Under section 53 of the British Transport Commission Act 1949 and the Railways Act 1993—in so far as they apply to England and Wales—the BTP will have jurisdiction in, on and in the vicinity of the premises of British Rail, Railtrack and certain other railway operators, but will have jurisdiction to act elsewhere only in matters connected with or affecting the board and not in matters connected with or affecting Railtrack and other operators.

The defect does not arise in Scotland, which, since 1980, has had different provisions that are apposite to Scotland, where there is a different legal system. The Bill remedies the defect for England and Wales. It will enable

the British Transport police to act elsewhere than in the vicinity of railway premises in matters connected with or affecting Railtrack and other operators that are police service users to the full extent of the agreements made between them and the board. In addition, it enables the British Transport police to act in, on and in the vicinity of premises of any subsidiary of the board, and elsewhere in matters connected with or affecting any of the subsidiaries.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Just for clarity and perhaps to truncate this part of the discussion, will the Minister spell out the principal rail operators that will not be under a statutory requirement to be licensed users of British Transport police services?

Mr. Freeman: The principal and indeed only example that I can give—if there are others, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman—will be the preserved railways. I refer to those running steam trains wholly outwith the provision of a public service to passengers—in other words, running only on their own tracks and run by their own members for the benefit of those members. If a preserved railway wishes to offer a public service, it must be licensed. I hope that that example gives the hon. Gentleman the flavour.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful for the flavour, but now let us get to the taste. By way of clarification, will the Minister assure me that there will be a statutory obligation on, for example, the Heathrow Express and European passenger services to enter into agreements and licensing that will involve the use of the British Transport police?

Mr. Freeman: The Heathrow Express will require a licence to run—I am fairly certain, but will check during the course of the debate—on existing track between Paddington and the point where there is a departure from the main railway lines. The hon. Gentleman asked about European services. I can give the hon. Gentleman the categorical assurance that the writ of the British Transport police will run for services from Waterloo and, in due course, other railway stations, down to the channel tunnel. There is no question of any ambiguity about the powers of the British Transport police in that regard.

The Bill thus ensures that the existing jurisdiction of the British Transport police will extend to all police services users—to all those who are party to a transport police services agreement with the British Railways Board. I have already made it clear that all licence holders in the restructured railway will be required by their licences at all times to be a party to an agreement to use and pay for the services of the British Transport police. The general authority to the regulator will ensure that the regulator may not issue a licence without such a condition. A licence will provide that the police services agreement must be approved by the Secretary of State, and the services to be provided under the agreement are those specified as "core police services" by the police committee.

I can assure the House that a crucial factor in the Secretary of State's decision to approve an agreement for the provision of police services will be to ensure consistency in agreements. In particular, he will seek to ensure that provisions in the agreement that might affect the jurisdiction of constables are consistent so that British Transport police constables can have a clear and unambiguous understanding of their jurisdiction. Moreover, the police committee will ensure that the core police services are such as to ensure law and order on the railway.

The employer of the British Transport police, which is and will continue to be the British Railways Board until there is a change in the law, will be fully responsible for funding the British Transport police and will be responsible for collecting charges from operators. Operators will therefore pay policing charges to the employer of the British Transport police, not to the BTP itself. I can assure the House that there is no question that any failure of an operator to pay the employer would affect the ability of the British Transport police to police the railway.

Hon. Members will realise that, despite the simplicity of what the Bill sets out to achieve, it is a detailed measure that reflects the complicated and much-amended status of the legislation.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I have listened carefully to what the Minister has said, including his remark that the Bill is a complicated and detailed measure. Will he tell us why, if that is the case, it is necessary and appropriate for the Government to get the measure through the House in 24 hours—later today? Why could not the proceedings at least have been split up to allow the Committee stage to be taken another day? I recognise the urgency of the matter, but it is a sham and a disgrace to Parliament that the Bill is being railroaded through in one afternoon. That is totally unacceptable.

Mr. Freeman: The handling of parliamentary business is not a matter for me. The only comment that I would make is that there is universal agreement that we should seek to amend the law by the end of the month. The timetabling of the Bill and its various stages must be a matter for the business managers and representatives of the various parties involved.

Clause 1, in its application to England and Wales, amends section 53 of the British Transport Commission Act 1949 with respect to the jurisdiction of the British Transport police. It extends their jurisdiction to enable them to act elsewhere than in, on and in the vicinity of premises of the board or a police services user in matters connected with or affecting a police services user. In addition, it enables them to act in, on and in the vicinity of premises of any subsidiary—whether wholly owned or not —of the board, and in matters connected with or affecting such subsidiaries.

Clause 2 and the schedule specify the citation and commencement of the Act, the enactments that it repeals and its extent. It is intended that, when passed, the Bill will come into force on 1 April 1994 to ensure that the jurisdiction is maintained when Railtrack takes over from British Rail the ownership and management of the network.

I have written on the above lines today to the police committee. Following a meeting with it this morning, Sir Bob Reid has replied in the following terms on its behalf:

"Thank you for your letter of 21 March to David Rayner"—the chairman of the police committee—

"about the Transport Police 'Jurisdiction' Bill, which is most helpful and welcomed by the Police Committee.

We shall now be putting in place work, in the light of your letter, to define model agreements for police services which are acceptable to the Chief Constable and the Police Committee. Any

[Mr. Freeman]

substantial modification which may arise to such model agreements will need to be evaluated and endorsed by the Police Committee as they arise."

The Bill restores the powers of jurisdiction of the BTP inadvertently affected by the Railways Act 1993. I commend it to the House.

5.47 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I welcome the Bill; as we suggested it to the Government, it would be rather churlish of me not to welcome it. As the Minister has explained, as a result of slovenly errors on the part of the Government, the jurisdiction of the British Transport police was reduced by the Railways Act 1993. Apparently, the Government have become so committed to deregulation that they now even do it by accident.

Nothing could better illustrate the importance that the Government attach to the need to tackle crime than their error in reducing the jurisdiction of the British Transport police and their apparent unwillingness subsequently to do anything urgently to put the matter right. There was a possibility therefore that, from 1 April, the staff of the British Transport police would not be able to investigate crimes or arrest people elsewhere than on, or immediately adjacent to, the property of Railtrack or any privatised railway company. That was clearly bad from the point of view of combating crime, and particularly bad from the point of view of continuing the fight against terrorism.

British Transport police is currently responsible for policing the whole railway system. It is vital that it stays that way, particularly because of terrorist threats. We either have a fully comprehensive system—as we have now—or it is broken up, loses its effectiveness and makes passengers and staff vulnerable. Last year, British Transport police received more than 1,130 bomb threats on British Rail and London Underground. It vetted them carefully and advised the closure of stations on just 33 occasions. Of those 33, only nine turned out to be bombs; all were dealt with successfully. No one was killed and no one was injured. There were no bombs involved in the 1,100 instances where the BTP exercised their judgment and advised that stations did not need to be closed. I am sure that all would agree that that was a remarkable achievement—a credit to the BTP, to the effectiveness of their communications and assessment system and to the judgment exercised daily by their senior officers. That judgment is based on confidence that they run a watertight system and that there are no gaps in their information. That is a major reason why there must be no railway organisation not covered by the BTP and no curtailment of their jurisdiction.

If anything goes wrong with the present arrangements, two things could happen. First, some bomb threats might not be dealt with properly or promptly. As a result, people might be killed or injured. In that event, the terrorists would have succeeded. Alternatively, because those who had to exercise their judgment on the bomb threats no longer had confidence in their system, BTP could order far more station closures. Again, the terrorists would have succeeded. The public will be protected only if there are proper and comprehensive arrangements that are properly regulated.

Given the Opposition's concern for the safety of passengers and their property, I did not believe it right to leave the BTP for months after 1 April bereft of their proper powers, which they continued to operate. I suggested to the Government that they should introduce a one-clause Bill to put things right, and that they agreed to do. It almost goes without saying that the Bill that they introduced has not one clause but two and that it does not put things right. The Bill covers only England and Wales, presumably because the Government are satisfied that the law in Scotland is adequate. If that is so, surely it would be logical to apply that law in England and Wales. That would be simple and sensible—so the Government have done something else.

The Government propose wording that introduces new uncertainties that do not apply in Scotland and should not apply in England and Wales in future. Another fine mess the Government have got themselves into. The Bill provides that a constable will be able to investigate or arrest on the premises or

"on and in the vicinity"

of privatised railway premises, or "elsewhere", providing that the agreement between the owner of the premises and the BTP permits the constable to do so.

If privatisation proceeds as the Government claim, there could be more than 100 private owners of parts of the railway system. Each owner could have a different contract with the BTP. If that happens, BTP constables will need to carry a backpack of contract documents with them to ensure that what they are doing is covered by the appropriate agreement. If all the details are checked against the documents that the constable has with him, he will then presumably shout to the suspect, "You are nicked." Apparently the Government think that the suspect will be standing by waiting for the constable to finish his adjudication. That is preposterous.

In their letter to the police committee of the BTP—this has now been made clear in the Chamber—the Government have said that they will assuage the BTP's concern. Obviously there was concern, which is why the Minister had to write. There was also concern in British Rail. The Government have said that they will check on all the agreements to ensure that they all say the same thing. If that is to happen, why have they put such a ludicrous requirement into the Bill? If all the agreements are the same, there is no need to confine the authority or the jurisdiction of the police to the terms of each individual agreement. At present, however, the Bill sets out that requirement. The Government could grant a general power or dispensation. That is what they have done in Scotland. Apparently that approach works properly in Scotland, and we believe that it should apply here.

In the Minister's letter to the police committee, he seeks to quote three precedents. The only trouble is that they are not proper precedents. None of them refers to agreements that might be reached between the police and a private owner, with the private owner in the position of being able to decide what should be set out in the agreement.

Two of the agreements to which the Minister refers in his letter are with publicly owned bodies, so they would be reasonably under control. The other example is subject to agreement by the police in the first place regarding the terms of the contract. In other words, these examples should carry no weight in our discussions. We are not impressed by the Government's effort to cover up yet another fumble in the process of privatising the railways. There are some who claim effortless superiority; the Government seem to go in for effortless incompetence.

We would like the Government to accept in Committee this evening that the law in England and Wales should be brought in line with the law in Scotland. The detail of the relevant amendment that we have tabled may not be satisfactory. I am only too aware of that because I drafted it myself. I know that my drafting is usually just about as inadequate as that prepared for the Minister. It is quite possible that the drafting is wrong in detail, but I am sure that it is right in principle. It cannot be right to have a different law in Scotland—a wider and more effective law—that is not constrained by private agreements.

I remind the Minister of what the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, said in Committee when we were considering what became the Railways Act 1993. He said:

"Transport Police travel all over the country and that is why there is no territorial arrangement".— [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 18 March 1993; c. 878.]

We know, of course, that other forces have those arrangements. We do not want a territorial arrangement for the BTP. We want all parts of the BTP to have the same powers throughout the country as they have at present in Scotland. The Minister must accept that in Scotland the BTP are not constrained by the contents of any agreement that they may have to reach with any private owners. If that is good enough for Scotland, it should be good enough for England and Wales.

The Bill is before us because we suggested that change should be made as there was a danger that the powers of the BTP would not be sufficient from 1 April. In the spirit in which we have proposed that the law should be changed—we have not obstructed the Bill's passage, and we do not intend to do so this evening—the Minister owes it to us to ensure that our arguments are accepted. If he cannot accept them and agree to changes this evening, he should give an undertaking that the appropriate amendment will be made in another place.

5.58 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for not being in my place at the start of the debate. I had not anticipated as accurately as some hon. Members that the preceding debate would end rather quickly.

Like the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), I welcome the Bill in principle but regret that it is necessary. Throughout the passage of what is now the Railways Act 1993, several of us objected repeatedly to the indecent haste with which some important measures were being put together.

I well recall one morning in Committee when the Government turned up with a raft of amendments that had been tabled at the last possible moment. After the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) had advanced his arguments against them, they had to be withdrawn. The proceedings for the day were then scratched. I referred to that during the final stages of our consideration of the Bill. I meant to say that we were proceeding with the Government's amendments while the ink upon them was scarcely dry. Unfortunately, I said that the ink was scarcely wet. It was said by someone on the Bench behind mine that I had accidentally coined a new phrase but that in all the circumstances it was probably more accurate than the old one.

I am glad that the Government have recognised the deficiency of the legislation as we left it at the end of last year. Whatever arguments might be put to the contrary, the jurisdiction of the British Transport police was distinctly undermined in that they would be exceeding their jurisdiction if they attempted to stray beyond British Rail property when conducting their inquiries or trying to apprehend a suspect. One can imagine the public outcry if, after a mugging, theft or attempted rape, the British Transport police, in hot pursuit of a suspect, had to give up when the suspect leapt over a perimeter fence. The sorts of incidents that might arise during mass travel to football matches leave one very worried indeed.

I welcome the fact that the Government have attempted to address the problem, but, like Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, I voice some concerns about the Bill. I, too, am unable to understand why England and Wales are to have a regime that is different from that in Scotland. If the situation in Scotland is deemed to be adequate, that would seem an ideal model for England and Wales.

I am slightly concerned that commercial interests might be involved. After the railway network has been broken up and privatisation has smashed it into many different pieces, if different elements of the railway negotiate their own different agreements, there could be a real mess. It is essential that one form of jurisdiction should apply across the whole railway network. That is the crucial aim of the Bill, regardless of how it is attained.

I regret that I missed an earlier exchange between the Minister and the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), when I think the question of exemptions from the licensing requirements of the Railways Act 1993 were dealt with. It is essential that the question of exemptions be dealt with. If the elements of the railways that are exempt from holding a licence were also to be exempt from a police services agreement, different regulations would apply to different parts of the railways. I also seek clarification about railway maintenance depots, leasing depots and freight depots.

Nowhere does the Bill mention people who are approaching the vicinity of the railways. We have conducted the argument only in terms of people leaving the vicinity. What about people who are approaching the railways with crime in mind? This matter must be addressed. On an everyday level, a train driver may come on duty having drunk excessive amounts of alcohol. If that were known about, the transport police must be able to enter the depot from which the driver is to start his work and deal with the situation in a preventative way rather than waiting until he reached the main network.

There are problems with this legislation, but I will not pursue the specifics any further tonight. The objective should be a universal system of jurisdiction throughout the railways by whatever means that that can be brought about. There should be no question of different commercial operations having different regulations with no one being clearly accountable for the whole.

6.4 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): In case I omit to make my position clear, I state first that I fully support the passing of the Bill. It is desperately needed by the British Transport police if they are to continue their much-valued

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

and brave work in promoting and protecting the best interests of the travelling public. I recognise that this legislation needs to reach the statute book before 1 April.

I am extremely angry about the way in which this matter has been conducted by the Government and the way in which other people have acquiesced in procedures which I believe make a sham of parliamentary democracy. I am disappointed to have to speak in such terms, but I think that it needs to be said. Even though not many Members of Parliament are present, it needs to be made clear that the manner in which this important—I think the Minister referred to it as detailed—and complicated legislation is being dealt with is a total negation of proper scrutiny and parliamentary democracy.

Of course, this is not the most important Bill ever to pass through the House but it is a measure which requires proper scrutiny. Because of their incompetence, the Government are trying to get through all stages of the Bill in one parliamentary day. That is almost unprecedented; it happens when people invade our shores and when the integrity of the United Kingdom is put at risk. Normally, one would expect that parliamentarians and other interested parties would have a reasonable opportunity to examine legislation and to prepare appropriate amendments in a considered manner, but I and other Members have been denied that opportunity in this case.

I will explain why I think that the proceedings today are a charade. Since the last general election, the Minister for Public Transport and others on the Treasury Bench have been cautioned and counselled repeatedly about the need to safeguard the interests of the British Transport police. I can bear witness to that. On the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Act, I bored my colleagues almost silly going on about the need for the Minister to recognise their interests.

The Minister then issued a document entitled "The Future Status of the British Transport Police" which was referred to on the Floor of the House on a number of occasions and in various Committees of the House. Hon. Members have raised a plethora of questions and early-day motions urging the Government to be mindful of the need for precision in legislation which will avoid putting in jeopardy the powers and interests of the British Transport police. But we have seen a combination of arrogance and incompetence from Ministers who, on every occasion, have said to hon. Members, "Don't worry, it is all on board". They have not said that just to hon. Members; they have said it also to the chief constable and the British Transport Police Federation.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will at least concede that as long ago as September 1993 in correspondence with the British Transport Police Federation he acknowledged that there was a flaw in the legislation. So why is this legislation being railroaded through Parliament at the eleventh hour? There have been plenty of opportunities for the matter to come before Parliament. As recently as last week in another place it was conceded by the right hon. Earl Ferrers, Minister of State, Home Office, that legislation was needed in this area, but even then the Government did not come to the House of Commons and publish the Bill. An extra day would have given hon. Members the opportunity for greater scrutiny, consideration and understanding of the legislation, as well as the opportunity to consult interested parties. It would also have allowed other parties, such as the chief constable and the British Transport Police Federation, to make representations.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) has joined us. Unfortunately, he was unable to be here for the Minister's opening speech. That is a pity.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): I spoke to my hon. Friend the Minister before the debate and explained that I had to take the receivers of Swan Hunter to see a Minister most urgently about the future of that company. I am sure that the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) will appreciate the extremely important nature of that constituency problem.

Mr. Mackinlay: That is why I said that I was pleased to see the hon. Member for Tynemouth. It is good that he has arrived. No doubt he will give us the benefit of his views and information. I understand that he is the advisor to the British Transport Police Federation which is anxious that its views should be heard in this debate.

I am a friend of the British Transport Police Federation. It should be stated on the Floor of the House that yesterday, on my own initiative, I faxed a copy of the Bill to the chairman of the federation who, prior to that, had not seen it. I blame the Government for that. How can it be right that the representative body in the police has not been allowed to see the Bill officially until today if, indeed, it has received a copy now? As of yesterday afternoon, that body had not received a copy of the Bill. It received a copy only when I sent one, on my own initiative, via my fax at home. That is an outrage and an insult to that representative body.

The Minister had the audacity to thank various parties, including the hon. Member for Tynemouth, for drawing attention to the matter. The Minister also mentioned Lord Harris of Greenwich. I took the opportunity to examine *Hansard* from the other place and it is clear that Lord Harris of Greenwich believes that the Government have shown unprecedented incompetence in this matterm, so it was interesting that the Minister referred to Lord Harris. I understand that the Minister will be going to the British Transport Police Federation conference later this week. The federation should feel the Minister's collar and I hope that he receives a thoroughly good earbashing for his incompetence and that of his colleagues.

We are considering this Bill because there has been an error. The matter goes to the heart of our proceedings in this place. No one can pretend that we give adequate scrutiny to legislation in this House, as has been demonstrated by the error which gave rise to the Bill. To some extent, all 651 Members of this place are to blame. In particular, the Government are to blame for pushing through the Railways Act 1993 in a very arrogant manner, regardless of the views of hon. Members. The Government guillotined the proceedings on that legislation, but when it reached the statute book they found that it contained an error. In other circumstances, people would be dismissed for such a costly and fundamental error, but that does not happen in the Government. There are two standards in this country, as has been shown yet again by the present scenario.

The Government now want to rush this Bill through in one day and at the eleventh hour. If any hon. Member is confident that the Bill contains no errors, perhaps he will show his hand. It would be absurd and would make

nonsense of our proceedings if we found that the Bill contained an error after it had completed its passage, but there is a real danger of that as hon. Members have not had an opportunity to study the Bill or to seek advice or counsel about what it means.

The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) raised some interesting points to which he did not know the answers, while my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) asked some rhetorical questions. No doubt we shall receive answers from the Minister. Members should have an opportunity to explore what the Bill means before debating it in the Chamber. Apart from the Minister—and I am not too confident about him—not one hon. Member fully understands the contents of the Bill. Yet we are expected to give it a Second Reading, allow it a Committee stage and then give it a Third Reading all in one day. That is wrong.

Later on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will take the Chair as First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): My hon. Friend has said that hon. Members do not understand the Bill. Does he agree that that is because the Railways Act 1993 is of such labyrinthine absurdity in relation to the consequences of breaking up a national system into various parts, the number of which we do not know, and under agreements of which we do not have sight? It is not possible for us to know what kind of agreements are referred to in this Bill as they have yet to be drawn up among organisations which do not yet exist, in a degree and in numbers of which we are unaware.

Mr. Mackinlay: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is the danger of this Bill, particularly with regard to the speed of its passage. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras made a serious point. There will be a plethora of agreements, but there cannot be consistency in all of them. They will follow the same theme, but there will be variations on that theme. It will be most unsatisfactory for police officers or chief constables to have to operate in that way.

If we had more time to deal with the Bill, we might understand the points, but it is an inescapable fact that none of us has had an opportunity to explore what the Bill involves or its implications. I assume that the motion will be passed and that the Bill will be considered in Committee, although I shall resist that and I shall be pleased to welcome any hon. Members who would support me in the Lobby to resist the Bill being considered by a Committee of the whole House today. This is a fundamental principle and one that I will not shirk. I am opposed to the way in which the Bill is proceeding because it is bad legislation and bad for Parliament.

Assuming that the Bill passes to a Committee of the whole House, I shall wish to raise points of order with the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means. I believe that amendments should be explored and examined. The hon. Member for North Devon made a valid point about people who are heading towards committing a crime or contemplating a crime. What powers exist in respect of such people?

The Bill is entitled the Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill. You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the graphic scenes on television a few months ago when there was a riot against the poll tax in Trafalgar square and a rioter threw a piece of scaffolding through the window of a police car. It is a matter of fact that that police car was a British Transport police vehicle. As things stand, those officers had no power to intervene in crimes being committed in that vicinity other than the powers that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hold as ordinary citizens. I am also told —this also relates to a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras—that such a situation does not prevail in Scotland.

We have an opportunity to remedy that situation and to clarify the jurisdiction of the BTP instead of fudging and confusing the issue. My objection to the details of the Bill, to the extent that I am able to understand them, is that far from clarifying the powers of the BTP, the Bill will cause confusion. I used the example that I did to demonstrate how, if my amendments were considered and accepted by the Committee of the whole House, we could clarify the powers of British Transport police officers outside of railway premises. The police officers who are at the sharp end would welcome clarification of their powers.

I take a great interest in uniforms, regalia and cap badges. When I left St. Stephen's entrance recently I saw a British Transport police officer. To an ordinary member of the public he was simply a police officer. Most members of the public would have assumed that he was a member of the Metropolitan police. Had there been an incident outside St. Stephen's entrance, the public would not have paused to consider whether that officer was a Metropolitan police officer or a British Transport police officer. To Joe public, someone wearing a policeman's uniform is a police officer for 24 hours of the day and the public would have expected that officer to respond to an incident in that area. The way things are at present, however, that police officer would have been constrained from getting involved in any incident. Indeed, he would have put himself in jeopardy. He would have had to make a split-second decision whether to intervene, and if he had intervened he would have had only the same powers as ordinary citizens.

I appeal to hon. Members to pause for a moment and consider whether we are doing justice to the police and to the institution of Parliament by treating such a serious matter in what I regard as a flip way in the manner in which the Bill is being pushed through. The Bill must be read a Second time and it must reach the statute book because it is much needed: it is inescapable that the powers must be restored to the British Transport police. But we could have an improved Bill—one which would bring credit rather than discredit to Parliament—if we concluded the Second Reading today and the Bill went into a Committee of the whole House on another occasion or, indeed, was referred to a Standing Committee. Hon. Members and people outside the House could then improve the Bill and, above all, understand its contents. For that reason, I support the Second Reading, but I hope that even at this stage Parliament can be persuaded to give the Bill the proper scrutiny that such an important matter deserves.

6.20 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): I am sorry if controversy has been brought into the Bill, which I thought would commend itself to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The British Transport police sets an excellent example to other forces. It is a force some 2,000 strong. It is noted for its efficiency and the calibre of its officers. In its

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organisation, it was ahead of many of the reforms that are now being introduced by the Home Office forces. It is led by a well-respected chief constable.

The British Transport police have a particular and serious problem in that they are dealing daily with a large number of terrorist threats and suspect parcels left on railway premises, amounting to something like 4,500 incidents each year. Every one of those incidents must be dealt with sensibly and correctly by the officers who respond to them. That is a considerable responsibility which descends at times on the shoulders of junior and young officers. There is more than one explosion every month on railway premises. Apart from their normal task of policing the railways and ensuring the safety and security of passengers and those who work on the railways, the BTP now face a very considerable added burden from terrorism.

I agree with the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on one thing at least—the need for the powers of the British Transport police to be extended, especially in circumstances in which BTP officers are the first to respond to a terrorist situation outside railway premises. At Bishopsgate, the first inspector to arrive on the scene was a British Transport police inspector. He did what had to be done but he did not in fact have the power to do it. He got by by using his common sense and his uniform. It is true that to the public the British Transport police are policemen, and all policemen are the same. The issue needs to be sorted out. If it cannot be sorted out in this Bill, which is making a remarkably rapid passage through the House so that it can become law before 31 March, I shall certainly return to it, and I suspect that the hon. Member for Thurrock will return to it as well.

In the past 18 months, we have seen a great deal of uncertainty inevitably as a result of rail privatisation. During that time, my right hon. Friend the Minister and I have had numerous meetings with federation representatives. My right hon. Friend has always been fully supportive at those meetings. He made it clear from the start that he agreed that the force should remain as a national and unified force—there has been no suggestion that it should be split up and its role handed to local Home Office forces.

It is regrettable that we need to spend time today debating the powers of the BTP in this way. It would have been much better if the whole issue had been decided when the Bill went through the House of Lords. However, so many political points were raised in the debates about privatisation that such sensible points were guillotined at the end of the day.

Mr. Wilson: I find the hon. Gentleman's comments absolutely stunning. Is he suggesting that the issues that detained the House of Lords and threw the unwanted legislation into chaos were unimportant? Which issues does he think were unimportant—perhaps the concessionary travel for old age pensioners and the discounted through ticketing? Can he name the unimportant matters that detained both Houses of Parliament? Incidentally, will he declare his interest in the matter?

Mr. Trotter: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out that, technically, I have not declared an interest, but it was referred to earlier. Hon. Members are well aware that I represent the British Transport Police Federation. The delays to the passage of the Bill in the House of Commons were often on tedious and irrelevant points. If it had not been for delays on matters of no great moment, there would have been more time to debate the issues of substance.

I shall return to the situation that the BTP face in the changed circumstances of privatisation. The essential factor is that there will be a stipulation that all of those who operate the railways in the future will be required to use the British Transport police force for their principal core police activities. That this stipulation will apply has been amply confirmed by my right hon. Friend the Minister.

I have no doubt whatever that the force will have the same important role to play in the future of the railways as it has had in the past. It will continue to police the railways, to ensure security and safety and to follow up crimes that are committed in connection with the railways. It is important for the BTP to have powers not only on railway premises but also to follow up offences related to the railways in areas outside railway premises. That is what the Bill seeks to do.

In the future, Railtrack will have an important part to play in the organisation of the BTP. I took it upon myself recently to meet Robert Horton, the chairman of Railtrack. I asked him to put in writing what he told me, and it will be helpful to the House if I spell out what he said:

"I am happy to be able to let you know my views on BTP and my resolve to make sure that they are properly funded and that this is not an 'optional extra' for the franchisees."

Representatives of the federation will meet me and Mr. Horton in the near future.

I have no doubt that the BTP will retain their present position as the national force policing the railway system. They will continue to fulfil excellently their vital role, and as a result of this Bill they will obtain the powers that they need to continue in the way that they should. Therefore, I commend the Bill to the House.

6.27 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is worth raising a few points about the Bill before it zips through the House. The Bill is before the House because of an error made by the Department of Transport, the relevant Ministers and the civil service advisers. We shall spend half a day in Parliament remedying an omission in previous legislation.

The hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), who is a paid representative of the British Transport police, argued that we are debating this Bill because we spent time debating the rest of the privatisation legislation and issues, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said, such as the through ticketing system which will be non-existent, the universal concessions to pensioners and other concessions, and the whole panoply of absurd right-wing extremism which the Bill represents. Two right-wing representatives of the Tories are present in the Chamber—the Minister for Public Transport and the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), who is grinning. He is a well-known right-wing extremist in the Tory party, and undoubtedly proud of it.

The Bill is one of the consequences of rushing through legislation to break up a national service which is so complex in its application. It is not the fault of the House that the omission of the British Transport police was allowed to go through; it is the fact that we had to spend so much time getting explanations from the Minister as to

how the whole thing would work without bringing to a halt the railway service in one or more parts. I predicted then, and I predict now, that privatisation of the railway will do just that. It is not the House's fault; it is the Government's fault in producing such absurdly complex legislation, which will have the effect of producing a deteriorating standard of service.

I want to raise some points in relation to the transport police. It is not only the serious and dramatic incidents of potential terrorist activity and the planting of bombs on the railway system which are of concern. The British Transport police must police 11,000 route miles, and it also polices the retention of the protection on both sides of the track, which makes 22,000 route miles of fencing.

British Rail, unlike continental railways, was established not with open access, but with the requirement that people should be shielded from access to the railway by two lines of fencing. Therefore, the British Transport police have a duty and an obligation to try their level best —it is difficult in the present circumstances—to reduce the amount of vandalism, which can be sometimes encouraged by the lack of maintenance to fencing on either side of the track.

The Government are the pillars of capitalism and they impose their philosophy on the public sector willy-nilly. They impose what they call efficiency, and their efficiency is sacking as many people as can be sacked. That is why 4 million people have been on the dole in about 10 of the 15 years that the Government have been in office. Vandalism has increased on the railways. Signal boxes have been closed, and stations are unstaffed.

We heard earlier this afternoon at Question Time that 80 per cent. of the 1,000 stations in London are unstaffed after 6 o'clock. That means that, in winter, the stations are unstaffed after dark, and that is clearly an encouragement to vandalism. There are hundreds of thousands of people on the streets of our cities. Some of them are homeless because of the Government's housing policies, and some are wandering the streets because they are unemployed and have nothing to do because of the Government's wretched and wicked philosophies. Those philosophies are all about putting people out of work and imposing so-called efficiencies—which are really false efficiencies—on the public utilities and elsewhere. The British Transport police have an important and enormous day-to-day task in trying to preserve life and limb by ensuring that people cannot get on to the railways, which can represent an enormous danger.

What about developments which have taken place? It is curious that the legislation provides that a British Transport police constable can act as a constable only

"to the extent that he is acting as a constable in pursuance of a transport police services agreement";

and that

"he shall . . . only so act in accordance with the terms of that agreement."

One of the ways that British Rail has tried to reduce the financial burdens which have been placed upon it by the Government is to get rid of the obligations of maintenance of overhead bridges. If it can get rid of an overhead bridge by transferring it to either a private body, if it is an access bridge, or a public body such as a local authority, it does so. It has been encouraged by the Government to do just that. Maintenance will be carried out by the local authority under the terms and conditions which have been laid down by the civil engineer of British Rail.

What happens when somebody on a bridge is throwing obstacles at a train, either to encourage a derailment or simply to hit the driver? That is not unknown. That bridge, and the local authority which is maintaining it, presumably must be subject to an agreement for the British Transport police constable to have jurisdiction. If there is not a service agreement in existence, the constable will merely be able to stand to one side and say that he has no jurisdiction. Under the legislation, he will not be allowed to intervene as he is not a police constable in transport terms on the bridge. That bridge is owned by a private organisation because British Rail has sold it to get rid of the statutory obligations; and the Government want them to do that anyhow.

A number of intriguing circumstances could arise. What about the miles of desert which have been created by all the clever people at the Department of Transport who love road transport so much and have denigrated and denuded a fine railway system? Freight depots and marshalling yards have been closed, and British Rail has been encouraged to sell them off. It has relied on the selling of assets for a significant percentage of its revenue.

All those assets must now be subject to an agreement if British Transport police officers are to have jurisdiction over those assets in relation to the track which runs alongside, between or through them. If there is to be comprehensive policing alongside the 11,000 route miles —over and above the 11,000 route miles where trains run —it is possible that we will need a large number of service agreements to make sure that constables have adequate jurisdiction where railways have some access and where sections of land have been sold off as a result of pressure from the Government.

My hon. Friends have raised an important matter which has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides—except, curiously enough, the hon. Member for Tynemouth, who is a representative of the British Transport Police Federation. The hon. Gentleman simply accepted the legislation, and did not think anything about it. He believed that the House should rubber-stamp the Bill and pass it, in spite of the difficulties which will be created by the legislation for the operation of the powers of the British Transport police.

We should debate the matter so that the Minister can give us a comprehensive answer. There are other areas in which the British Transport police operate well away from operating lines, and there is the question of vandalism by children where a special duty of care applies to keep people off the railway tracks.

When the franchise holders take over, will Railtrack be encouraged to contract out such requirements as the statutory obligation for the maintenance of fencing? Will that create a greater burden on the transport police through children having access to tracks and creating difficulties for drivers? The Minister knows that British Rail has to run what are called Q trains to catch trespassers and warn them of the dangers. Trespassing can result in rapid injury and death because of the pace of trains, particularly the electrified trains which are much quieter than their steam and diesel predecessors.

Lastly, I want to raise the question of sections of former British Rail property which are well away from the railways. For example, if a preserved viaduct is taken over by a preservation society, it can at the moment be supervised and guarded against vandalism by the BTP. What happens if there is an agreement, as there is in one

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

case, about a viaduct which has been refurbished and preserved? The example to which I refer is a grade 2 listed monument in Cumbria.

What happens when a structure such as that is taken over by a trust to look after it and to give people the opportunity of looking at a great architectural structure? Does there have to be a separate agreement for the BTP to operate in an area where a private organisation is involved in the maintenance and operation of the viaduct, albeit a public trust? The trust is dedicated not to profit but to the retention of the viaduct for public access in conjunction with a nature reserve.

The more one thinks about it, the greater the potential for these agreements to be combined into one huge volume. A transport constable will look at a situation, and he will have to turn to page 1,035 to check whether the area is subject to an agreement before he can take action. By the time he has looked up the relevant page and clause, the people will have disappeared. So the constable will not be so effective.

I regret to say that the paid representative of the British Transport Police Federation has departed the Chamber—*[Interruption.]*—and has returned perhaps to take part in the debate, having arrived late in any case. I wonder whether the British Transport Police Federation thinks that it is getting value for money. I can say with confidence that, if there is a cause for anxiety, Opposition Members will take it up without being paid to do so.

I hope that the Minister will give us some answers. I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). He asked why the Bill was being pushed through in such a short time. The Minister is surely a little trusting to present to the House the notion that the business managers alone determine the way in which business is conducted. Do not Ministers have some comment to make when a proposal is made? Do not they say, for example, that they would like longer or that the amount of time is all right because a measure will go through on the nod?

Surely Ministers are not so completely remote from the business managers that they cannot say, "We have made one terrible error already. This legislation is the result of that error. Should not we linger over it a little longer to allow more time for amendments to be tabled so that we do not make any errors the second time round?" I do not believe that the Minister could not make such representations or that the Leader of the House would ignore them if he did. So I believe that the Minister is content at his own risk to push the Bill through in the most rapid time that he regards as convenient. The House is not here to be convenient for the Executive. The longer that we take over examination of the Bill, the more likely it is that it will be better legislation.

6.41 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): We have been far too beastly to the Minister. We should thank him for giving us the opportunity to debate a subject rarely debated in the House—policing outside the Home Department police forces. Perhaps that was his motive. Perhaps he wanted to give us that opportunity.

I did not serve on the Committee that considered what became the Railways Act 1993, section 132 of which says:

"The Secretary of State may make a scheme".

When I read that, I wondered what it reminded me of. It occurred to me that it was obvious. Yesterday I had the privilege of attending a rally in Birmingham that was led by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition. It was hosted by Tony Robinson, who plays the part of Baldrick in "Blackadder", who always says something like, "I have a scheme" or, "I have a cunning plan." The element of farce in the Bill is obvious.

This is the time for apologies. I must apologise to the Minister for missing his speech. He has apologised for missing the British Transport police. As I am deeply interested in history, I looked up the history of the British Transport police force. I found that it went back to the 1830s and the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company. The officers appointed had constabulary powers. One would have thought that the 160 years or so since the origins of the British Transport police would have allowed our scintillating civil servants, known to be the best in the world, the opportunity to learn about the powers of those officers. If the civil servants were not aware of the powers of the transport police in England, they could have looked more closely at the powers of the transport police in Scotland or other non-Home Department police forces. Therefore, the error was inexcusable.

That error illustrates the contempt of the Executive for the legislature. The Executive say, "It does not really matter. We can make legislation swiftly, the legislature is not up to it. After all, half the Committee will be placemen from our side. All they are interested in doing is their correspondence or their crosswords. As for the Opposition, they are not smart enough to spot our errors." In many ways, the House has been reduced to the level of the old eastern European rubber-stamp legislatures.

The Government's reputation for political competence is in tatters. Their reputation, if they have any left, for administrative competence is even more shredded. This little error has been exposed not as a result of internal examination but by people on the outside saying that the Government have got it wrong. If the error had not been corrected, the transport police would have been in a bizarre position after 1 April. A couple of British Rail transport policemen running to apprehend an alleged criminal who was leaving British Rail premises would have panted to each other, "Do we have the power to pursue? Yes, we have the powers of the ordinary citizen." While they were debating their constitutional position, the hood would have made his exit. Perhaps 1 April has an element of farce about it.

We are having to debate the Bill rather swiftly. On Friday only a photocopied Bill was available to us. It is rather embarrassing and humiliating that the House of Commons, given two or three days to investigate a failure of drafting, is sent a photocopy and has to wait until the day of the debate to have a proper copy made available to Members.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Has my hon. Friend thought that the last Bill that went through this place at exactly this speed was the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974, which is not exactly noted for being the most beautifully crafted piece of legislation that the House of Commons has ever accepted?

Mr. George: Those who are aggrieved by the Opposition's guerilla warfare in protest at the contempt

with which the Executive has treated the House—not only the Opposition—must accept that the Bill is further evidence of the need to bring it to the attention of the Government that they must treat the House with rather more respect than they have shown so far. We have an opportunity now briefly to discuss policing outside our Home Office police forces.

What has happened with the Bill has shown elements of farce and a lack of political and administrative competence. It is an example—this is my crucial point—of the indifference bordering on contempt that the Government have shown not just to the House but to the non-Home Department police forces. We forget about them. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) said that people did not know the difference between transport policemen and other police officers. They look alike and they dress alike. Their vehicles are similar. They have somewhat similar powers. They are trained in exactly the same way. They have, at least until the Bill is passed, more or less analogous powers and they are exceedingly competent.

Non-Home Department police forces are suffering because some of their responsibilities have been eliminated as a result of the collapse of industry and because the Government are intent on privatisation. The Government's mania for privatisation is manifest in industry, but they have had to develop a more cunning plan to deal with the health service—witness trusts. They have had greater difficulty in dealing with the military, but they are privatising in the best way that they can.

The Government are privatising police forces. That process will continue. The Home Office is defining core police functions. I am sure that they will be the responsibility of the police and everything else will be up for grabs by the private sector, which will muscle in. What is more, that will be an unregulated private sector.

Mr. Mackinlay: Has my hon. Friend noticed that it is intended that as from 1 April the British Transport police will be vested in Railtrack and that the Government have announced their not medium-term intention that Railtrack should be privatised? Is not that a matter for grave concern to the British Transport police and other non-Home Office forces who are threatened by the Government with privatisation?

Mr. George: One of the advantages of the absurd timing is that I am able to give some publicity for a conference that I am organising in Committee Room 14 on Monday, which will consider the future of policing, public and private. It is fortuitous that one of the speakers will be the chief constable of the Ministry of Defence police, who will speak about the future of the non-Home Department police forces. I do not know what he will say; I am only the organiser of the conference. The content will be entirely his. However, in my opinion, the future of the non-Home Department forces—if the Bill is anything to go by—is uncertain, at least during the next two or three years. It is uncertain because the Government cannot even draft the legislation properly when they deal with it, and they are privatising where they can.

There is an even greater threat to the Ministry of Defence police. As a result of the Blelloch report, they will apparently be replaced by redundant service men. It seems patently bizarre—I know that I use that word frequently—if, to deal with redundancy in one sector of the Ministry of Defence, one creates redundancy in another sector, but that is an example.

The Government do not like the non-Home Department police forces. I am worried about the transport police. There may not be a direct threat to them now, but I know exactly what will happen once privatisation takes hold. The privatised entities will say to the Minister, probably unofficially, "This is very expensive. After all, we are paying full policing rates for these guys. They are going through so much training. Surely we can train them less effectively than the training college that the fools have to go through to become as competent as police officers. It is much too costly. Minister, can't we find a way to reduce our costs?"

Obviously the Government are intent on doing that. It has happened in the Ministry of Defence with the royal ordnance factories, and the sidelining of the Ministry of Defence police in many areas. It is a continuation of the mania for cheap policing, but cheap policing is poor policing. One may appear to gain, looking at a balance sheet, but I can say, with some experience, that one will not gain if policing and security personnel are not trained to a level that is commensurate with the growing threat from the criminal and from terrorism. The international situation will deteriorate so that there will be more targets, static and mobile, requiring better, not deteriorating, policing.

I believe that there should be a future for the transport police. They should not have to look behind them to see whether private companies are muscling in on the work that they do. There is an enormous vacuum in the Home Office's knowledge of policing and it appears to be indifferent to the way in which the contract security industry is evolving. There is no regulatory system for guarding, for private investigators, for retail security. That requires investigation, as does the way in which the Home Department police forces, including the transport police, operate.

I hope that, as a result of receiving this little slap across the wrist from the legislature, the Minister will take the transport police more seriously than his Department has done hitherto, and his colleagues will take the non-Home Department police forces more seriously. Morale is a subject that we must all, including the Executive, tackle. What will be the future of those forces? Is there a real future for them? Is their future merely to await the time when the private sector is able to move in and take over? We know exactly what will happen unless that private sector operates under a system of regulation. Standards will deteriorate and standards of security will diminish even further.

If British Rail or what succeeds it moves as swiftly as the Government have moved with this legislation, we should see trains moving far more swiftly. I hope that the Minister will be mindful of the criticism to which he has been subjected and that the drafting process will be improved. I hope that hon. Members will develop the enthusiasm to challenge the Executive and to provide a better system of scrutiny.

If one thing emerges from this farce, it is that Parliament's capacity to scrutinise is woefully weak. Should that continue, we shall be replacing the old Supreme Soviet in the legislatures of eastern Europe as the superfluous Parliament in the western world.

6.54 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Tonight we must learn the lesson that when Governments legislate in an autocratic and hasty way, they soon regret it. Few Bills have been more deeply unpopular than that which became the Railways Act 1993. It was condemned by the Transport Select Committee unanimously, by members of all parties, and many Members of the House have the right to claim that we were wise before the event.

So unpopular was the Bill that at one time the Transport Select Committee sought from extremist organisations, such as the right-wing think tanks, support for the Government's intention. The Committee went so far as to take the unique step of advertising in the press for anyone who was willing to support the Government's plans, and no one came forward to support them. Throughout the long hours on that Committee, the only people who said anything in the Bill's favour were those who had a vested interest in its outcome.

The 1993 Act is an atrocious piece of legislation. We all remember the comments that were made in the House when the Act went through. The resistance from the other place and this House was deep and serious. The Government chose to ignore it and behaved like an elective dictatorship.

Another argument is going on at the moment about decisions taken by another organisation that is a union of countries—the European Union. The Government are pressing for a blocking motion on that by 27 members or 23 members, which amounts to 34 per cent. of the membership of that organisation. I have asked the Prime Minister, in my usual helpful, constructive way, whether he would support in the House a blocking measure on Bills if it were supported by 34 per cent. of Members of the House. His answer, which I have just received, was disappointingly brief and consisted of one word, which was no.

As a democracy, we are in serious trouble because if there were such a blocking motion in the House as the Government are demanding in the other union of nations, the European Union, we would have far better legislation. The Government would have to persuade the Members of the House of the wisdom of their policies. We would not have had the Railways Act. We would not have had the poll tax. We would not have had all the other damaging pieces of legislation. We have a Government who have managed to be popular for a few days every five years, following which their popularity disappears rapidly for a long period.

We have had two Bills recently that apply to my country, Wales—and Wales only. Eighty-four per cent. of the elected Members for Wales have opposed those Bills, yet they have passed through the House, pushed through by elected Members from other parts of the United Kingdom, who have no interest in those Bills, who do not understand them and whose constituents will not be affected.

We are here tonight to mark a major error by the Government. Although I apologise for not being here to hear the Minister's statement, unfortunately I would not have missed an apology by the Government. They should apologise to the House for that major error.

6.58 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): We are discussing a rushed piece of legislation, introduced with 10 days to go before the unwanted fragmentation of our railways, to avoid leaving the British Transport police virtually bereft of powers. The sole reason for that state of affairs is the Government's failure to deal with the issue during the progress of that demented and discredited piece of legislation, the Railways Act 1993, which poses such a threat to the future of our rail network.

I put that statement of fact on the record because, listening to the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), one might have had to suspend disbelief. He appears to regard it as an irksome necessity to drop in occasionally to earn his consultancy fees. First, he objected to this matter being treated as controversial. He expected us to turn up, vote the Bill through and go home. Ten days before the unwanted upheaval in the British railways system, no legislation is on the statute book to give the British Transport police, which the hon. Gentleman is supposed to represent in this House, the powers which they need. We have before us tonight a Bill with which the British Transport police are not happy and the hon. Gentleman wonders why we must waste more than 20 minutes discussing it. He wants us simply to wave it through and go to dinner. I hope that the British Transport police read the transcript of these proceedings.

The hon. Member for Tynemouth then suggested that we need not be here at all. The matter could have been dealt with months ago, had not all the footling other matters for which he is not the paid consultant had to be dealt with in this House and the other place.

I invite the hon. Gentleman to cast his mind back to the issues that took the Government to the wire on the Railways Act. I do not know whether he has received letters from railway pensioners or whether he has railway pensioners in his constituency, but my hon. Friends and I and many Tory Members who are missing from those Benches have received hundreds of letters expressing genuine concern that the Government are seeking to use the mask of rail privatisation to get the Treasury's hands on the railway pension fund. That issue exercised the House night after night and encouraged Members on both sides of the House of Lords to try to force Ministers, until the last possible moment, to rescind their policy and accept railway pensioners' rights. A few short months later, the hon. Member for Tynemouth has the cheek to make a brief appearance in the Chamber and say that this matter could have been dismissed lightly for his convenience and that of the Minister.

Only one set of people is responsible for the fact that we are back here tonight. Those same people are responsible for this legislation in the first place and for trying to perpetrate that dreadful act against railway pensioners—the Government, represented tonight by the Minister for Public Transport. I do not recall the hon. Member for Tynemouth, in defence of the interests of the British Transport police, British Rail pensioners or those of our rail network, questioning or voting against a dot or comma of the Railways Act. For him to complain that it is the fault of anyone but the Government that we are in this position is offensive. With his throw-away remarks that we are wasting our time here and could have rubber-stamped the substance of tonight's Bill months ago, he has introduced an element of controversy into tonight's debate.

Many serious questions must be asked about the Bill. Most of them centre around the phrase in line 29 of clause 1, "transport police services agreement". The hon. Member for Tynemouth probably thinks that it is a wonderful idea that, instead of one integrated British Transport police serving every element of the network, it should be like catering contracts put out to Macdonalds with the transport police obliged to seek service agreements. Each component part of our fragmented rail network will have to make those agreements with the British Transport police.

Opposition Members and the British Transport police are concerned about the word "agreement". Will the Minister explain much more clearly whether that implies that two parties must agree on something, or whether it is an obligation? Is there an obligation to have an agreement and accept what is in that agreement? Is there a fixed set of terms within that agreement or is it literally a case of bargaining in each specific case until an agreement is reached? The only guidance which we have from the Minister is in his letter of 21 March—today's date—to David Rayner, chairman of the British Transport police. But it does not resolve the ambiguity, because it says:

"Since all licence holders referred to above must have an agreement approved by the Secretary of State for the provision of core police services determined by the Police Committee, you have my assurance that the Secretary of State will ensure consistency of agreements. In particular, he will seek to ensure that provisions in the agreements, which might affect the jurisdiction of constables, are consistent so that British Transport Police constables can have a clear and unambiguous understanding of their jurisdiction."

So many questions are raised by those two sentences that I might have expected the paid advisor of the transport police to ask some of them but, as he did not, it has been left for my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and others to ask them.

The Minister is aware of the difference between precise and imprecise language. What does "consistency of agreements" mean? Will agreements all be the same? Will they be a matter of negotiation? The Minister's letter says that he will "seek" to ensure that provisions in the agreement are consistent. What does "seek" mean? To anyone who uses the English language normally, it means that he will have a go and try to encourage the parties to come to an agreement. But if the parties say that they do not want that agreement, the search might be in vain and the Minister may have to seek again next year or the year after. The language is imprecise about whether there will be an element of compunction within those agreements or whether they will be negotiable.

What the Minister has told us tonight and the transport police in that letter does not answer the question but opens up new questions. Either there is an obligation on licence holders—the companies that will be established by the Railways Act—to enter into obligations to use the British Transport police on certain terms, or there is not. If there is no such obligation, there will be massive uncertainties and precisely the situation to which my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras referred will arise. Depending on which fragmented element of the railway the British Transport police are working for at any time, they will have to check the handbook to see whether the terms of that agreement are what they understand them to be. If that is what the Minister is offering the House, it is inadequate. He must understand that as well as any Opposition Members, but will he admit it?

Will the Minister clarify the term, "licence holders"? This is an exploratory question and I might be going up the wrong alleyway. To what extent is the term cross-referrable with the Railways (Class and Miscellaneous Exemptions) Order 1994, which has not yet been agreed to on the Floor of the House or in Committee? It contains a large number of exemptions from the requirement to hold a licence. Many are perfectly understandable, such as exemptions for steam railways and certain maintenance depots. Even within the context that we are discussing tonight, some exemptions would be understandable. But is an exemption from the requirement to hold a licence under the Railways Act translatable as being not subject to the provisions of this Bill? If a company is not a licence holder, must it still use the British Transport police?

The Minister will understand that my concern about that matter is strengthened by the repeated use of the phrase "licence holders" in his letter to David Rayner.

I reserve the right to return to this question, but an intervention from the Minister would be very welcome. The hon. Gentleman could bring the debate to a conclusion right now. If licence holders are the only operators or companies to be covered by the legislation, the Minister may—totally inadvertently—have been a little misleading in replies to questions that I put to him earlier. He may wish to clarify his thinking, especially in respect of the channel tunnel and the Heathrow express. At this stage, what we need is clarification—very important clarification, I suggest.

We are dealing with a world that will begin to develop only on 1 April. I hope that it will not go very far, but it may go a little further than I should like. Some very undesirable operators may be brought on to the scene. Mr. James Sherwood, the man who bought and sold Sealink and British Transport Hotels, is on record as having said that the last thing he wants to do is employ the British Transport police. We are not dealing here with something hypothetical; we are dealing with Mr. Sherwood and, I believe, with other operators, one of whose early aims is to get rid of the British Transport police and employ private security firms. Thus we must know how strong are the guarantees concerning retention of the services of that force.

We must know also who will determine how much has to be paid for those services and how the money will be collected. Once again, is it a matter for negotiation, or is it a question of somebody—I shall come in a moment to the question of which somebody—being able to lay down the charges and then, in effect, precept the companies, saying, "These are the charges, and you will pay them as a condition of continuing to operate services or any other function of the railway"? Who will lay down the charges, what rights of enforcement will there be, and what will happen to a franchisee who fails to pay up? It is very important that these questions be answered.

I should like to deal now with the question of jurisdiction. If everyone thinks that the way in which things work in Scotland is right, that there is no need for new legislation for Scotland, where the British Transport police have the right to pursue and investigate in a more liberal way than in the rest of Britain, why in heaven's name should not we use the opportunity of this legislation to create uniformity throughout the country?

In his letter to David Rayner, the Minister says:

"It was never intended that the Bill would do other than address the defect in the Railways Act 1993. Jurisdiction in

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

respect of non-railway activities is a separate issue, which is not the subject of this legislation."

Fair enough, but why? When next will the House of Commons deal with legislation dealing specifically with the British Transport police? If we agree that there is a better legislative model in operation elsewhere in the United Kingdom, why should not we incorporate it in the Bill? I hope that in the course of tonight's debate the Minister will look sympathetically at that argument. There is no case against uniformity.

On a specific point of detail, it has been suggested to me that I should ask the Minister who is on the police committee and how future membership will be determined.

Mr. Mackinlay : As I am confused, I should like to underline my hon. Friend's request. We need to be told, not only for our own sake but for the sake of officers of the British Transport police, whether it is the intention that, on a day-to-day basis, this body will be under the control and stewardship of Railtrack—I believe that to be the position —or at arm's length from Railtrack.

I should like to return to a point that I flagged earlier: the Government's expressed intention to privatise Railtrack. Whether or not the British Transport police are to be under the control of Railtrack from 1 April, what would be the position if the Government were given an opportunity to put privatisation legislation through the House? The threat of privatisation, either in whole or in part, of the functions of the British Transport police is felt by every police officer. We need and have a right to know what the Government's intention is.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister will have noted my hon. Friend's remarks. On the question of the privatisation of Railtrack, we shall cross that viaduct when we come to it. However, I do not think that that will happen this side of a general election, unless the Government are taking the suicide pills again. My hon. Friend's question concerning structure is one in respect of which I should value more elucidation. My understanding is that the British Transport police continues to be a subsidiary of the British Railways Board—and that much I welcome—but, with regard to the precise relationship with Railtrack, I understand that body to be a client of the British Railways Board in securing the services of the British Transport police, much along the lines of any of the other entities being created by the Railways Act. No doubt the Minister will fill us in.

I do not want to detain the House, but these are immensely important questions concerning not just matters of detail but the basis of the Bill and the extent to which it will meet the very legitimate concerns of the British Transport police and the public. Eventually, as in the case of everything to do with this legislation, it is the public who should be borne in mind. A shocking proportion of crimes of violence are committed within a very narrow radius of railway stations. There is enormous fear, particularly among women using railway stations late at night. That, as a by-product of this legislation—a short Bill to be rushed through 10 days before it takes effect—the powers of the British Transport police are to be seriously diluted is an unacceptable proposition and one in respect of which the Minister must answer much more satisfactorily to the House.

All of this is a product of rail privatisation legislation. In particular, it is a part of the fragmentation of the railways, which almost literally nobody, except the 300 Tory Members of Parliament who voted for it, wants.

7.16 pm

Mr. Freeman: By leave of the House, I shall seek to respond to the questions that have been addressed to me.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), opening the debate for the Opposition, raised two points for response. He referred to the possibility that members of the British Transport police would have to carry in their backpack an index to all the various agreements being entered into on the new railway system. That is not the case. The core policing responsibilities that will be laid upon all those who are licensed—Railtrack, the train operators, those who operate light maintenance depots and those who operate stations—are covered. It is the intention of the police committee to draw up a standard specification of responsibilities of the British Transport police for what are called core services. I read into the record at the beginning of the debate the definition of core police responsibilities. It is clearly sensible that the chief constable be able to refer to a standard, almost boilerplate, set of responsibilities of the police in relation to any part of the railways.

I accept, and have always accepted, the argument that one cannot have different core policing responsibilities for different sections of the railways. That would cause confusion. No doubt the chief constable will ensure that there is a clear standard set of instructions and guidance for all transport police constables in the exercise of their duty.

With regard to non-core activities—and here we are talking at the margin—there may well be certain guarding responsibilities that neither the British Transport police wish to discharge nor rail operators wish to place upon the shoulders of the British Transport police. Core policing activities constitute the vast majority of the responsibilities of the police. Law and order issues throughout the railway system—whether passenger or freight—will be clearly specified and will be standard and consistent as between different licensees.

Mr. Dobson: If all these agreements are to be identical, why do we need lines 28 to 31 at all? They are utterly superfluous. Why do we need to say that a constable will be able to act

"in accordance with the terms of that agreement"?

Unless the agreements are going to be different, there is no need to include that line in the Bill. If the agreements are to be identical, the Minister can scrap those four lines, and then we shall be rather more satisfied with the Bill.

Mr. Freeman: There are two reasons why the agreements might vary. The first is the duration of an agreement. If a franchise is to run for seven, 10 or 15 years, that needs to be written into the agreement. Secondly, the charge paid by the user of the British Transport police will vary according to the size of the rail operation. Those two conditions, which have nothing to do with what I call the boilerplate core policing arrangements, will have to be included in an agreement.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras looks incredulous at this explanation, but he should allow me to complete it. I think it important that everyone involved in the running of the new railways should have, set out clearly in an agreement, precise obligations. That is well precedented, and the hon. Member for Crewe and

Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)—who also looks incredulous, but who has long experience of the operation of the railways and who will know full well that all the legislation of the past 10 years has included the idea of specific agreements between undertakings and the BTP—will recall that this has been true of light rapid transit and of parts of London Regional Transport. It is certainly important to specify obligations and rights.

Mr. Dobson: The right hon. Gentleman has given us two reasons why he wants separate agreements to be brought to bear on a constable going about his duties. The first is that such agreements will be for different lengths of time. Surely at any given moment an agreement will be in place covering a premises or a company: either it will exist, or it will have run out, and the owners will no longer be the owners.

As for the different charges, is the Minister suggesting that the charges might affect the amount of effort put in by a constable or the extent of his jurisdiction? That is blithering nonsense. There is no good reason to keep this part of the Bill.

Mr. Freeman: I have been accused of many things in my time, but never of talking blithering nonsense—

Mr. Mackinlay: You have now.

Mr. Freeman: There is always a first time. It stands to reason that a police services agreement will specify for a franchised train operator or station operator precisely what the obligations in addition to the standard core policing obligations are.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister keeps referring to a standard core obligation on the police. Can he confirm that there is no statutory obligation on any party involved to impose such a core service? If any party to an agreement dissents, then the chief constable will be in no position to override that party. That provides the necessary condition for a wide variety of agreements—it is what the Bill will entail.

Mr. Freeman: Not so—the police committee appointed by the board of British Rail will be responsible for drawing up a precise definition of the core policing responsibility of the BTP, and it will be imposed. Indeed, it will be a condition of the licences issued to everyone —apart from those who are exempt—running the railway. A preserved railway would be a good example of such exemption. The rail operator does not have the option whether to accept the remit of the BTP: it will be imposed on him. As the hon. Gentleman knows, under the Railways Act every operator requires a licence. The police committee determines the core policing arrangements, and the chief constable sits on that committee.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I hope that the Minister understands that the real problem is that the House suspects that the implication of his reiteration of the phrase "core policing" is that he envisages two levels of policing. He may brush that aside by claiming that in some instances guarding can be done by security men, but the fact remains that, once the House suspects that he is introducing a two-tier system of policing, we will have grave doubts about whether the British Transport police will remain the same or whether they are to become an ever smaller part of a different system in which their duties will, perforce, be changed.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady may not have heard my speech at the beginning of the debate in which I defined core policing responsibilities. Those responsibilities are very broad. I offer two examples of activities in which the British Transport Police themselves might not be interested in engaging. After all, the chief constable wants to use his constables in the most effective possible way. The first example is guarding cash or other items of great value when they move, say, from a ticket office to a bank. I should have thought that a private sector security firm would be better able to provide that service. If the hon. Lady doubts that, she should talk to the chief constable who, like any other sensible chief constable, needs to use his limited manpower to the best possible effect.

A second example might be the guarding of a free-standing freight facility or yard—that is not a job for policemen, whose job is to ensure that law and order are preserved on the railway and that terrorists are defeated. I really do not think that the difference between core and non-core functions is relevant; nor is the hon. Lady's concern shared by the chief constable.

Mr. Dobson: Would the Minister apply the description "free-standing freight yard" to any of the Euro-terminals that he proposes?

Mr. Freeman: I did not say yard, I said facility, by which I meant a depot. It is not the job of a policeman on static guard to make sure that a facility is not broken into. If the chief constable and the police committee want to give an independent operator the flexibility to provide such a service, that is only sensible.

The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) asked me two questions. I can assure him, first, that light maintenance depots will be covered because they must be licensed. He asked also whether pre-emptive responsibilities could be placed on the BTP for dealing with people coming from outwith the rail estate on to a railway. The answer is yes; the Bill provides the appropriate jurisdiction for that.

Mr. Harvey: To return to the Minister's earlier point, how long an agreement may last or how much it will cost are points of no relevance to the jurisdiction of the police carrying out an investigation. Coming closer to the nub of the argument, however, about core services and services which might, in some circumstances, be carried out by a private contractor, I suggest that the idea advanced by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) —that police officers would need a manual about their person to tell them whether private contracts with security firms were in place—will turn out to be true after all.

We are talking about the jurisdiction of the police, in which context those four lines of the Bill seem excessive. We do not want to insist on the BTP duplicating activities carried out by private security firms, but surely we need to give them the right, in the heat of a chase or of apprehending someone, to enter an area that may be patrolled by a private security firm.

Mr. Freeman: Of course the police have that jurisdiction—that is the whole purpose of the Bill. If a criminal leaves the vicinity of a railway station or freight yard, and absconds to some other facility that may be guarded by a private security firm, the British Transport police will have full jurisdiction to enter that property. That is the position and we want it to continue after 1 April.

[Mr. Freeman]

The hon. Member for North Devon foresees the problem that a policeman will not know whether he has responsibility. That problem already exists for police forces. I assure him that the question of jurisdiction will not arise. If a policeman pursues a criminal or suspicious individual to property anywhere in England and Wales, he will have complete jurisdiction.

Mr. Dobson: In that case, why does the Minister need those four lines in the Bill? That is the reason why we are puzzled. All that we need are the provisions in the earlier part of the proposed subsection. We do not need the exclusion proposals. Does the Minister accept that those four lines crib, cabin and confine constables' jurisdiction? He must accept that they potentially reduce jurisdiction, which will cause confusion and a conflict may arise. The Minister says that there will be core policing and that non-core policing may be undertaken by others. That is of relevance to the terms of the agreement. How will constables know whether what they are doing is within those terms? The Minister has accepted that they may differ.

Mr. Freeman: The chief constable is satisfied that he can issue instructions to his force which are consistent with the Bill's provisions. All constables will know precisely what their core policing responsibilities are and what their jurisdiction will be. The purpose of the Bill is to avoid any possible confusion.

There are two reasons why we need the provisions in those four lines. A precedent has been set in the past 10 years—and perhaps in the years before—that it is important for the undertakings of London Regional Transport, the docklands light railway or companies operating a franchise to include a formal agreement. The companies involved have a responsibility to pay the employer of the British Transport police for their services. That is the position for non-railway services. It is also agreed that the British Transport police should have on file a formal understanding of their responsibilities.

Although the core policing responsibilities will not change, other factors will vary from one user to the next. I have already given two examples of where there might be change. A third example might be that the individual franchisee might be involved in other non-railway undertakings. The British Transport police do not have jurisdiction to deal with crimes committed outside the railway network, which having nothing to do with it.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does that not emphasise the fact that the Committee stage should be separate from today's proceedings so that those matters can be examined properly outside the House and in Committee?

A British Transport police officer may be operating within the curtilage of the British Airports Authority and Heathrow airport, but just outside the curtilage of London Underground. Unless we take the opportunity to introduce a change today, that officer will not have the opportunity to exercise his powers as a constable. That is an absurdity. I have already given the examples of St. Stephen's entrance and the Trafalgar square riot. There is a void in police powers, which we should take this opportunity to remedy. Heathrow airport is another example of an interface in the region policed by London Underground and the Metropolitan police, where a British Transport police officer could be on wrong side of the line and thus be unable to fulfil his or her duty as a constable, as expected by the public.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise the wider issue of the jurisdiction of British Transport police constables. If an officer happens, in uniform, to be travelling from his home to his police station and a crime is committed that has no connection with the railway, he does not have jurisdiction. The hon. Gentleman knows that. That is a sensible issue for debate, but it should not be discussed during the debate on this Bill and it was not an appropriate subject for discussion during the debates on the Railways Act 1993. I shall be happy to debate the subject in due course, but we need first to continue our discussions with the Home Office and with other home police forces, through the Home Office, to identify what reforms are needed. That subject is not connected with the Bill or with the Railways Act.

I acknowledge that it is a subject about which the British Transport Police Federation and British Transport police chief constable are concerned. The hon. Gentleman referred to a letter that I wrote to him in September 1993. It dealt with that wider jurisdictional matter and not with the lacuna, which was discovered much later, in the jurisdiction of British Transport police constables pursuing crimes committed on the railway.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) asked me who the employer is. The employer now and after 1 April is the British Railways Board, not Railtrack. That situation will not change until there is fresh primary legislation, and the debate on that legislation will be the time and place to discuss the matter. Railtrack will be an important user of British Transport policemen, but not the employer.

I pay tribute to the achievements of my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), who spoke earlier. I have been in my job for four years and he has badgered me consistently about British Transport police issues and has brought officers of the British Transport Police Federation to my office on a dozen occasions. Accompanied by my hon. Friend, I have visited the federation's annual general meetings on several occasions and I shall be attending its conference with him this Wednesday. He has been exceptionally diligent in pursuing the BTP's interests.

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Freeman: No.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) raised a number of issues. The first dealt with the wider jurisdictional point. I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands the Government view that that is a separate issue, which needs to be addressed separately. He cited the example of an offence being committed on a bridge owned by the highway authority or by a private sector company above a railway line. In that situation, there is no question of the jurisdiction of the British Transport police being clouded or restricted. They have jurisdiction to arrest and pursue those who are affecting the safety of passengers using the railway.

In his winding-up speech, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) asked a number of questions and I shall seek to answer them concisely. All those operators who have to have a licence are required to include a provision that there should be a police services

agreement. Every aspect of the operation of the railways —where they are open for public transportation of passengers and freight—must be licensed. I cited the only example that I could—the preserved railways. Some other public sector transport undertakings—for example, London Regional Transport and the docklands light railway—are covered separately. The practical effect of the legislation is universal.

I confirm what I said in opening the debate. European passenger services will be included in the proposals because they will have to be licensed. We shall deal with the new channel tunnel rail link separately in a Bill which I hope will be presented later this year. I confirm that what I said about the Heathrow express was correct. If it runs on Railtrack, it will have to be licensed.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to the Minister. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), I picked up the Minister's last phrase. I asked him whether the Bill's provisions on licensing cross-referred to the Railways Class and Miscellaneous Exemptions Order 1994. From what he said, it appears that they do. I think that the Minister is nodding. That raises many interesting questions on which the Minister should give us more information.

I am conscious of the time, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I do not wish to make a lengthy intervention.

Under the heading "Licence exemptions", paragraphs 3 and 4 set out a list running from "a" to "u"—about 22, at the last count. Most, or at least many, are small items which could easily be passed by; item "l", however, states that exemption will apply to

"any network, station or light maintenance depot comprised in the Channel Tunnel system".

We need a brief explanation of that from the Minister. Indeed, I think that we should have a brief explanation of everything in items "a" to "u".

Mr. Freeman: Anything involving the construction of the new channel tunnel rail link will be the subject of separate legislation. To the extent that passenger and freight services use the existing channel tunnel, they will be covered.

Mr. Wilson: The word "link" is not used; the phrase used is

"any network, station or light maintenance depot comprised in the Channel Tunnel system".

The words "system" and "link" are not synonymous, as the Minister well knows.

If the Opposition had not raised the list of exemptions, the Minister would not have told us about it. He did not intend to tell us about elements of the railway which will not require licensing and will therefore not be required to enter into agreements with the British Transport police. I find that pretty shocking.

Mr. Freeman: I have made the position quite clear. *[Interruption.]* I have repeated what I said earlier, also very clearly.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North also asked about three other important issues. First, he asked about the police committee. The committee is appointed by the board; that has not changed, and will not change. Secondly, he asked who determines the charges. They will be determined by the board, and collected by it; if there is default, the operator is in default of licence conditions.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) asked about the Heathrow link. The Minister said that it would be covered by the Bill in so far as it was running on Railtrack. I understand that the part nearest to the airport will not run on Railtrack, but will use a bit of track that it will own. Does that mean that that part of the link will be under a separate and distinct jurisdiction? If so, that will be the vulnerable bit of the system that terrorists would use to obtain access to the whole system. As we all know, if the British Transport police do not have full confidence in the whole system, stations will be closed much more frequently—or there will be explosions, and people will be killed and injured.

Mr. Freeman: The link will doubtless fall into the same category as Heathrow airport itself, where the British Airports Authority ensures that there is adequate, full and comprehensive policing.

The police committee, the chairman of the board and the chief constable are content with the arrangements that we have presented today. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Motion made and Question put, That this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House:

The House divided: Ayes 180, Noes 44.

Division No. 171] **[7.43 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Cran, James
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Amess, David	Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Arbuthnot, James	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Dover, Den
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Duncan, Alan
Atkins, Robert	Elletson, Harold
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*	Fabricant, Michael
Bates, Michael	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Batiste, Spencer	Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Bellingham, Henry	Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Beresford, Sir Paul	Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	French, Douglas
Booth, Hartley	Gale, Roger
Boswell, Tim	Gallie, Phil
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia	Garnier, Edward
Bowden, Andrew	Gillan, Cheryl
Bowis, John	Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Brandreth, Gyles	Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Bright, Graham	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela	Grylls, Sir Michael
Butler, Peter	Hague, William
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*	Hanley, Jeremy
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*	Hannam, Sir John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Harris, David
Carrington, Matthew	Haselhurst, Alan
Carttiss, Michael	Hawkins, Nick
Cash, William	Hawksley, Warren
Chapman, Sydney	Heald, Oliver
Clappison, James	Hendry, Charles
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Colvin, Michael	Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Congdon, David	Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Conway, Derek	Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Cormack, Patrick	Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Couchman, James	Hunter, Andrew

Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lewis, Terry
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mandelson, Peter
Michael, Alun
Mudie, George
O'Hara, Edward
Oliner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Redmond, Martin
Rendel, David
Rooney, Terry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Mackinlay: On a point of order, Dame Janet. Due to the extraordinary speed at which the Bill is being considered—its First Reading was only last Friday—there has not, in my submission, been reasonable time to scrutinise it. We explored that issue on Second Reading.

I understand that the Chairman of Ways and Means did not select my starred amendments. Because of the rapid consideration of the Bill, I was denied an opportunity at least to have an informal interview with the Chairman of Ways and Means and/or yourself, Dame Janet, to make the case that my amendments fall within the terms of the Bill.

It is grossly unfair to me and to other hon. Members that amendment No. 2 and new clause 1 in my name should not be debated in Committee, as they are within the rules of the House and relevant to the Bill. Amendement No. 2 relates to matters that were the subject of extensive debate on Second Reading. If passed, it would clarify the powers and jurisdiction of police officers, but I cannot even present it to the Committee. I make no criticism of the Chair but of the unreasonable manner in which the Bill is being pushed through the House. The jurisdiction of the British Transport police goes to the heart of amendment No. 2 and should be considered.

New clause 1 is important. I would not lie awake at night worrying if it were not debated but for the fact that it concerns an important point of principle. If new clause 1 is debated and accepted by the Committee, it will clarify the jurisdiction of the police officers in question—that is, that they are British Railways police officers.

As the Bill has been botched by the Executive—there is no adequate description of those officers in their title—I hope that you, Dame Janet, agree that there should be discrimination in my favour to allow me to present my amendments to the Committee and that it should be for the Minister to argue why they are inappropriate, if he sees fit.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Amendment No. 2 goes beyond the scope of the Bill and it is therefore out of order and cannot be debated.

New clause 1 was not selected by the Chairman of Ways and Means. It is not the practice for the Chairman to give reasons in Committee.

Clause 1

AMENDMENT OF THE BRITISH TRANSPORT COMMISSION ACT 1949

Mr. Mackinlay: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in clause 1, page 1, line 7, leave out

', in its application to England and Wales,'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 4, in page 2, line 36, leave out 'throughout England and Wales'.

No. 3, in clause 2, page 3, line 3, leave out subsection (5).

8 pm

Mr. Mackinlay: It would appear that the draftsmen have forgotten about the Kingdom of Scotland in this matter, and that there is a disparity in the treatment of powers being made available to British Transport police officers in England and Wales as distinct from those in Scotland. It seems to me, particularly as the Bill is remedying a profound mistake by the Government, that

there should be clarity and precision, and that there should be uniformity of precision in one Act of Parliament relating to British Transport police officers, wherever they are in the United Kingdom.

In clause 1, and throughout the Bill, reference is made to England and Wales. From the extent that we have been able to examine the Bill, it would seem that that is an error. The problem, Sir Geoffrey—

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): "Sir Geoffrey?"

Mr. Mackinlay: I do not know whether it is possible through the usual good offices to ask the Government Whip to contain himself, but we are trying to deal with a difficult matter. The Minister described it as complex and detailed legislation, and the Government Whip is treating it as a matter of levity. It is inappropriate, Mr. Lofthouse, that it should be dealt with in that way, particularly when the Government have yet to apologise, not just to the House but to the British Transport police, for their error. My amendments are necessary to clarify the position.

The problem that those of us who take an interest in the Bill have is that we have not had an opportunity of doing the necessary homework. I could find only one copy of the primary statute—the British Transport Commission Act 1949—in the Palace of Westminster and that took some discovery late at night on Thursday, before the Bill was published. To the extent that one has been able to do any homework, it looks as though my amendments are appropriate and necessary.

The people from whom I would have sought advice and counsel—those in the British Transport Police Federation—did not receive the Bill from the Government. That has not been explained by the Minister. As I said in the debate on Second Reading, the federation received a copy of the Bill from me yesterday. The Minister referred on Second Reading to the views and support of the chief constable but made no reference to the endorsement of the British Transport Police Federation of the details of the Bill—it wants the principle, as we all do, and we recognise the need for great urgency. He could not do that because he had not sent it a copy of the Bill and, as a further result, I and other hon. Members were not able to consult it. It was extraordinarily difficult to get the advice of the chief constable or his assistants in time.

My amendments would help to clarify the situation. I understand—perhaps the Minister will tell me—that a judgment exists either from a sheriff in Scotland or the High Court that results in the British Transport police officers in Scotland having the wider jurisdiction powers that we discussed on Second Reading. For example, if a British Transport police officer outside Waverley station in Edinburgh saw an incident that required the attendance and stewardship of a police officer, that officer, operating not within the curtilage of a railway station but in a street close to the station, would be able to respond, but that is not the position in a comparable situation in London.

I understand that that power exists by virtue of a judge's decision, and very wise and prudent that judge was. It seems to me that it is necessary for the Bill, first, to put on the statute book the view and opinion of the learned Scottish judge and, secondly, to ensure that those powers that have been enjoyed by British Transport police officers in Scotland are enjoyed throughout the United Kingdom. I believe that that is what my amendments would do.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I wish to raise one narrow point on which I would appreciate my right hon. Friend's advice. I am sure that we all appreciate very much the careful attention that the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) has given the Bill, but I raise one tiny point about the word "throughout". I wonder whether it applies to private as well as public premises and, if the British Transport police were to provide, for example, a service within private premises, whether the proposed legislation would apply.

My particular interest is the Port of London Police Federation, to which I have been an adviser for many years. As my right hon. Friend is aware, it is a small police force. Because of the privatisation of the ports, its position has changed rather dramatically. It has full chief constables but, following privatisation, their relative pay and conditions have been adversely affected. That has happened not because of privatisation but as one of the inevitable consequences. Their numbers are small indeed.

Mr. Wilson: What is an inevitable consequence of privatisation that is not caused by privatisation?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that if, like me, he had paid careful attention to the whole issue, on which the my right hon. Friend the Minister has shown great sympathy and understanding, he would appreciate that those snap judgments are not correct.

My point is this. Because of the age of the Port of London police force, consideration is being given to its future. One of the possibilities would be for it to merge with the British Transport police, because that would provide a continuing career structure. Part of the port of London is located in the constituency of the hon. Member for Thurrock, and he takes a great interest in the British Transport police and in all activities of the ports.

If there were to be such a change, and if the Port of London police came under the jurisdiction of the British Transport police, would the new subsection (1A)(3) apply to the Port of London police? It would be sad from the point of view of administration if we passed this exciting new Bill in a hurry only to find that by so doing we prevented the Port of London police even being considered for a merger with the British Transport police.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has always shown great sympathy and understanding for the problems of south-east England and particularly for Essex. I know that the hon. Member for Thurrock, who also takes an interest in the Fenchurch Street line, appreciates very much, although I am sure that he deplores Government policies, the interest that my right hon. Friend always takes in our affairs. The Port of London police are a fine body of constables, who have served the port well and wisely. I hope that my right hon. Friend can give me the assurance that, in the event of the Port of London police merging with the British Transport police, they will be allowed to carry on with their duties under the Bill. That is a small and narrow point, but I am sure that the draftsmen who assist the Minister will have thought about it. If my right hon. Friend can say that all would be well, I would be more than grateful.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) for raising the issue of the Port of London Police Federation. I have not met any of those responsible for the discharge of those important functions, but would be glad to pursue the matter

[Mr. Freeman]

that my hon. Friend has raised. I am bound to say that administrative merger is one thing and difference in jurisdiction is another. I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate that it is important to have proper legal advice on the point. In any case, this is not the right Bill to deal with that particular point, important as it is. I accept what he has said and give him an undertaking that I will pursue it and will write to him initially. If it is appropriate to have meetings with the representatives of the Port of London Police Federation, that will be done.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) raised a perfectly sensible point: why not simply extend the Scottish provisions to England and Wales? That is a different debate. As I have said, it is a sensible point to raise. First, however, the hon. Gentleman should appreciate that my references to what was complex and detailed referred not to the Bill but to the compendium of law since 1949, which for the layman is fiendishly complicated. The 1949 legislation has been amended by many Governments on many different occasions. It is important to trace through the changes in the powers of the police and their jurisdiction from one Act to an amending Act.

Mr. Mackinlay: The Minister has flagged up his excuse if the Bill is proved subsequently to be botched. The Bill could receive Royal Assent, only for us to find that it, too, is in error. It seems that the Minister is lining up his built-in excuse for getting things wrong again.

Mr. Freeman: That is not so. No Labour or Conservative Minister since the war has ever been able to give an assurance that complex legislation stemming from the 1945 to 1951 Parliament would be 100 per cent. right. Ministers make mistakes and Governments make mistakes. Sometimes there is an error of omission, sometimes one of commission. We try to get legislation right. Before the Bill receives Royal Assent I shall introduce the hon. Gentleman, if he would like, to the Parliamentary Counsel. He is a skilled lawyer who takes a great deal of pain and trouble when drafting any legislation. He is responsible not for policy but for translating the policy objectives of Ministers into legislation.

The hon. Member for Thurrock raised several important issues. Scottish law has been different from English and Welsh law in relation to the powers of the BTP for 14 years. The Scottish provisions became law in 1980 and the English provisions, which date back to the 1949 Act, as amended on many different occasions, have provided a different set of laws. I am not aware of any problems having been raised with me over the past few years about difficulties arising as a result of the two different sets of laws. As in many different sectors, there are two distinct sets of legal jurisdiction. That is something that goes beyond the BTP.

A problem has arisen specifically in relation to England and Wales, not Scotland. That has happened for reasons that I have described. Everyone who has participated in the debate understands that. The legal advice available to us, as I am sure to all others involved, was that the defect in England and Wales had to be put right. As I have said, there was no defect in the law relating to Scotland. It is the defect in English and Welsh legislation that we are seeking to correct.

The hon. Member for Thurrock raised the separate issue of why we should have different laws in Scotland than in England and Wales. That is a legitimate topic of debate. We were asked through the Bill to deal with a specific problem that had arisen in England and Wales as a result of the Railways Act 1993 in terms of its implications for the 1949 legislation, and we are doing so. We are not seeking to widen the jurisdiction of the BTP or to ensure that English and Scottish laws are the same in every aspect of life within our society. We are correcting an anomaly.

On that basis, I cannot commend the amendment to the Committee. I say that in no partisan spirit. I have explained that there is an urgent need for legislation to address a specific problem. I hope that the Bill commands the support of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber and of those in another place. With that brief explanation, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept what I have said in good faith.

8.15 pm

Mr. Wilson: I do not want to prolong our debates. There is no point in covering the same ground again. The Opposition's position is as follows: if we are to have legislation that deals specifically with the British Transport police and if there is a consensus that the present legislation in Scotland is more effective than that which hitherto has pertained in England and Wales, why not use the opportunity to establish the same powers throughout the whole of the country? That would achieve the consistency that we are looking for and secure a more effective British Transport police.

That is no ideology. There is no rule in the book stating that, because the primary purpose of a Bill is to remedy a defect in other legislation, we cannot take the opportunity to improve upon the status quo ante. I do not understand the Government's difficulty unless they are reluctant to extend the powers of the BTP in a logical way that is in line with the Scottish system. They cannot say that the Scottish system is less efficient than the one that pertains in England and Wales because everyone agrees that it is not.

The BTP in England and Wales work within the same powers as their counterparts in Scotland. As the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and I well know, we are all part of the same United Kingdom. Why should we not have the same BTP operating under the same rules? It is a simple question that the Minister has signally failed to answer except in the narrowest theological terms. He has said that the Bill is meant to do only A and that it would be some sort of crime against the constitution for it to do B and thus make it better.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 54, Noes 151.

Division No. 172] **[8.16 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Dewar, Donald
Barnes, Harry	Dobson, Frank
Bayley, Hugh	Eastham, Ken
Benton, Joe	Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*	Fyfe, Maria
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	George, Bruce
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*	Gunnell, John
Chisholm, Malcolm	Hall, Mike
Clapham, Michael	Hanson, David
Corston, Ms Jean	Harvey, Nick
Cummings, John	Jamieson, David

Lewis, Terry
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
[illegible]kthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rendel, David
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and Mr. Bob Cryer.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Dobson: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 31, to leave out from 'elsewhere' in line 21 to the end of line 31 and insert

'but only for the purposes of—
(i) carrying out investigations; and
(ii) arresting any person—
(aa) whom he has followed from, or from the vicinity of, any such premises, in circumstances where that person could have been arrested in, on, or in the vicinity of, such premises; or
(bb) who is in possession of goods or money which the constable reasonably believes to have been stolen from or from the vicinity of, any such premises or from the custody of the transport police.'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this we will consider amendment No. 6, in page 1, line 28, leave out from beginning to end of line 2 on page 2.

Mr. Dobson: When I originally suggested that the Government should bring forward a one-clause Bill to correct their own grotesque error which had left the British Transport police without proper jurisdiction from 1 April, I had hoped that, on the basis of once bitten twice shy, the Government would put forward a one-clause Bill which would do the job that the British Transport police, British Rail and the British Transport Police Federation all want it to do. The trouble is that the Government do not seem to have done that.

We are told—but we have no objective evidence to this effect—that the chief constable is satisfied with the proposition that is before us, but we think it is quite unsatisfactory. During the Second Reading debate we raised the question of the need for the four lines at the bottom of page 1 of the Bill which would restrict the powers of a constable as being lawful only when he was acting in accordance with the terms of the agreement with one of the privatised operators.

The Minister has put forward a number of what can only be described as quite preposterous justifications for this proposition. For instance, he said that one of the reasons for the clause was that, although some of the provisions of the agreements would be universal, they might cover different periods for different companies. We will try to deal with that one. If there is an agreement in force, whether it lasts for a week or a decade, either it is in operation or it is not. If the agreement is in operation, it might be identical; if it is not in operation, it would not be valid and it would have no bearing on the powers of a constable employed by, or working for, British Transport police.

Another of the Minister's suggestions for his preposterous proposition was that different sums of money

[Mr. Dobson]

might be involved. The sums of money involved must surely be completely irrelevant to the actions of an individual constable. Either he is doing his job, or he is not. If, as will probably be the case, the Government have managed to drag in a fly-by-night outfit which has not paid its contribution, that will surely be of no consequence. Provided that that outfit is a railway operator for the time being, the constable will have certain duties in relation to its property and its operations. The state of that outfit's accounts and what it is paying are utterly irrelevant to the constable's jurisdiction. Money cannot affect the constable's jurisdiction.

8.30 pm

The Minister came closest to providing a sensible explanation for the provision when he said that some operators might also operate other activities and the constable should not be obliged to act in a policing role in relation to the other activities. I do not understand why a constable should expect to do that. I do not see why the agreement should have to exclude non-railway premises and non-railway functions. Unless they were imported into the agreement in the first place, there would be no reason why a British Transport police constable should have anything to do with such premises or functions.

The Minister may say that there may be circumstances in which part of a depot is devoted to non-railway activities and therefore the constable needs to have jurisdiction there. That may be the case. However, if he needs that jurisdiction, he should have it. It should not be limited by considerations of who owns the premises or what they are used for.

The Minister has come up with no sensible arguments in favour of the four lines at the bottom of page 1 of this two-clause Bill. He has given us no justification for the provisions. The continued presence of those four lines in the Bill could possibly limit the jurisdiction of British Transport police constables. It is clear from the letter that the Minister was forced to send to the chair of the British Transport police committee that the committee believed that there were problems. If that was not the case, the Minister would not have had to write his letter.

I am not convinced that that committee is convinced that what the Minister is saying is what the committee wants to hear or that it is entirely satisfied with the Minister's current propositions. We have tabled the amendments to delete the four lines which we believe are objectionable, ridiculous and troublesome and which will cause bother for constables who are trying to go about their duties and for the management of BTP when it tries to carry out its proper management tasks.

As I admitted earlier, my detailed formulation of the wording of the amendment may be unsatisfactory. I am quite prepared to accept that. We have suggested that the best way to deal with the matter would be to import into the law for England and Wales the provisions that presently apply in Scotland where everyone accepts that the system currently works well. The Minister will have to accept that the restrictions on the powers of the constable set out in the last four lines of the Bill will not apply in Scotland. Constables in Scotland will not have to check whether they are acting in accordance with the terms of each individual agreement.

There will be general powers in Scotland, but there will not be untrammelled general powers in England and Wales. That is absurd, particularly as British Transport police officers are not necessarily confined to England and Wales, or to Scotland. British Transport police officers do not recognise any difference at the boundaries. They sometimes travel by car and sometimes by train backwards and forwards across the border. However, their jurisdictions could differ depending on which side of the border they are. That is preposterous and is likely to cause difficulty for constables.

The Minister has presented no sound or solid explanation of why he wants the provision in the Bill. The provision is totally unnecessary. It complicates things and makes life difficult for those who must try to operate the provisions of the Bill when it becomes an Act. It will make life difficult for those who try to protect passengers and goods on the railways and, as we said earlier, it will make life difficult for those who have the very difficult task of trying to ensure that terrorists do not kill or maim people on the railways or manage to close the system down by threatening bomb incidents.

The Minister has failed in his undertaking. When I approached him and told him that I thought that he should present a one-clause Bill, he said that that was what the Government were contemplating. They committed themselves to that in the Lords. However, it should be understood that if the Government say that they are going to introduce a one-clause Bill which will clear up a mess that they created in the first place, it is reasonable for the House to expect them to introduce a one-clause Bill which will not create another mess similar to the one they have created already and which this Bill is supposed to correct.

We are giving the Minister an opportunity to accept our amendments or the spirit of the amendments. It would be no criticism of the Minister if he were to say that he was prepared to consider them and come back with amendments in the other place to deal with the very reasonable points that we have raised. My hon. Friends and I, and the representative of the Liberal Democrat party, the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey), have acted throughout with the intention of trying to get the law back on the rails, to correct the Government's errors and to ensure that, from 1 April, the law is effective.

We have behaved throughout with utter responsibility and a concern for the safety of passengers and British Transport police officers. We do not believe that the Government have responded in kind to our propositions. They have not introduced a Bill that does the trick. Either amendment or both amendments would massively improve the Bill. The principle behind them would result in a great improvement. In particular, amendment No. 1 would bring the law in England and Wales into line with the law in Scotland which everyone accepts is satisfactory and which is in no way restricted by a clause or provision like the last four lines of page 1 of the Bill.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I spent a great deal of time last Session on the Floor of the House and also in Committee in the debates on the Railways Bill. We had 35 sittings in Committee which included many hours of debate on the future role of the British Transport police.

The Minister has been asked tonight—and we have not had a satisfactory answer from him—why, throughout those lengthy debates, the Government did not manage to get it right. They bungled not just the clause on the BTP,

but their definition of the BTP's remit, role and powers. They are in danger of doing the same again with the Bill. My hon. Friends have tabled an amendment that would clarify the powers of the British Transport police. Those powers were ably set out by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

The Committee on the Railways Bill debated the provisions relating to the British Transport police in the light of a consultative document which the Department of Transport issued on the future of the British Transport police. That document was issued in November 1992. There was very little time for people to comment because the closing date for consultation was 16 December 1992. I hope that the Minister can tell us how many responses the Department of Transport received to that consultation paper. Does he believe that adequate time was given to enable those who wished to make a response to do so? If there was adequate time for those with an interest in the affairs of the British Transport police to consult and respond to the Government's proposals, why was the problem that we are discussing in Committee tonight missed?

After the debates last year, which followed a consultation period on a Government document, and which took place over a longer period in Committee on the Railways Bill than we have in this rushed Committee of the whole House on this Bill, can the Minister assure us that what he is now proposing is foolproof and that the Government will not have to come back with further changes?

The amendment in the name of my hon. Friends seeks to define the powers of the police as that of investigation —the seeking of evidence and interviewing suspects or witnesses—and/or that of arrest in certain specified circumstances. It is suggested that the BTP should have those powers away from the premises of British Rail, its subsidiaries, and the rail operators who engage the services of the BTP. The Minister's definition in the Bill as drafted is wider. It says that British Transport police officers would have powers with regard to

"matters connected with or affecting the British Railways Board"

and the other bodies concerned.

Can the Minister tell the Committee what precisely is meant by the words "matters connected with or affecting"? If the scope of the powers in the Bill is wider than the scope proposed in the amendment—that is, the power of investigation, the collecting of evidence, and the power of arrest—we should know what those powers are. If the powers in the Bill are not wider than those proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, we should have the simple and clear definition proposed by my hon. Friend. I hope that the Committee will support his amendment.

I trust that the Minister will respond also to the issue of the supervision of the British Transport police. That supervision will be in the hands of the police committee. Can the Minister tell us who the members of the committee will be and how they will define the words "connected with or affecting"? Unless we know how the committee will define the policy of the British Transport police, we will not know the remit and range of their powers away from railway premises.

8.45 pm

All hon. Members want to ensure that the British Transport police have the powers that they need to do their job of protecting law and order, protecting passengers, and protecting the property of railway operators. Those powers should be defined in the Bill. However, I do not believe that they are clearly defined at present. My hon. Friend makes a better job of that definition in his amendment.

During the long Committee sittings on the Railways Bill, it became clear on several occasions that the Government were simply making up railway privatisation as they went along. They were unclear on how to put into practice their objective of privatising the railways. Clause after clause was brought to the Committee and included in the Railways Bill. Clauses were then withdrawn and we were told that different clauses would be introduced. That Committee was an arena for debate in which there were days, weeks and months to reflect, go back to the draftsmen and re-examine the provisions of the Bill in the light of debate and questions raised, but still a serious error was made.

Tonight, a new Bill is presented to us as something that we must debate and finish in a single evening. It is not as though the faults in the original Bill suddenly came to light on Wednesday or Thursday last week. There is absolutely no reason why the Minister could not have published his Bill weeks ago—I do not want to repeat the Second Reading debate—so that hon. Members who wished to examine and probe whether the Government had got it right this time could table amendments or seek to see the Minister to express reservations. I should like the Minister to explain why those opportunities have not been provided. I suspect that the reason why they have not been provided is that the Government are deeply embarrassed at having botched the Railways Bill and that they want to hide their embarrassment with the shortest possible debate.

Filling the holes in the Railways Bill is rather like trying to refloat the Titanic. The Government introduced today's Bill to block some of the holes and mistakes in the original Bill. As the consequences of rail privatisation go ahead, I am absolutely convinced that this will be the first of many Bills that the Government will have to introduce desperately to make the unworkable work and make rail privatisation happen in a way that will improve services to the travelling public. Frankly, the Government will not be successful because rail privatisation will not improve services for the public. The whole endeavour is fatally flawed.

Mr. Trotter: It may be helpful to remind the Committee of the scope of activity of the British Transport police when considering their powers. The British Transport police deal not only with matters that obviously relate to the police; they deal with a very wide range of matters, similar to any Home Office force. They deal with murder, manslaughter, grievous bodily harm, firearms and explosives—reference has already been made to that—rape, robbery, booking office frauds, thefts, thefts of motor vehicles, thousands of cases of fraud relating mostly to tickets, arson, damage to motor vehicles, numerous incidents involving endangering the safety of the public on the railways and public order offences. They deal with a total of some 78,000 or 80,000 offences a year, which is some 200 plus a day. Obviously, the scope of the force is very wide.

[Mr. Trotter]

Can my right hon. Friend give the Committee the assurance that he has given to me privately, which is that the force will continue to have all the powers that it needs to deal with that wide ramification of crime from murder at the top to graffiti at the bottom, if I may put it that way? Can he give an assurance that the force will retain the adequate powers that it has at present to deal with such incidents?

Mr. Harvey: Earlier, the Minister said that the responsibility of the British Transport police will differ in various parts of the railways network. That is why there would be a variety of agreements. Everybody accepts that, however, we are discussing not the responsibilities of the British Transport police, but its jurisdiction.

Any curb on that jurisdiction is a risk or a gamble. A number of hon. Members have given today various hypothetical examples of where the limits to the transport police's jurisdiction might have unforeseen and calamitous consequences, in that a villain could get away in various situations.

The only argument which the Minister has made which appears to have any logic as to why jurisdiction should be limited in this way is that some of the private railway companies might have other interests which are not related to railways over which they would not want the transport police to have jurisdiction. That being so, surely the way to address that is to amend line 25 in another place to specify that it is simply the railway interests of the companies which would be covered.

In my view, any limit to jurisdiction is a gamble. The burden of proof is therefore on the side of whoever wishes to curtail that jurisdiction. If it is curtailed in an unfortunate way and there are disastrous consequences, it will be on the Minister's shoulders. The burden of proof is with him, and I have yet to hear any reason as to why the limit to jurisdiction in those four lines should be imposed.

Mr. Cryer: It would be helpful if the Minister were to give a good reason why the amendment should be rejected. It is a serious attempt to clarify the position and to place it —as lawyers say—beyond peradventure that the British Transport police, or the British Railways Board police as it will be under the combined Acts, are not placed in jeopardy because they are not sure of their jurisdiction. That is the essence of the argument.

The hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) asked for an assurance that a wide range of powers which the transport police currently undertake are not to be affected in any way by the legislation. I ask the Minister whether they would be affected in any way by amendment No. 1. which we are considering together with amendment No. 6. The range of powers given there to allow the railway police to act elsewhere other than on railway premises would cover the range of offences which the hon. Gentleman has outlined.

I cannot see that the phrases put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) would in any way inhibit that, so it would improve the Bill. There is no question but that there is a limitation placed in line 30 of the Bill that the constable can act only

"in accordance with the terms of that agreement."

That refers to the service agreement between the British Railways Board and police, and it implies that there is a potential limitation.

The Minister said that the agreements would vary by duration. Obviously, once an agreement has expired, a constable will no longer have jurisdiction. If an organisation were no longer employing the British Transport police, there would be no jurisdiction. That is only one example.

The Minister, for instance, mentioned the amount of money involved. I cannot understand how that would affect the component which the Minister emphasised—the jurisdiction of the railway police which is to be built into every licence to every franchisee. However, if money is to affect the matter, that would surely mean that the range of services which the police will offer will be more costly the wider the range. Inevitably, that means the jurisdiction of the police, because the services it offers for sale are police services.

If money is to be greater for a given range of services, inevitably more services will be involved and therefore the jurisdiction of the agreement will be wider. One set of policemen will operate under one agreement, and they will have wider jurisdiction on particular premises subject to that agreement than policemen who are operating on other premises and subject to a different agreement.

Ministers have claimed that the chief constables' "code of conduct" will be imposed on every licence which, the Minister claims, is a safeguard. We need to ask questions about that. There will be lots of agreements, and operators will be changing. As one operator goes into liquidation, another comes in and takes over the franchise. There will be many changes.

The Department of Transport, as I recall, claimed at the time the Bill was being debated that as many as 14,000 contracts—not all covering the police—would be involved in setting up this crazy pack of cards which the demented right-wingers are seeking to impose on an unwilling nation. That is all right in the sense that it will hasten their electoral doom at the next general election. However, we must suffer the crazy and demented ravings of the reich which is currently operating in the Government offices in Whitehall. The right-wing loonies have control.

The Opposition oppose the Bill in Parliament and in principle, and we have now to try to make it work as effectively as we can in the short term. Hopefully, there will not be many aspects of the Railways Act 1993 which will be put into operation because of the shortage of time between April and the next general election.

Nonetheless, we all enunciated an important point at Second Reading about the protection of the public from entry on to the railways and the protection of people on the railways from vandalism and, alas, from the terrorist potential which is there daily. Indeed, there was a bomb threat at Orpington station early today. It caused disruption.

All the factors that I have mentioned are ever present. We do not want the British Transport police, as part of the thin blue line against the rising tide of crime that is engulfing the nation under the Conservative Government, to be handicapped. That is why we are raising these points. We want to make sure beyond peradventure that the law is clear.

If legislation has to be tested in the courts, it is poor legislation. We want to make it clear. I should have thought

that the amendment clarified the position. It seeks to leave out the mumbo jumbo about the terms of the agreement. It does not depend on the terms of the agreement. The Minister has told Parliament that as a condition of every licence the chief constable will lay down universal terms and conditions for the operation of the police in relation to the conduct of law and order. Terms and conditions relating to time and money will also be laid down, but they will not affect law and order or the duties of the British Transport police. We would not need to worry about the terms of the agreement if a standard set of terms and conditions were laid out in the Bill.

It is more satisfactory for Parliament to write terms and conditions into the Bill than for it to leave them to some shadowy committee. If the chief constable tells the people who administer the licences that they must incorporate certain terms in the licence, and if there is a plethora of agreements, someone somewhere might just leave out the section that would be so relevant in a subsequent court case and open to challenge. We want to make the law on criminal activities which inhibits the operation of the railway and the safety of passengers and users as clear as we possibly can. I should have thought that the amendment did just that.

Mr. Freeman: I shall first deal with the points made by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I guess that more points will be made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) in due course.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras asked why there should be a police services agreement. I have already explained that the Government believe that it is important to formalise the relationship between the British Transport police and the various constituent parts of the railway industry in terms of the precise functions and responsibilities of the police for a certain user. That is not to say that the core police responsibilities will not be the same for each user. Provisions in the agreement will relate to the specifics of a case.

I have already explained that one of the main purposes of the agreement might well be to limit the responsibilities of the police to the railway undertakings involved and not to the other activities of the company. Such an agreement is well precedented, for example, in the London Regional Transport Act 1984 and the Leeds Supertram Act 1993. So I do not understand hon. Members' fears about the use of the agreement. It seems sensible and practical. We seek to deal with a problem that has arisen in England and Wales, but not in Scotland. In Scotland, jurisdiction and limits of jurisdiction are not an issue.

9 pm

Mr. Dobson: Where in any of the precedents that the Minister adduced today or in his letter to the chairman of the police committee does it say that the constable can act only in accordance with the terms of an agreement?

Mr. Freeman: I have already given two examples. If the hon. Gentleman consults the Leeds Supertram Act 1993, he will find that there must be a formal agreement to enshrine responsibility. The Leeds supertram has not opened yet, but there has to be an agreement between British Transport police and that undertaking. The same is true of the London Regional Transport Act 1984. There is nothing unusual about a formal agreement.

Mr. Dobson: I have the Leeds Supertram Act here. There is no suggestion anywhere in the Act or in the other two precedents that the Minister has given—*[Interruption.]* The Minister is getting a copy of the Act, which will prove that I am telling the truth—that a constable's duties will be trammelled or curtailed by the agreement that is reached. That is the point that we have sought to make to the Minister.

Mr. Freeman: Section 64 of the Leeds Supertram Act 1993 says:

"Where agreement under this section is made with the railways board, members of the British Transport Police Force may act in accordance with the terms of the agreement as constables in, on and in the vicinity of any premises of the Executive notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (1) of section 53 (As to appointment of constables) of the British Transport Commission Act 1949."

A similar provision is replicated in schedule 4 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984. The existence of agreements is already precedented.

Mr. Dobson: We all know that there are agreements, but nowhere in any of the legislation that the Minister has quoted is there any suggestion that the specific terms of the agreement limit the powers of a constable.

Mr. Freeman: I shall deal with the limitation of the powers of a constable, which was raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), in a moment.

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) asked me two questions. First, he asked me to comment on the phrase, "matters connected with or affecting".

That is drawn from the British Transport Commission Act 1949. The language has proved to be effective ever since. Those words are a broader definition than the practice in Scotland, but they are well proven and tried and tested.

The hon. Member for York asked me who was on the police committee. The police committee is, and will continue to be, appointed by the British Railways Board. It includes, obviously, appointees from the railways. There is an independent member. There is also the chairman of the Central Transport Users Consultative Committee. The order that has been laid before Parliament simply gives the British Railways Board the power to appoint representatives from Railtrack.

Mr. Mackinlay: Oh?

Mr. Freeman: Because Railtrack comprises literally half the railway—the infrastructure. Also, as the name of the Central Transport Users Consultative Committee is changing—although its powers are, if anything, slightly enlarged—the order that is before Parliament now simply refers to the new Central Rail Users Consultative Committee.

Mr. Bayley: Are there proposals to allow private rail operators to appoint members of the police committee? I ask the question because of a statement in the consultation document that the Department of Transport distributed on the future of the British Transport police, which says in paragraph 28:

"On the other hand, a national police force controlled by private companies and exercising all the powers of Constables might prove unacceptable to public opinion."

Mr. Freeman: There is no suggestion that private franchisees should appoint members of the police committee. *[Interruption.]* I am able to handle the point, thank you—so far.

Mr. Mackinlay: Another fine mess you have got into!

Mr. Freeman: When I need help, I will ask for it.

There is no question of private sector franchisees appointing themselves or others to the police committee. The police committee is appointed by the British Railways Board. Obviously it would be sensible for the chairman of that board, when in due course he makes new appointments to the police committee, to appoint representatives of franchisees, but there are no franchisees at the moment and there will be none this year. There will be some next year, and at that stage it may be sensible to include representatives, but they are representatives.

Mr. Bayley *rose—*

Mr. Freeman: I should like to make progress, if I may.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) asked whether all the various crimes and offences that he described could be encompassed in the jurisdiction envisaged by the Bill. The answer, obviously, is yes. There will be no change to the powers of the British Transport police in relation to the pursuit of offenders, the arrest of offenders and the questioning and interrogation of offenders, if we pass the Bill.

The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) asked about the jurisdiction covered by a police services agreement. I have indicated—I repeat the point for the sake of clarity—that there may be a need to exclude non-railway businesses which will vary according to the police user. Each police user will have a different set of businesses and undertakings which will therefore have to be specifically described in the agreement if they are to be excluded from the jurisdiction of the police. That has long been the case. The jurisdiction of the British Transport police does not extend beyond the railways.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South asked about the limitations imposed on jurisdiction. There must be an agreement and that will be enforced as a condition of the licence. It will be in a form agreed by the police committee for core policing and any agreement must be approved by the Secretary of State. Those provisions are clear.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South because he has done me a favour. I note from the Order Paper that the hon. Gentleman has an Adjournment debate tabled for this Friday, dealing with Menwyth Hill station. I have to tell him that last week, on learning of that, my civil servants said, "You have to answer that Adjournment debate, Minister."

Mr. Cryer: It shows how much the right hon. Gentleman knows about railways.

Mr. Freeman: The reason why I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman is that my constituency diary was cleared of all engagements. Now they tell me that, having consulted British Rail, even British Rail cannot find Menwyth Hill station. A Defence Minister is to answer, so now I have a completely clear day.

Mr. Dobson: Other railway stations may disappear into the Menwyth triangle before privatisation proceeds far.

Mr. Cryer: The fact that Department of Transport officials believe that Menwyth Hill station is a railway station shows how long they have been dedicated to supporting the road industry.

Mr. Dobson: They are obviously running a ghost train through there.

I feel sorry for the Minister because he has been sent out to put right his and other people's mistakes and finds himself defending the indefensible in trying to put them right. The Opposition accept that a police services agreement is needed between each railway company or undertaking and British Transport police. Nobody disputes the fact that all those organisations other than British Rail have such an agreement now, but we do dispute whether an individual agreement could limit the powers of constables employed by British Transport police. Such limits should not exist.

At the risk of being accused of tedious repetition, I must point out yet again that, if the agreements vary—eventually there may be more than 100—neither the constables nor British Transport police will know whether they have the authority to act in individual circumstances. The Minister has still offered no explanation. The three precedents that he quoted are not relevant as they do not include the words to which we object in the Bill. It would have been better had he not quoted them.

We also asked the Minister to give examples of differences that might exist in those agreements. I shall not go into whether some agreements will run for a longer time than others. Either they exist or they do not. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and others pointed out, the financial side of the contract is utterly irrelevant to the work of the constable.

As the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) and I have said, the nearest the Minister has come to giving a sensible justification was when he said that some railway companies might own premises that are not used for railway purposes, so the agreement would need to exclude such premises. It does not need to do that because the clause confines constables to acting

"in, on and in the vicinity of any police premises; and . . . elsewhere, in relation to matters connected with or affecting . . . a police services user".

They would become a user as a police service. There is no question of the last four lines of page 1 qualifying the fact; it does not need qualifying as it is qualified right from the start.

The Minister has not come up with a sensible explanation or justification for those four lines, which is why we shall call for a Division on the amendment, which would delete those and other words and replace them with the words drawn from the Scottish legislation. Everyone must accept that that legislation works and would not be limited by the words to which we object in the Bill. I cannot understand why the Minister does not see that.

Opposition Members are becoming increasingly suspicious that, yet again, the Government are up to something. We are developing a suspicion that, one way or another, bits of the railway system and more and more policing activities will be excluded from the jurisdiction of the British Transport police. As we said at the beginning of debates on the Bill—which was not very long ago—it is crucial to the safety of passengers and of goods, and, above all, crucial in the fight against the terrorist, that there be no gaps, that we continue to have comprehensive jurisdiction. We do not believe that this one-clause Bill will do the job it was supposed to do and the job that we requested be done. That is why we shall press the amendment to a vote.

9.15 pm

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 49, Noes 167.

Division No. 173] **[9.15 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benton, Joe
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dobson, Frank
Faulds, Andrew
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Home Robertson, John
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Lewis, Terry
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
Oiner, William
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Rendel, David
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and
Mr. Jim Dowd.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Mackinlay: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 1, line 25, at end insert—"or (iv) London Underground Limited."

The amendment would improve the Bill by adding London Underground Ltd. to clause 1(3). It should be inserted for the sake of clarity. I anticipate that the Minister will say that London Underground is subject to the user agreements. I would welcome that clarification. This a probing amendment, as it seems that London Underground has been forgotten.

I am conscious of the fact that, unlike the other users which have been the subject of earlier discussion, London Underground is represented on the British Transport police committee. It would be appropriate, therefore, for its status to be reflected in the Bill. It is in that spirit that I have moved the amendment.

Mr. Freeman: I shall clarify the matter for the hon. Gentleman. The powers of the British Transport police in relation to London Underground are already covered by the London Regional Transport Act 1984, so there is no need for the amendment. I confirm that the British Railways Board appoints London Underground's managing director, who sits on the British Transport police committee. I am not aware of any proposals to change that. A sufficient number of British Transport policemen deal with the underground to warrant a representative of London Underground on that committee. The arrangements have worked well and I can therefore assure the hon. Gentleman that the amendment is not necessary.

Mr. Mackinlay: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

AMENDMENT OF THE BRITISH TRANSPORT COMMISSION ACT 1949

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

9.30 pm

Mr. Wilson: I want to use this debate to explore the licence exemptions. The way in which information has trickled out tonight shows that the conduct of this Bill has been an affront. Many issues should clearly have been discussed in Committee. There is an awful lot of ground to be covered and many questions to be asked in this House and outside it by the people who will be affected by this legislation.

In something of a departure from his normal style, the Minister refused to answer my earlier questions and peremptorily terminated our discussion of the channel tunnel. As I said, a grave problem has to be settled. Where will the writ of the British Transport police run? Perhaps we can have an action replay of the earlier stages of the debate when I started to probe the Minister on that subject. The hon. Member for North Devon, (Mr. Harvey) also mentioned exemptions. The Minister's replies could not have been more clear cut—exemptions were about the odd steam train here and there. He stated categorically that the tunnel was not covered by exemptions.

I mentioned the relationship between the Bill and SI 606, the Railways (Class and Miscellaneous Exemptions) Order 1994. As far as I can gather from his reply on Second Reading, the Minister confirmed that the list of exemptions of operators who will not require licences contained in that order is relevant to the Bill. In other words, if one does not need a licence and one is therefore listed in the statutory instrument, one will not be covered by the obligation to retain British Transport police. If that is not an accurate summary, the Minister can correct me. If it is, it raises questions of major importance.

The list does not merely cover some trivial group of steam engine operators, but includes some important categories, and it needs at least some explanation to be given to the House. For instance, category (a) includes:

"any network, station or light maintenance depot, the operator of which immediately before the coming into force of this article was a person other than—(i) the Board, (ii) a subsidiary of the Board, (iii) London Regional Transport, or (iv) a subsidiary of London Regional Transport".

Category (b) gives a geographical description of a network that is to be exempted from the need for a licence. I am no expert on the geography of London, but the description reads suspiciously like the docklands light railway, or certainly parts of it. Is that the case? The description is of

"the railway line running from the junction between Westferry Station and West India Quay Station, through Poplar Station, to the western end of Beckton station in London"—

and so on and so forth. It also lists other stations. Is that the docklands light railway? If so, it is not some old steam engine, run by enthusiasts. On that count, the Minister's answer appears to have been faulty.

Paragraph (l) is perhaps the most interesting. It reads:

"any network, station or light maintenance depot comprised in the Channel Tunnel system".

I am advised by the interpretation section that the "Channel Tunnel system" means that system defined in the Channel Tunnel Act 1987. That Act contains a lengthy description and it appears that the system includes not only the underwater link between the two countries, but also much infrastructure on this side of the tunnel. For instance, it includes the two terminal areas, the service and maintenance area, the inland clearance depot at Ashford, the necessary links with the road and rail networks and the fixed and movable equipment needed for the operation of the tunnel. Is that the extent of what is to be outside the remit of the British Transport police? That is a straightforward question. Now that we have drawn out the information that the channel tunnel is affected by the legislation, I find the Minister's earlier answer extremely puzzling: I do not know why he said that exemptions had nothing to do with the tunnel, when that is clearly not the case.

Item "m" is also interesting. It refers to

"the light maintenance depots listed in Schedule 1".

Schedule 1 of the order lists 63 such depots. They are not trivial; I would guess that they are some of the biggest British Rail depots in the country. Examples are Chester wagon shop, the traction maintenance depot at Crewe, the Eastleigh freight traction maintenance depot and Saltley fuel and maintenance point.

Let me truncate the question, and simply ask how many of those depots which are at present within the ambit of the British Transport police will not be subject to licence—and thus not BTP responsibility—in the future. If the answer is "none", the Minister can give it very quickly, and it will be in line with his earlier answers. If, however, the list includes depots which are currently the responsibility of the British Transport police but which will be exempted from the licence system, that is clearly not consistent with what the Minister told the Committee earlier.

There is a vast chasm of conflicting interpretations. At the beginning of the debate, the Minister told us categorically that exemptions meant steam railways, and similar bits and pieces that were of no account to anyone. The British Transport police, however, believe that as a result of the exemptions they will be excluded from the Heathrow express, the docklands light railway, European passenger services and many other important segments of the railway, and I believe that the hon. Member for North Devon has been told as much. That, as I have said, represents a chasm of misunderstanding—and an eloquent comment on the Government's handling of the matter: as we enter the last minutes of consideration of the Bill, that is the belief held by people outside who will be affected by it.

It would have been much more straightforward of the Minister not to ignore the existence of the list of exemptions, but to try to explain to the Committee its relevance, or lack of relevance. We would then have been given a statement of the position, rather than a dismissal of the idea in the hope—probably—that no one would notice the connection between the Bill and the statutory instrument that the Minister himself tabled a few days ago.

I look forward to the Minister's answer.

Mr. Freeman: Let me deal with the three major points raised by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson).

First, if there is an exemption and a licence is not required, the arguments that I have deployed in relation to enforcing an agreement through the licence clearly cannot apply: the hon. Gentleman is right in that regard. Undertakings that are exempt—including London Underground and the docklands light railway, which is related to London Regional Transport for the purposes of legislation—will exercise their right, and enter into an agreement with the British Transport police. The hon. Gentleman is correct, however, in saying that because they are exempt from the railway licensing system it is an option for them to extend the jurisdiction of the British Transport police, rather than its being imposed on them.

I can confirm that the docklands light railway and London Underground have a formal relationship with the British Transport police; in other words, they have extended the jurisdiction of the police voluntarily to themselves—and the system has worked very well.

I have mentioned the representation on the police committee. I indicated a cross-reference and the hon. Gentleman was right to ask questions about police jurisdiction in relation to exemptees.

The hon. Gentleman cited the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 and its definition of the tunnel system, which is exempt. That definition relates to the tunnels, terminal areas at Cheriton and Frethun, an inland clearance depot which is not proceeding as originally envisaged, necessary road and rail links of each country, and the fixed and movable equipment needed for tunnel operations.

Although British Transport police jurisdiction cannot be imposed on the tunnel system through the licensing system, BTP's jurisdiction is clear in respect of passenger and freight rail services to and from the tunnel. It exists because licences are required to run those train services, so a requirement will be imposed on the licensee to enter an agreement—which must be approved by the Secretary of State—to cover the powers of the police. Therefore, British Transport police will be at Waterloo station and on the trains, and will be responsible for the law and order function that I described earlier in respect of freight services.

In the tunnel itself and at its portals, Eurotunnel will be responsible for security arrangements. If there are problems, it will call in Kent constabulary. There is an agreement between Kent constabulary and Eurotunnel. On the other side of the channel, different arrangements will apply because there the state is responsible for security and policing arrangements.

Mr. Harvey: Will European Passenger Services be an exemptee?

Mr. Freeman: It will not be exempt. European Passenger Services will run all the trains to and from the tunnel. It will be licensed, so BTP will police those boarding and using its trains.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North drew my attention to the long list of light maintenance depots, which are exempt from the licensing system. He is right to say that jurisdiction can extend automatically to investigations and to the pursuit to those depots of anyone committing an offence. Of that, there is no question. I should not have thought that policing the depots themselves would be high on the list of policing responsibilities, but I accept that there may be a legitimate interest on the part of depot owners to enter an agreement with British Transport police. However, that will not be compulsory but voluntarily negotiated.

Mr. Dobson: Is the Minister saying that British Transport police will have no jurisdiction over exempt premises and will have a right to enter such premises only in pursuit of someone who thieved something from the railway?

Mr. Freeman: Yes, that is a fair and accurate description. After discussions with British Transport police and the chief constable, I am not aware of any particular problems arising in relation to constraints on jurisdiction. Clearly there is a right of pursuit, but because such depots are exempt from the licensing regime it would not be possible to impose a BTP agreement on their owners, although some may wish to enter such an agreement to protect their property.

Mr. Trotter: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Labour party issued a press release tonight? I subsequently spoke to the chairman of the British Transport Police Federation, who described that press release as

"a load of garbage, so wrong it is unbelievable. I can only conclude that it was designed to stir up trouble unnecessarily."

I suggest to my right hon. Friend that that has been the tone of many comments by Opposition Members tonight.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that to my attention. Doubtless the matter will be discussed in Torquay at the annual conference that he and I will be attending.

Mr. Wilson: That was a despicable intervention.

I have stood opposite the Minister, at the Opposition Dispatch Box, throughout the Railways Bill and in Committee, I respect his regard for detail and his attempts to explain the proposed legislation—in so far as it is capable of being explained—and I know that he does not run away from the issues. I am not suggesting that it was anything deliberate, as the area had not been explored, but it is on the record that at the start of the debate today he dismissed the exemptions as being only steam trains, and the odd bit here and there.

In his response to me on the stand part debate, the Minister went through every one of the substantive exemptions that I asked about and confirmed that, in each case, there would be at the very least a possibility that those parts of the railway would be outside the jurisdiction of the British Transport police and that they might or might not opt in. So far as I am concerned, that is it—the record is straight on that and we shall not obstruct the Bill tonight —but that was not what the Minister said to start with, so there are still huge questions to be answered.

The guy who is paid money by the British Transport police to look after their interests—the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), who had neither the intellect nor the energy to ask any of those questions—then stood up at the end and produced the best contribution that he could make. And it spoke volumes. When members of the British Transport police read the record of this debate, they will know who asked the questions, who scraped away the surface and who began to get some of the information that is relevant to their future work and to that of railway passengers. I will let it rest there, but—my goodness—

[Mr. Wilson]

what a movement there has been since the start of the debate in the factual information that has come from the Minister.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

Reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

9.47 pm

Mr. Dobson: I do not wish to detain the House for long. As I explained on Second Reading, the Bill is before the House because the Labour party pressed the Government to put right their errors in the Railways Act that would have left the British Transport police bereft of significant powers to combat crime, look after the interests of passengers and goods on the railways, and continue our efforts to fight terrorism. The Bill was urged on the Government by myself, and, in the knowledge of my urging, also by the chairman of British Rail and the chief constable of the British Transport police. They believed that it was right to introduce such a Bill. I believe that it was right to do so and hope that the inadequate measure that is before us tonight will be something of an improvement on the situation that would have prevailed had we not got the Bill.

Tonight's brief debate has demonstrated what we suspected as soon as we saw the Bill—that it is an inadequate and confused measure. I do not know what members of the British Transport Police Federation might think, nor do I know what the chief constable of the British Transport police might think, but it appears to all Opposition Members that aspects of the Bill suggest that the comprehensive policing of the whole of the railway network exclusively by British Transport police is under threat and is further threatened.

We suspect that it is the Government's intention to exempt more and more of the railway system from the coverage of BTP generally and to cause them to restrict their activities to what is called core policing so that organisations such as Group 4 can move in and take over some of BTP's current functions.

As I said on Second Reading, when the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) was not present, the measures taken by BTP to counter terrorism are extremely impressive. They managed to assess 1,136 bomb threats last year and to close stations on only 33 occasions, when nine bombs were found. Of the 1,103 occasions when they decided not to advise the closure of stations, none of them involved a bomb and no one was injured or killed. That was the result of having a comprehensive policing system for Britain's entire railway system. That left the senior officers who have to make such judgments confident about the information that they were receiving. They were confident about their ability to analyse the situation and confident to take their lives and others' lives in their hands in making their decisions.

If the Bill undermines in any way the comprehensive nature of BTP's coverage, the Minister will be responsible for putting at risk people's safety and for increasing the vulnerability of the transport system to terrorism. He had better remember that. If he has any doubts about the Bill in view of what has been said and the questions asked by Opposition Members, which have been left unanswered, perhaps he should eat a little humble pie and suggest some changes to be made in another place.

We are dubious about the Bill. We asked for it to be introduced and it was, but we consider it unsatisfactory. Its long-term ramifications may be extremely dangerous.

9.52 pm

Mr. Freeman: I have a clear conscience about the Bill. It deals with a specific problem and it is clear and concise. It does not undermine the powers of the British Transport police. It ensures that their jurisdiction and powers are unimpaired. I reject the criticism that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has levelled that the Bill may be defective in some way and that we should think again. It is, of course, a Government Bill. We are not dealing with an Opposition measure. It is the result of the best legal advice and it has been supported by the Labour party and endorsed by the police committee, the chief constable and the chairman of the British Railways Board.

We are correcting a specific problem. The Bill is not a charter for Group 4 or any other private sector security firm. It is designed to ensure that BTP's powers remain unimpaired. The force will in future be able to provide the same jurisdiction and cover that it has applied hitherto. The Government have discharged their responsibilities to BTP promptly and adequately and I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Mr. Mackinlay: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall be brief but this is an important matter. I am concerned that the Bill affects the prerogative of Her Majesty in as much as it relates to constables who are sworn, I believe, to carry out their powers under the royal prerogative. If that is so, the Queen's—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. That point of order cannot now arise; we have just completed the Bill.

PETITION

Value Added Tax on Fuel

9.55 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I rise to present a petition to the House about a matter which has enraged many British citizens: the imposition of VAT on fuel. It has enraged British citizens because the Government specifically promised in the last election campaign that they would not widen the scope of VAT. The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the people of York

Sheweth

That the Government intends to impose VAT on domestic fuel bills, which will greatly add to the hardship suffered by those on low incomes or with special heating needs.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Chancellor of the Exchequer to remove from the Finance Bill currently being considered by the House the proposals to add VAT to domestic fuel bills.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition is signed by Mr. A. Kelly of Tennyson Avenue, York, and by many others of my constituents.

To lie upon the Table.

Outdoor Education (Safety)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

9.56 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I am very grateful to have been awarded the chance to debate safety in outdoor education. I come to the Chamber with mixed emotions of pleasure and sadness—pleasure that I am able to air views about outdoor education on behalf of my constituents and sadness because of the circumstances in which I have had to ask for the debate.

At 11 am on 22 March last year, eight teenagers from Southway school in my constituency went on a canoeing trip to Lyme bay in Dorset and by 11 o'clock that night it had been confirmed that four of those teenagers had died in that venture. During the past year the bereaved parents have borne their great pain with considerable dignity. They have campaigned for changes in the law with passion and perseverance because it is their wish that no parent should have to go through the agony that they have been through in the past year.

I speak, both as a former teacher and as a parent, as a supporter of outdoor education. Young people—particularly those who suffer the monotony of urban life—need the challenge of the outdoors. It gives direction and purpose to their lives and provides a discipline that is lacking in the lives of many youngsters today. The national curriculum recommends outdoor pursuits to schools and the debate is not about taking away all risk from outdoor pursuits, but about removing all unnecessary risk from those pursuits.

What changes have taken place in the past few years? Because of the onset of local management of schools, many local education authority outdoor centres are winding down or have closed. The debate is not about the merits of LMS, but that is still a fact. Many of those centres are now being replaced by commercial private centres that are run for profit. The debate is not about whether that should happen. Some of those commercial centres are good, some are excellent, some are mediocre and a few are cowboy outfits that are putting children's lives at risk. It is my wish that the poorest centres should be brought up to the standard of the best centres, or should close.

My concerns about the matter are not new. *Which?* has been campaigning for changes in the law for 19 years—since 1975. In 1991, it carried out a survey of centres in Great Britain. If the Minister has not already seen it, I commend to him *Holiday Which?* of September 1991 which showed that some of the centres that it inspected were seriously lacking in basic safety measures. It also found, as I have said, that some of the centres were excellent. However, two of the 10 centres inspected were seriously deficient in safety measures.

At that time, calls—the parents to whom I have referred and I have been saying this for the past year—were made for compulsory registration of activity centres, for a comprehensive code of practice for those centres, for appropriate qualifications for instructors employed by activity centres and for a formal system of regular and comprehensive inspection by an independent body. What checks are made?

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Mr. Jamieson: What checks are being made on those centres? In a recent, well-reported case, the centre in Lyme bay and several other centres were checked by an inspector who was sent round by the British Activity Holiday Association. Presumably, he gave a clean bill of health to those centres. However, it was later found that he ran a centre that was seriously deficient. He was quoted in no less a journal than the *Western Morning News* as saying that he had no qualifications. He said that he just used common sense to carry out the task.

Would we allow an aeroplane mechanic working on a aeroplane on which we were about to fly or a surgeon who was about to carry out open-heart surgery to use just common sense? What is wrong with the present system is that any of us in the Chamber, whether we were skilled or experienced, could open an outdoor pursuits centre tomorrow and take youngsters on potentially hazardous outings.

Most local education authorities have good guidance. Over the past year, I have discovered that a few of them have weak guidance. Some have guidance that is virtually non-existent. I am concerned that grant-maintained schools do not have guidance on which to fall back unless they take note of the LEA guidance in their areas.

Some of those schools are now using what is called the named instructor scheme whereby a centre fills in a check list sent in by the school. That check list is checked afterwards. However, the difficulty is that too few schools have people who are competent to say whether that check list has been filled in correctly. Similarly, too few LEAs have outdoor pursuits advisers who can tell them whether that check list has been filled in correctly. The system is fundamentally flawed because those check lists rely on the centres giving truthful and accurate answers about the operation of the centres.

It is estimated that 25 per cent. of children who go to those centres every year do not go through their schools or LEAs. They go straight to the centre from home. Their parents usually find a centre in one of the Sunday supplements. There is no checking in between by any other body to discover whether the centre is working to high standards.

We expect the highest standards of safety in a civilised society in any body that is operating publicly. We do not get on a bus and ask whether the bus driver has a driving licence. We expect that to be the case. However, in outdoor education activities, there is no statutory requirement for any person to have qualifications to carry out those activities.

I want now to consider briefly the Government's response to the tragedy to which I have referred. On 11 November, the Secretary of State for Education released his four-point plan. The first item in the plan is that the Health and Safety Executive should inspect the centres. It came out earlier this year that the Health and Safety Executive will inspect only 100—50 a year for two years—out of an estimated 3,000 centres. On that basis, it will take 60 years to inspect all the centres. If we applied that to motor vehicles, would we say that it is satisfactory to give an MOT to only one out of 30 vehicles? The Minister's plan is seriously deficient in that respect.

There is another point. In written questions, I have asked both the Department for Education and the Department of Employment where those 3,000 centres are in Britain. Neither of those Departments could give me an answer. They simply said that the information was not collected in the form in which I requested it. All that I asked for was the names of the centres and the counties in which they are. Perhaps the Minister will enlighten the House and tell us in what form the statistics are kept, if they are kept at all. Does he know where all the centres are, so that he is in a position to have them inspected by the Health and Safety Executive?

Another point in the Minister's plan is that the reports will be published. I agree with that, but where will the reports be published? How will they be made available to parents who are thumbing through the colour supplements on Sunday to find a centre? How will parents and schools see the reports? I remind the Minister that the Department of Employment said that the first reports will not be available until April 1995 and the second batch will be available in April 1996. Three years after the tragedy, we will have reports on one out of every 30 centres.

I refer to a letter that I received from the Minister on another matter—I asked him about Ofsted reports of private schools. In a letter dated 17 February, he said:

"The onus is on the school to distribute the report to interested parties or to advise them where reports can be obtained."

Will he use the same criteria for those centres or will the reports be openly and freely available to all?

The four-point plan set out further guidance for schools. I am glad that many schools are receiving good guidance. The guidance available in Devon is excellent—it was updated following the terrible tragedy. However, all of the guidance documents still rely on honest and truthful answers from the outdoor centres. That is a fundamental flaw in the present system.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Jamieson: Time is limited; I am sorry but I am unable to give way tonight.

The fourth point in the plan laid out by the Minister is that he will change the articles for governing bodies to reinforce the legal responsibility of governors. Unless other measures are put in place, I am afraid that that will make governors who support outdoor education reluctant to send children on such activities because they would be held legally liable for the shortcomings of centres over which they have no control whatever.

The Secretary of State has set up a steering group—it is meeting at present—to draw up new guidelines. The membership of that group is excellent. I am pleased that it has a number of distinguished members. The work of that group will be of limited value—indeed, it will have negligible value—unless there are some statutory teeth to what it is doing. The draft document refers users to a code of practice set out by tourist boards. That code of practice has been drawn up largely by people who own such centres or who have a vested interest in them. Any code of practice should be drawn up independently by people who do not have a direct financial interest in a centre.

Most of all, what is wrong is that there is no binding requirement on any centre to employ instructors who are properly qualified to carry out the work. We know that some of the people who work in centres start work a matter of days before the activity is undertaken, sometimes with no training at all. They are paid £30 or £40 a week, and are expected to take responsibility for the lives of young children.

What is needed? Clearly, the new guidelines for local education authorities—particularly those which have

insufficiently good guidelines at the moment—are right. I applaud what the Minister is doing in that respect. We want all of the guidelines to come up to the best standards. However, they must be backed by teeth. There must be a statutory obligation on the centres.

The Minister needs to address two points. The inspections that take place are carried out by the Health and Safety Executive, but just inspecting a few centres is insufficient. The hon. Gentleman must make sure that far more centres are inspected. They could be inspected by an agency, and the centres themselves could pay. That is a little bit like the MOT test example that I gave. The centres could have some sort of kite mark which would show that they had been tested and had met high standards as a minimum requirement. I know that many good centres would welcome and would pay for such a scheme. That does not necessarily have a financial implication, and perhaps there could be some pump-priming from the Minister. I ask him to address seriously the question of wider inspection.

The other main point is that there should be a clear legal framework for establishing that instructors who are undertaking potentially hazardous activities, such as abseiling, yachting or canoeing on the sea, should have qualifications to carry out those activities. That does not exist at the moment. If we allow just anybody to take children abseiling or canoeing, I am afraid that their lives will be at risk. I have also found out that there are literally millions of children going through the centres each year. I ask the Minister to address the two points of inspection and the statutory qualifications that people should have.

It is my wish, and the wish of the parents who lost their children in the appalling tragedy last year, that there should be changes in the law to make sure that all outdoor education establishments are working to the highest standards. I know that my thoughts, and those of many hon. Members, will be with the parents who lost Simon, Claire, Dean and Rachel. Let us hope that their sad and tragic loss spurs to us change the law.

10.11 pm

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) for allowing me a few minutes to speak in the debate. I am also grateful to the Minister because he indicated that, hopefully, he would be able to respond in some way.

My concern is the safety aspects of private schools and, in particular, private kindergartens and primary schools. Tragically, the young child of a Mr. and Mrs. Sargeant in my constituency died in a swimming accident at such a private school. The child died basically because of a difficulty with a floatation device.

I am not seeking to apportion blame or neglect in the matter. What concerns me, and what also concerns Mr. and Mrs. Sargeant, is the yawning gap in enforcing the best standards within those establishments. This follows closely on what my hon. Friend was saying.

There are elements of danger in everything, but people —particularly parents—are reassured if they know that those elements of danger, to the best of everybody's intentions, are being closely monitored. There does not appear to be anyone with jurisdiction for safety in private schools, with the exception of the Health and Safety Executive and the police. Admirable as those two bodies might be, I do not believe that they have the breadth, scope and expertise of local education authorities. LEAs examine such matters continually and on a larger scale. In the letter that the Minister kindly sent me dated 7 March he unfortunately gives no undertaking that the Government are prepared to consider that suggestion.

I hope that in response to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Devonport and my speech the Minister will take it on himself to consider the matter more closely. He said in his letter that once an independent school has satisfied the Secretary of State that the necessary standards have been achieved, everything is OK, everything is signed. I remind the Minister that, tragically, standards can be applied in the first instance but may well not continue to be applied.

Unfortunately, there is a yawning gap in the legislation. I sincerely hope that the Minister will examine the case again and will consider the difficulties that have arisen. I hope that there will be some liaison with the LEAs. I hope that their expertise, which I am sure will be welcomed by most of the independent and private schools, can be put to good use.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call anyone, I must be clear that the Member has the permission of both the Minister and the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) to speak.

10.15 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I wish to intervene for only one minute.

I also lost a constituent as a result of the canoeing accident. I was extremely disappointed that my next-door neighbour, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), did not have the courtesy to allow me to intervene in his speech in this important debate, which I am glad that he managed to obtain. It is not helpful if next-door neighbours who have suffered the same tragedy do not stand together to announce such—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must make it clear that an Adjournment debate is essentially on a subject raised by one Member and answered by a Minister. The custom is for another Member who wishes to take part in the debate to sound out both the Member and the Minister in advance.

Mr. Steen: I merely wished to intervene, Madam Deputy Speaker. I did not intend to make a speech, but because the hon. Member for Devonport refused even to allow me to ask a question, I am having to make a short speech.

I lost a constituent in the tragic accident. I do not believe that if statutory rules and regulations had been laid down the accident would have happened. It was one of those tragedies that occur from time to time which one feels are an appalling waste of life. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not overreact to the tragedy, believing that creating more rules and regulations will prevent such tragedies from happening.

The Health and Safety Executive has an amazing number of things to do. To give it more tasks is unlikely to result in such tragedies being prevented. I hope that the

[Mr. Steen]

Minister will take that point to heart. We do not necessarily stop such unfortunate occurrences by passing rules and regulations.

10.18 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston) *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member have the permission of the Minister?

Mr. Miller: I said to the Minister that I would take only two minutes, and I shall stick to that.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on handling the matter in the way that he has. It is a particularly important issue. I must say in response to the point raised by the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) that such tragedies can be avoided. I rise to speak as someone with many years' experience of canoeing. I built some of the first glass fibre boats in this country in the early 1960s.

When I discussed the day after the tragedy the matters raised by my hon. Friend, I was horrified to learn about the lack of supervision. Basic needs were ignored. For example, the youngsters had been given no training in deep-sea rescue before they were taken across Lyme bay, which is a treacherous piece of water. There were no spray decks on the vessels. The clothing worn, although good, was inadequate. The situation in which those youngsters found themselves was bound to cause a tragedy. It is nonsense to argue that that tragedy could not have been avoided. Way back in the early 1960s, there were canoeing expeditions in British waters, emulating experiences gained by eskimos in Arctic waters, that were supervised far more safely than was this specific incident.

The right place to comment in detail and to attribute blame is obviously another place, but I hope that the Minister will take on board the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Devonport throughout the past year, and the very clear guidance given by the British Canoe Union and other organisations which have clearly indicated that the tragedy should have been, and could have been, avoided.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on bringing this important matter before the House in the way that he has. As he pointed out, we are in effect at the anniversary of the Lyme bay tragedy to which he referred, in which four of our young people so sadly died. I wish to express yet again the sympathy that I and my colleagues feel and want to express to the family and friends of those young people, and our determination to learn the lessons and to take effective action in regard to them. I also want fully to acknowledge the tenacity with which the hon. Gentleman has rightly pursued the issue, which will have affected his constituents and those of other hon. Members present, and what he has done to promote that inside the House and outside and indeed in my own Department. He has also met the Secretary of State with the parents of the young people.

I shall briefly set out our response and the reasoning behind it, in the hope that I will be able to persuade hon. Members of our thinking, and of the effectiveness that we believe that it will have. I recognise that the hon. Member for Devonport, the Devon county council, the young people in the Southway school, the bereaved parents and many other people have said that they believe—the hon. Gentleman has repeated it tonight—that the right way forward is to introduce new statutory and regulatory provision, through which there would be a compulsory scheme of accreditation and inspection of outdoor activity centres, whether in the private or public sector. I want to explain why, although we thought very carefully about that, in the end we did not share that view.

First, I do not think that it is necessarily, even now, sufficiently realised what comprehensive and relevant provision there already is in common law and statute law and in regulations. There are the long established and important common law requirements for those acting in loco parentis to exercise a duty of care. There are existing general statutes imposing duties with respect to health and safety and especially, as has been referred to more than once, the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. Within that general framework, there are specific regulations such as the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 and others which apply to activity centres as well as to other premises.

In reply to the point made by the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner), I believe that those all apply equally to the types of schools that he mentioned, but I would like to examine the point that he made to discover whether that is the case and what other assurances I am able to give him in the matter that he raised during the debate. I will do that and let him know when I have done so.

The regulations require employers and the self-employed to undertake an assessment of risks to the health and safety of their employees and to others, such as members of the public, who may be affected by their work, and introduce measures necessary to comply with the requirements of the law. I cannot comment on matters before the courts, but it is well known that prosecutions are being pursued relating to the events at Lyme bay under existing law by the Crown Prosecution Service.

We therefore believe that further specific provisions for activity centres in that regard would not necessarily add rapidly or significantly to safety. They would undoubtedly take time to frame and implement—more time than the measures which we are currently implementing.

Given the range of existing provisions, there might be serious dangers that additional requirements—even of the kind outlined by the hon. Gentleman—would add burdens on both suppliers and customers of services, including the schools themselves, increasing costs and possibly, therefore, acting as a deterrent to the provision of activities, which the hon. Gentleman conceded at the outset form such a valuable educational contribution to the curriculum of the schools.

Against that background, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set out the Government's alternative approach in the statement that he made last November. He announced the Government's programme of action, which consisted of a special programme of inspections of outdoor centres by the Health and Safety Executive and its expert inspectorate, and the provision of information from that programme. On the hon. Gentleman's point about their inspecting "only 100 centres", it is normal practice for the Health and Safety Executive, as it is with their factory and all other kinds of inspections, to look at the profile of the

matter and draw up priorities. Those can be altered and made flexible as experience is gained and priorities change. I shall discuss that a little more later if time permits, but it is an important point to bear in mind. Although the number may appear small, the effectiveness may be much greater, as it is with factory inspections. We shall then have new advice and guidance to our partners in the education service, who are the customers for the services provided by the centres.

In his announcement, the Secretary of State emphasised the Government's support for the initiative being undertaken by the English tourist board, in association with others, to devise a code of practice for activity centres and to work towards a new system of accreditation with endorsement by respected national bodies. The Government not only support that process but are and will remain closely involved with it.

We are undertaking a comprehensive series of actions, looking carefully at the quality of health and safety provision in a large and representative sample of centres with information emerging from that process, and the possibility of enforcement measures in response to any deficiencies identified; advice to the schools and others on the education side, including a clarification of relevant responsibilities; and encouragement of and involvement with a national but non-statutory scheme of accreditation, which will form an increasingly important reference point for the users of services.

The action being undertaken is comprehensive, dealing with the various aspects of the question by partnership, which is the right approach, with others involved, building on existing resources in the system and on established lines of responsibility. We believe that approach to be both quicker and of more practical benefit than an attempt to put in place new, more comprehensive and statutorily-based forms of regulation.

Work on all aspects of the action programme is being taken forward urgently. For example, my Department has already been working on new guidance to schools and others in the education service, with valuable collaboration by other agencies both inside and outside Government, with the aim of preparing a new document which we plan to make available next month. That will set out in appropriate detail, but in concise and practical form, information which schools and local authorities will wish to consider, drawn from the lessons of the Lyme bay tragedy. We shall give advice on procedures which they will wish to follow to ensure, as far as is practicable, the safety of pupils attending outdoor centres.

The Health and Safety Executive, for its part, is well advanced with arrangements for the special programme of inspections that will begin on 1 April. It will involve inspectors from six areas of the country, including Wales and Scotland, and from local authorities. More than 100 visits will be made by October this year. Centres are being chosen on the basis of local information, taking account of the proportion of the client group represented by children, the risks associated with the activities offered, the number and range of activities and the knowledge of any previous incidents.

The inspections will go into the quality and numbers of instructing staff, affiliation to appropriate national bodies, arrangements for monitoring health and safety, the suitability and maintenance of equipment, accident reporting and emergency procedures. Special training for the inspectors involved has already been provided and will continue. A published report of the findings of the visits will be made available next spring. If any areas of significant concern emerge before that, that information will be made available.

I hope that I have said enough in the time available to show that we have given this matter careful and close thought. We looked at the alternatives outlined by the hon. Gentleman but, having taken account of the balance of the speed and efficacy with which we could introduce measures, the varying circumstances of the centres, the expertise available through the Health and Safety Executive, and our desire to make those centres as readily available to schools as they have been in the past, the Secretary of State and I believe that the solution which we are offering is rapidly available and practical. We shall monitor it and keep it closely under review.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join us in looking forward to that new regime making a significant and rapid impact and difference to ensure that, as far as we can, the tragedy that occurred a year ago will never be repeated.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 22 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Personal Social Services

2. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has undertaken on the relationship between the national health service and personal social services at the local level.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): Considerable and continuing.

Mr. Gunnell: The Minister has not told us very much. Has he studied the Health Service Commissioner's report on the long-term care that Leeds health authority has failed to provide? Is he aware that a recent meeting of the Leeds community health council reported four similar cases and that other CHCs around the country were getting in touch with Leeds about similar cases? Does that not demonstrate a failure to provide long-term care? Is that not why, despite the Government's stated objective of looking after carers, many carers have to finance long-term respite care out of their own pockets—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman might take a leaf out of the Minister's book.

Mr. Bowis: The quick answer is no, but I shall expand a little. I have seen the report. I am pleased to know that Leeds health authority has accepted it and is putting right the individual case. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the case predates community care. It confirms the Department of Health guidelines and underlines why the discharge agreement was one of the conditions for the special transitional grant.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend accept that, at least in Kent, the relationship between the national health service and social services has been greatly improved by the introduction of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1989? Does he also accept that further improvements could be made if a small handful of national health service patients who are also clients of the social services were allowed direct control over that part of their budget which allows for domiciliary care?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is persistent, persuasive and eloquent in making his cause. As he knows, I have discussed the matter with him. Once the community care system has bedded down for a year, we shall be happy to look further at his ideas.

Mr. John Evans: Does the Minister agree that one of the most important social services is that provided by school nurses? Is he aware that St. Helens and Knowsley health authority is proposing to cut by half the number of school nurses in St. Helens and Knowsley? Will he join me in condemning an action that will be detrimental to the health and welfare of children in St. Helens and Knowsley?

Mr. Bowis: It is not for me to second-guess the provision of services in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. That is a matter for the local health authority, the local authority and the local education authority. I am sure that he is putting his case to them so that school children can benefit from all the resources available to meet the needs assessed by those areas.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is increasing concern about this subject and increasing evidence that many people requiring long-stay hospital care are not getting it under the national health service but are being directed to the private sector—either residential homes or private nursing homes—where they or their families are having to pay a heavy price for a service that should be free under the national health service?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is knowledgeable about these matters. He is, of course, referring to the Leeds judgment, which underlines the Department of Health guidance that it is for the national health service to provide or to purchase long-term care for those who need it on grounds of ill health. The guidance says that no patient in such circumstances should be required to go into a home where there is a charge. As for people who need social care, rather than health care, for many years the principle has been that the charge should be according to the individual's means.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Will the Minister listen to his hon. Friends—such as the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who is absolutely right in saying that the NHS is not discharging its duties to people requiring long-term care? Will the Minister tell me why there is no review system allowing consideration of the cases of people who were placed in long-term residential or nursing home care before the community care changes? Given that people are now paying for care that was formerly freely available under the NHS, has not the ombudsman provided concrete evidence of the way in which the Government are privatising the service?

Mr. Bowis: Continuing, long-stay care is available for those who need it; moreover, provision for elderly patients has reached record levels. Under the present Government, the number of elderly people receiving in-patient treatment has risen by 125 per cent. to 526,000, and the number receiving out-patient care has risen by 89 per cent. to 452,000. That is a record of care for the elderly of which we can be proud, and which the hon. Gentleman can only envy.

Maternity Service, Basildon

3. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on Basildon's maternity service.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): Basildon has an excellent new maternity unit, whose staff expect to deliver 4,000 babies each year.

Mr. Amess: Does my hon. Friend approve of the centralisation of services in Basildon, with a specialist neonatal care unit on site? Will he issue guidelines on the delivery of babies in water? Finally, does he agree that Basildon's maternity service is now the finest in the world?

Mr. Sackville: There is a feeling among Conservative Members that to be born anywhere in Basildon gives one an unfair advantage in life; but to have the benefit of perhaps the most up-to-date, best-managed and best-equipped maternity unit in the country is an additional advantage for this generation.

I am aware that some clinicians believe that water can have advantages in relaxing mothers in labour, but the decision on actual water births must be left to clinicians, midwives and, of course, the mothers themselves.

Mr. Tony Banks: I believe that, at the last count, the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) had fathered five children. Has he not already put far too much pressure on Basildon's maternity service? Would not the decent thing be for the NHS to offer him a large quantity of bromide —or, if it cannot afford that, perhaps a do-it-yourself vasectomy with two bricks?

Mr. Sackville: I must defend my hon. Friend's right to an equal share of NHS facilities.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: When providing maternity services in Basildon and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, will my hon. Friend ensure that full cognisance is taken of the report of the Select Committee on Health? The role of the midwife should be brought to the fore in the provision of service for mothers-to-be, and the wishes of pregnant women in regard to how they are confined should be respected.

Mr. Sackville: I can reassure my hon. Friend that my noble Friend Baroness Cumberlege, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the other place, has done a great deal of work on the whole question of maternity services. Central to her work is the question of the mother's choice.

Incontinence Services

4. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to monitor the quality and availability of incontinence services at a local level; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Continence services have been designated a priority for national health service planning for the coming year. The Government have funded a national helpline for incontinence sufferers, and have held a national continence week to publicise its availability.

Ms Eagle: Will the Minister admit that, despite the £100,000 that has been spent on publicising continence week, a recent survey showed that nearly 50 per cent. of health authorities find that they must ration the supply of incontinence services to stay within their budgetary limits? Will he take this opportunity to condemn that rationing —which forces sufferers to pay for any extra materials that they may require—and to assure the House that health authorities will provide sufferers with all the materials that they need to manage their condition?

Mr. Bowis: No, I do not accept the emotive term "rationing". Of course I accept that GPs and incontinence advisers have to assess the individual's needs—every individual is different in this respect—and decide how to meet them. We have heard a very sad and negative story from the Labour party on this issue; the Government are trying to overcome the shame, pain, sorrow and embarrassment of sufferers, whereas the Labour party merely picks holes in what is being done. It is a tremendous battle to try to encourage people who could be cured to come forward. One has only to consider the hon. Lady's health authority to see the tremendous provision that is ready and waiting for sufferers if they would only take the first step.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Does the Minister accept that hon. Members of all parties are receiving complaints that health authorities are not providing free incontinence pads to residents of residential homes, which is causing great distress? Can the hon. Gentleman tell us what guidelines the Government are issuing to health authorities so that the problems can be overcome?

Mr. Bowis: I certainly can. As the hon. Gentleman knows, incontinence pads are available free through the district nursing service. We have issued guidelines under which anyone in a residential care home should be treated in exactly the same way as someone living in his own home and the service should be free.

Personal Social Services

5. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the introduction of charges for personal social services other than residential care.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities have had a discretionary power to charge since January 1984. In January this year, the Department issued new guidance about the use of these powers, and since then six representations have been received.

Mr. Ainsworth: Will the Minister confirm or deny that his Department is operating unofficial guidance whereby it is expecting local authorities to make at least 7 per cent. of their standard spending assessment in charges for non-residential care? Does he agree that that is utterly unfair on local authorities in poorer areas and a tax on the elderly and infirm?

Mr. Bowis: The answer is no. I do not know where the hon. Gentleman gets the 7 per cent. figure from. The charges are long-standing and discretionary and it is entirely up to local authorities whether and to what extent charges are made. The guidelines to which he referred state that charges should be reasonable and should take account of the ability to pay. If he is concerned about the way in which the system is operating in Coventry, I am sure that, as he is a former chairman of finance, he can have a quiet word with his friends who are running the council to ensure that they play the game fairly.

Dame Jill Knight: May I encourage my hon. Friend not to be nervous about making a small charge for these

extremely valuable services provided that people can afford to pay? Is not it the case that at present only £1 in £10 spent on the services is recovered? Bearing in mind the fact that every penny of the recoverable sum will be spent on patients elsewhere, is not such a charge a good idea?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is entirely right. As I said, the charge is discretionary and each council must decide the sort of scheme that it introduces—whether there are flat charges or a scale of charges and whether there are exemptions or discounts. My hon. Friend makes a valid point, however; in fact, 9 per cent. of costs—less than £1 in £10—are recovered through charges, which means that about £69 million is recovered out of a total spend of £815 million. It is perfectly reasonable to expect that modest charges, tailored to the ability to pay, should be made. My hon. Friend is not making me nervous; she encourages me to encourage local authorities to do just that.

Mr. Blunkett: But where does the discretion lie when the Government control the council tax, the distribution of grant and the standard spending assessment and therefore make an assumption of a 7 per cent. charge which, if not levied, would mean that local authorities would have to cut services instead? Is not this very much like the proposed 25 per cent. increase in dental charges—having stung the nation for tax, the Government are now also stinging the nation in charges?

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman might just look at the figures. He might just remember that, in the current year, the Government are spending £6.4 billion on personal social services. That is a measure of support through the social services to the people of the country. It is entirely at the discretion of local authorities whether and how they introduce charges. If the hon. Gentleman is looking for real discretion that his party could use in local government, may I suggest that he considers the cost of services? Clearly, charges must be related to cost. If efficiency savings are made in the provision of services, the costs are lower. That is why in Conservative-controlled authorities there are lower costs through efficiency savings and why there will probably be lower charges, too.

Mr. Garnier: Will my hon. Friend assure me that those patients who are currently in the Carlton Hayes and the Towers hospitals in Leicestershire, which serve my constituency, will not be moved into the care of the social services department of the county without a proper clinical appraisal of the need for their care?

Mr. Bowis: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. It is the task of our mental health task force to ensure that such moves are made into adequate residential accommodation, if that is what is needed. I am assured by Leicestershire health authority that the hospitals concerned will not close unless and until that provision is available.

GP Fundholders

6. **Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the average savings made by GP fundholding practices in 1992-93; and if she will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Provisional figures suggest that in 1992-93 fundholders achieved efficiency savings of between 3 and 4 per cent. That means that an extra £30 million is to be re-invested in patient care. It shows what can be achieved when GPs take control of managing resources for their patients.

Mr. Hughes: By being able to cream off national health service funding in that way, are not some GP fundholders giving yet more credence to the fast-track, two-tier health service, while other people are having to wait in long queues for out-patient appointments and are facing hospital closures? Does not the Secretary of State agree that it is time that we got back to a needs-led health service, in which patients come first all the time?

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's comments at all. I am perplexed to hear his remarks because in Doncaster, there is a high standard of care for all patients, whether or not they are with GP fundholders. Almost all out-patients are to be seen in three months by July and no patient will be waiting longer than a year by July, whatever category that patient is in. That is an achievement about which I should have thought the hon. Gentleman would take the opportunity to tell the House. He has fundholders in his constituency, as elsewhere. They are at the leading edge of the reforms and all general practitioners are benefiting from the changes pioneered by the fundholders.

Mr. Congdon: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the significant savings that GP fundholders have made in their drug budgets? Will she consider how such good practice may be extended to all GPs?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. GP fundholders are showing a 4 per cent. advantage over the non-fundholders in curbing the increase in their drug budgets. It is an example of the way in which, when GPs are the gatekeepers of the NHS and have direct control over resources, they steward those resources more carefully and can invest in better patient care for others. We want to extend that system to all GPs at the earliest opportunity.

Ms Primarolo: Is the Secretary of State aware of the survey and report in *Doctor* magazine showing that, in the current year, GP fundholders will accrue £50 million in profit? Is not it obscene that £50 million should be accruing to fundholders when hospitals are turning patients away and cannot treat them because they are running out of money? Does not that finally prove that fundholding is inefficient, expensive, unfair and wasteful? When will the right hon. Lady act for the patients?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am sure that the hon. Lady appreciates by now that the savings achieved through greater efficiency by GP fundholders are ploughed back into patient care. Fundholders show how we can get better value for the inevitably finite resources invested in the national health service. I commend to the hon. Lady not only *Doctor* magazine, admirable though it is, but a study of the recent King's Fund report on evaluating the NHS reforms, which states that abolishing fundholding

"would probably lead to a substantial exodus from the NHS of fundholders setting up private insurance based HMOs. The Labour party would have finally broken up the NHS, which would be par for the course in stupidity!"

I commend those remarks to the hon. Lady.

Mr. Thomason: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she is aware of, and welcomes, the Bromsgrove project in

my constituency, which has been possible because all four fundholding practices in Bromsgrove are fully behind what her Department is doing? Will she commend the scheme and back its aims, and recommend that if it proves successful it should be extended to other parts of the country?

Mrs. Bottomley: The first of April will be a watershed in the establishment of GP fundholding, with about 36 per cent. of the population being covered. The task now, as my hon. Friend has described, is to find out how we can take fundholding forward, extending its benefits to non-fundholding GPs and ensuring that fundholders are able further to influence the way in which resources are allocated. GPs are the advocates on behalf of their patients, and GP fundholding has been one of the most important initiatives of the past five years.

GP Fundholders

7. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has undertaken into the effect of GP fundholding on equal access to health care; and if she will make a statement.

11. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions she has had with GPs on the impact of fundholding.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Ministers and officials regularly meet the British Medical Association and other organisations to discuss the successes of the national health service reforms, including GP fundholding.

Mr. Barnes: Is the Minister aware that a BMA survey shows that 42 per cent. of acute units have special arrangements for GP fundholders? How does that relate to the question that was asked about equality between GP fundholders and GPs without that facility? Is not there a terrible injustice in the difference between the two categories?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware that, despite repeated requests for evidence of a two-tier system, no evidence has been forthcoming from the BMA, the Joint Consultants Committee or the Labour party. I am also aware that the BMA is in favour of continuing to work with the Government on GP fundholding. That will come as a great shock to the Labour party, which is committed to abolishing fundholding.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the fact that all GPs are effectively in the private sector, as self-employed people contracting with the national health service? It is not surprising, therefore, that they want to use the best techniques that they can to achieve efficiency savings on behalf of their patients. Will my right hon. Friend welcome the two new fundholding practices in my constituency, in Esher and Claygate, which are joining the existing fundholding practice in Horsley?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I congratulate and welcome the two fundholding practices in his constituency. He will be interested to know that from 1 April the 20.3 per cent. of the population of the Kingston and Richmond family health services authority—of which his constituency is a part—that is covered by GP fundholders, will increase to 74.5 per cent. The House may also be interested to know that from 1 April there will be an extra 562 fundholding practices, 850 GP practices within those fundholders, and 2,740 GPs becoming fundholders. More than one third of the population of the country will then be covered by fundholding practices. That fact speaks louder than the weasel words of the Labour party.

Ms Lynne: The Minister has mentioned the BMA report about so-called fast-tracking for GP fundholders' patients. Does not he agree that the report's conclusion is that a two-tier health service has been created? However much he denies it, he cannot get away from that fact. Will he tell us what he intends to do about that problem?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have an advantage over the hon. Lady in that it was to Ministers that the JCC produced its 35 examples of two-tierism last September. We examined every one of those examples and not one was found to be true. What is interesting about the latest BMA survey is that it is framed in such general terms that the BMA itself cannot substantiate the charge of two-tierism.

Mr. Sims: May I encourage my hon. Friend to continue vigorously to rebut allegations of two-tier care? Does he agree that both health authorities and fundholding GPs must work within budgets and although it is perfectly possible that the health authority may have completely allocated its budget while GP fundholders still have funds in hand, the reverse situation could equally arise?

Dr. Mawhinney: As is so often the case, my hon. Friend is precisely right. What is interesting about Labour Members is that they have got themselves caught up in structures when what the national health service is about is patients. The proof of the pudding is the fact that we are treating more patients in this country than ever before. The increase in the number of patients that we are treating is higher than before, the quality of the treatment is higher than before, the convenience of the treatment is better than before and GP fundholders are in the lead in virtually all those areas.

Mr. Bayley: The Minister has been able to provide me with information about the amount of money per patient that is allocated to fundholding doctors, but he says that he does not have information about the amount of money per patient that is allocated for the same services for patients of non-fundholding doctors. As he does not have the figures, how can he say that there is equal access when he cannot say that there is equal money for the two types of patients?

Dr. Mawhinney: The allocation of resources is done on a basis that is not only fair but seen and recognised as fair by everyone except Labour Members.

Derriford Hospital, Plymouth

8. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to visit Derriford hospital, Plymouth to discuss cardiac surgery.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no current plans to visit Derriford hospital, but she maintains a close interest in the issue of a possible second cardiac unit for the south-west.

Mr. Streeter: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a growing sense of anticipation in the south-west as we look

forward to Derriford hospital becoming an NHS trust in April, thus going from one degree of excellence to another? Is he aware that he could make our joy complete by confirming at an early stage that Derriford hospital will have its own cardiac surgery unit to service people in Devon and Cornwall? When will that announcement be made?

Mr. Sackville: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his persistent advocacy of a second cardiac unit. It is common ground between us that it is unsatisfactory for people to travel long distances for heart surgery from the south-west to Oxford, London or, indeed, Bristol. However, he must recognise that a case must be made. It is generally thought that no cardiac surgery unit would be viable without perhaps 750 surgical cases per year split between three consultants. A business case has been made. We hope that it will come to the Department in the next few days, and I hope that there will be an early decision.

Mr. Jamieson: Is the Minister aware that Plymouth and the Torbay area have one of the highest rates of cardiac disease in the whole country, yet it is the only area without a dedicated coronary unit? Is he also aware that many hundreds of patients travel each year from Plymouth to London to get their treatment and that that is putting patients' lives at risk?

Mr. Sackville: Yes, I certainly agree that it is unsatisfactory for people to travel that distance. I have said to the hon. Gentleman that as soon as we receive a business case we will deal with it promptly, and I hope that there will be a favourable outcome.

Project 2000

9. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the progress in implementing the Project 2000 initiative.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Comptroller and Auditor General reported on the implementation of Project 2000 in December 1992.

The final report from the National Foundation for Educational Research, which was commissioned by the Department to undertake an independent evaluation of the implementation of Project 2000, was published on 15 February.

Mr. Heald: Can my hon. Friend confirm that this important training scheme is being fully and properly funded? Does he agree that the early success of the scheme, coupled with the 50 per cent. increase in real terms in nurses' pay since 1979, shows the commitment of the Government to nursing, not only in North Hertfordshire but in the country at large?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the Government's commitment to that important project. We share that commitment with the nursing profession and, I believe, with others from all parties. Since 1989, the Government have invested £321 million to introduce the reforms.

Mr. George Howarth: Does the Minister accept that the nursing profession will greet the proposals with a great deal of cynicism if the proposals to halve the numbers of highly trained, skilled school nurses in St Helens and Knowsley go ahead? Does that not mean that possible cures through the school nursing service for the terrible health problems that people in St Helens and Knowsley often experience will simply be cut off?

Dr. Mawhinney: The people of St Helens and Knowsley will want nurses who are trained to the highest possible degree, and that is what they will get with Project 2000.

Cancer Screening

10. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioners are achieving either the higher or lower targets for cancer screening in the northern region; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Ninety-nine per cent. of general practitioners in the northern region have achieved one of the targets for cervical screening. That is an excellent record.

Mr. Bates: Is not that answer somewhat at odds with the statement made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) when the targets were set that the immunisation and screening targets were so heroic that many doctors would give up even trying? Does not the excellent news about northern region GPs demonstrate that the hon. Gentleman was not criticising the policy, but was severely underestimating the professionalism and abilities of northern region GPs?

Mr. Sackville: I agree with my hon. Friend. Given what has happened since, it is particularly shocking that the Labour spokesman should in effect have exhorted GPs to give up, to screen fewer women and to save fewer lives. That typifies the thoroughly negative attitude that the Labour party maintains towards the NHS.

Mr. McCartney: A rising issue is that of prostate cancer and the Government's failure to provide for screening. Some 41,000 men have died in the past five years from that silent killer; yet the Government refuse to recognise that level of death by introducing a national screening system. If there is a national screening system for cervical cancer—which the Opposition support—for 2,500 deaths per year for women, there should be a national screening system for prostate cancer, from which 10,000 men a year die. When will the Secretary of State act and introduce such a national screening system?

Mr. Sackville: As the hon. Gentleman knows, before we introduced a national scheme for cervical and breast cancer, we had to make sure that we had an efficient and effective method of screening which would not lead to a lot of false diagnoses or to false and unnecessary surgery.

In the case of colorectal, ovarian and prostatic cancer, it may be that in time we shall find a consensus and the possibility of bringing in effective national screening systems. When that happens, we shall undoubtedly save more lives, but it cannot be brought in overnight.

Codes of Conduct and Accountability

12. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many responses have been received to consultation on the NHS draft codes of corporate conduct and accountability.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There has been a universal welcome for the draft national health service codes of conduct and accountability which I issued for consultation on 13 January. Almost 400 NHS trusts, authorities and non-NHS bodies and individuals have commented.

Mr. French: Does my right hon. Friend agree that good practice, as set out in her codes of conduct, is in most cases already the normal practice? Will she join me in condemning the Labour party for picking on a few isolated examples to cast a slur on the NHS generally when most of the NHS staff are dedicated, highly motivated and ethical public servants?

Mrs. Bottomley: Public sector values are very much at the heart of the management and operation of the NHS —*[Interruption.]*—and that will continue to be the case. Like my hon. Friend, I condemn and deplore the way in which the Opposition take every opportunity to denigrate the commitment of those who have achieved a great improvement in patient care in this country. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if the House would come to order and if conversations were less noisy during Question Time.

Dr. Wright: May I ask the Minister for her reaction to the fact that when I attended a recent meeting of my own NHS trust, at which the trust was adopting the new code of conduct to which she referred, I asked to speak and was told that I could not? Indeed, I was told that I was lucky to be there at all. Does that not show precisely what is wrong with the national health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: There is no doubt that the establishment of the new health authorities and trust boards has made opportunities for consideration of NHS matters far more effective and constructive. At the same time, the spirit of probity and accountablity is fundamental to the health service. The hon. Gentleman will for the first time be able to attend an annual meeting and to receive annual accounts and an annual report. There has been a transformation in the amount of information that is available about hospitals, the way in which they are run and the way in which they are funded.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there has always been excellent practice at Hammersmith hospital? The whole of west London welcomes her decision to keep that hospital in full order. Will she be similarly generous with the casualty department at Ealing hospital and confirm that its future is not in doubt?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am pleased that my hon. Friend welcomes yesterday's announcement about the new Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust. It will be one of 143 trusts to be established on 1 April, making 419 in all. Again, that is a major step forward for the national health service. As for the other aspects, my hon. Friend will know that the precise configuration of services across London and more widely continues to be considered. We shall always need to be sure that there are high-quality accident and emergency services and, above all, to continue the great investment in ambulance services.

Mr. Blunkett: Is it not a fact that the Government appoint their own nominees to trusts and then, as they are doing in London, allow those trusts to be subject to the vagaries of the market? When those trusts close great teaching and specialist hospitals in the capital, the Secretary of State washes her hands of the consequences and says that it is nothing to do with her. Is it not time that this nothing-to-do-with-us Government accepted responsibility for the health care of the British people?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is because we accept that responsibility that we are prepared to face difficult and complex decisions. I note that the hon. Gentleman described yesterday's announcement of the Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust as a fudge. On other occasions when difficult decisions have to be made, he also washes his hands of those decisions, although he himself said that no change was no option in London. We recognise that if we want to increase the quality and quantity of patient treatment—we are treating 1 million more patients than before the reforms, waiting times have fallen from nine to five months and there has been a steady improvement—difficult decisions have to be delivered with care.

Temazepam

13. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals she has to review the use of Temazepam.

Dr Mawhinney: In the White Paper, "The Health of the Nation," we drew attention to the need to develop local programmes to review the prescription of all benzodiazepines, including Temazepam, and to replace them as necessary with other methods of treatment. Family health services authorities have been asked to work with general practitioners to agree local targets on the reduction of benzodiazepine prescribing.

Ms Quin: Does the Minister agree that national action —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I can barely hear the hon. Lady from across the Chamber. I seek the co-operation of the House. I do not want to stop conversations, but let them be a little quieter so that I can hear hon. Members who are asking questions. Otherwise, it is a total waste of time.

Ms Quin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Does the Minister agree that national action on reviewing this drug is urgently needed in view of the alarming number of crimes that have been committed by people high on Temazepam taken in combination with alcohol and other substances? Does the Minister also agree with me that action is urgently needed to stop the alarming number of thefts of this drug from chemist shops?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware of the problems of theft, particularly in the area that the hon. Lady represents. I know that that has been a matter of particular local concern. I am sure that we both agree that pharmacists need to take adequate precautions to try to ensure that drugs are stored safely on their premises.

The hon. Lady will be pleased to know that copies of the Mental Health Foundation publication entitled "Guidelines for the Prevention of Treatment of Benzodiazepine Dependence" were issued to all family health services authorities just last week.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the real problem with Temazepam is not with the drug itself, but with the abuse of the capsule? Would the most sensible

thing to do be not to withdraw the whole drug, but just to withdraw the capsule which is being abused so horrendously?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The capsule form was changed to a gel form in 1989, I believe. That has caused difficulties for those who persist in using the drug illegally. It is a matter which is under review.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Connarty: Has anyone brought to the attention of the Prime Minister the 71.5 per cent. return in the Electoral Reform Society ballot on water services carried out for Strathclyde? Does he agree with the 1,194,667 people who voted against the Government's proposals for quangoing the water services in Scotland? Does he agree that this is a crushing humiliation, or could it be possible that the Prime Minister will see it as an opportunity to show that we have a listening Government and do the democratic thing and abandon his proposal immediately?

The Prime Minister: Since Strathclyde wilfully misrepresented the Government's proposals, I see nothing surprising in the result. The Opposition have continued to link the proposals with privatisation, even though it is perfectly clear that we are setting up public water authorities. They persist in scaremongering about disconnections, although we have no proposals to legalise disconnecting domestic water supplies for non-payment of bills.

The question that the hon. Gentleman should have asked is how Strathclyde will explain to its council taxpayers the waste of £750,000.

Mr. Brandreth: Will my right hon. Friend consider adding to his list of engagements *[Interruption.]*—

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

Mr. Brandreth: Will my right hon. Friend consider adding to his list of engagements a visit to the uniquely beautiful city of Chester, where he will find inward investment at record levels, and unemployment 6 per cent. lower than a year ago and 26 per cent. lower than six years ago? Does he agree that, in terms of inward investment to the European Community, the United Kingdom in general, and the city of Chester in particular, are now leading the way?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly pleased to hear of the particular inward investment to Chester. There has been a dramatic amount of inward investment into every part of the United Kingdom over the last few years—Wales and Scotland have certainly received a great degree of inward investment. That is very largely connected with the fact that we have a very flexible economy and a very effective business tax system, we do not have too many social on-costs, and investment here is welcome.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister think it right that those who can afford to pay fuel bills in advance can avoid paying the new VAT charges on gas and electricity?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, it has long been the case that customers for a wide range of services can pay for them in advance. *[Interruption.]* There is nothing unusual about that. It has happened before every Budget that the right hon. and learned Gentleman can remember since he entered the House.

Mr. John Smith: The Prime Minister does not even begin to understand the problem here. Does he not understand that it is deeply unfair that those who are better off can avoid a tax obligation which millions of others have to shoulder because they do not have the money to exploit the loophole that the Government have permitted?

The Prime Minister: It is not a loophole, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman says; it is a position that has applied for very many years. As far as people who are less well off are concerned, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, we have provided help for them worth £2.5 billion over three years—more to pensioners, more to disabled people and more to single parents. The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not mention that all those people will get the money before the bills arrive. That is a prepayment that the right hon. and learned Gentleman forgot to mention.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not understand that in those replies he has revealed the Tory attitude to tax in a nutshell—loopholes for the better off, and everyone else has to pay in full?

The Prime Minister: What has been revealed is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is up to his old tricks yet again, telling other people how to spend their own money. It boils down to the fact that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is a meddler in everything—in private sector pay, in company decisions and in how people pay their own bills. What he does not mention is the fact that electricity companies, for example, have announced next year's prices and all of them have frozen the price or cut it. When did that ever happen under Labour Administrations?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that yesterday the Department of the Environment issued a section 13 notice, under the Local Government Act 1988, against the Lancashire county council for utterly failing efficiently to run its ground maintenance services under direct labour? Is that not one more reason why the citizens of Lancashire wish the Lancashire county council to be abolished?

The Prime Minister: It is certainly a deeply ineffecient council, but that is something it shares with Sheffield and many other Labour-run authorities.

Mr. Ashdown: Are not the policies of the Government and of the Labour party towards the provision of nursery education for all now revealed to be exactly the same—that it will not happen until resources allow? Bearing in mind that it was the Prime Minister's predecessor, when she was Education Secretary nearly a quarter of a century ago, who

first formulated that policy, will the Prime Minister tell us when he thinks that that promise might be delivered—this year, next year, sometime or never?

The Prime Minister: That was extremely well rehearsed, but, as the hon. Lady mentioned a second ago, if the right hon. Gentleman went to the Isle of Wight he would find no nursery education there, whereas if he went to Tory Westminster he would find universal nursery education.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, under every Labour Government since the war, before every Budget there was massive spending in the shops to avoid the tax increases that always followed Labour Chancellors' statements, especially during the period of purchase tax when that tax went up to 33 per cent?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that. There has always been prepurchase of goods before Budgets, especially Labour Budgets, for precisely that reason, but the Opposition have been out of government so long that they have lost touch not only with government but with reality.

Q2. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Prime Minister at all surprised at the way in which the President of the Board of Trade is now constantly being talked up as his successor as leader? Should not the Prime Minister watch his back very carefully when the President of the Board of Trade says that he has no leadership ambition left? If the Prime Minister believes that, he will believe anything.

The Prime Minister: What the hon. Gentleman points out is the enormous wealth of talent behind me supporting me.

Mr. Wilkinson: In view of the latest terrorist outrages at Heathrow airport and, more recently, the shooting down of an Army Lynx helicopter at Crossmaglen, is not my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) right to say that the Downing street declaration has run its course? Is it not time to give primacy to the defeat of IRA terrorism, because political progress depends on progress on the security front?

The Prime Minister: Two things run in parallel: first, the Downing street declaration; and, secondly, the continuing efforts to defeat terrorism and engage in the talks process. Security co-operation has improved and continues to improve. The welcome recent successes on both sides of the border are evidence of the intensive efforts by the security forces in both jurisdictions to combat terrorism. Both Governments are committed to close co-operation, which is currently at an all-time high. I assure my hon. Friend that we propose to build on that security co-operation in both the short and the long term. There should be room nowhere in the United Kingdom for terrorism, and we are determined to maintain our battle against it.

Q3. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Easter egg that he is giving to the British people is a tax rise equivalent to two weeks' wages for every wage earner in the country?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, and as I have conceded before, it has been necessary to increase taxes. I invite him also to condemn the large and unjustifiable council tax increases imposed by Labour councils.

Q4. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that many people with disabilities make excellent employees? Will he ensure that the public sector plays its full part in employing the disabled and thus leads all other employers by example?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The civil service is steadily increasing the number of registered disabled people whom it employs. I am delighted that, as a proportion of its work force, it now employs slightly more than the percentage of registered disabled people in the work force as a whole. A number of Departments and agencies do significantly better than that. I share my hon. Friend's desire to see progress made, but it is encouraging that the public sector is now doing better than the private sector.

Mr. Radice: Which is more important to the Prime Minister—a blocking minority of 23 on qualified majority votes to the Council of Ministers, or an enlargement of the European Union?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman states a choice which, had he ever negotiated in Europe, he would not have stated in that fashion. He is blind to both the short and long-term consequences of change to the qualified majority vote system. We are determined to negotiate in Brussels, and to fight Britain's corner just as hard as every other nation would fight for itself. We will not be moved by phoney threats to delay enlargement. There is ample time to complete the enlargement process; if there is delay, it will be because certain other member states—two in particular—have taken an inflexible and doctrinaire line. We shall not do what the Labour party do, which is to say yes to everything that comes out of Europe, with no critical examination whatever. The Opposition would sign away our votes, our competitiveness and our money. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is the man who likes to say yes in Europe—Monsieur Oui, the poodle of Brussels.

Inward Investment (Northern Region)

Q5. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the impact of the social chapter on inward investment in the northern region; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The northern region has an excellent record for attracting inward investment and

creating jobs. Since 1985 the Northern Development Corporation has secured 36,000 jobs for the region. By piling on costs to business, the social chapter would destroy jobs in the northern region, as it would across the country.

Mr. Bates: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the decision by Black and Decker to close its production plant in Limburg in Germany and move to Spennymoor in county Durham because of the excessive level of non-wage labour costs in Germany? Does that not clearly demonstrate that the best way to keep manufacturing jobs in the north-east is to keep Britain out of the social chapter?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree. What is clear when one looks across Europe is that the social on-costs of every country other than the United Kingdom are rendering those countries progressively uncompetitive with Japan, the United States and the Pacific basin. What the social chapter would mean is the loss of jobs in the United Kingdom. I very much welcome the news for the people of Spennymoor. The Durham plant has a very high and very well-deserved reputation for quality. Black and Decker knows that high costs destroy jobs and that, for that reason, Britain is the best place in the European Community in which to do business and in which to invest.

Engagements

Q6. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Home Robertson: As the Prime Minister once dismissed Strathclyde as a monstrosity, I welcome his conversion and the fact that the Government have now decided to keep the Strathclyde passenger transport authority so as to safeguard comprehensive concessionary travel for pensioners in Strathclyde. Why are not pensioners in other parts of Scotland being allowed the same safeguards? I appeal to the Prime Minister to consider that point and to ensure that pensioners in all parts of Scotland, including the east, are given equal rights.

The Prime Minister: It is extremely unlikely that the hon. Gentleman would appeal to me in any circumstances. The view of Strathclyde that I hold is unaltered, as I indicated earlier with regard to the referendum, which was an expensive stunt. As to the second point, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have heard the Prime Minister, in responding to one of my hon. Friends on the question of tax increases, say that we should condemn the council tax increases also. This means that the right hon. Gentleman was admitting that the tax increases, too, should be condemned. Will you, Madam Speaker, ensure that *Hansard* is not altered?

Madam Speaker: That is an extension of Question Time. We shall not go into that matter now.

Freedom to Roam (Access to Countryside)

3.32 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for codification of law to ensure public access to the countryside and to define obligations and responsibilities for the public and landowners alike; and for connected purposes.

I was born the daughter of a ploughman. From the earliest years, my brother and I were taught not only to love our countryside but to respect it. Basic codes of conduct have been ingrained in our minds—codes that are observed by all sensible people. Therefore, I grew up with an instinctive feeling that my country—Scotland—is beautiful, that I and others have freedom to enjoy it, and that the correct pattern of behaviour should automatically accompany that freedom.

It is a view shared by colleagues living elsewhere in the United Kingdom—the Bill applies to all the United Kingdom and is endorsed by all who love the countryside, whether in England, Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland, although it is of Scotland that I can speak with some clear knowledge.

The Bill is particularly relevant at this time, because of various factors that are converging.

I refer first to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. The clauses dealing with aggravated trespass—originally clauses 52 and 53, now clauses 58 and 59 as the Bill has emerged from Committee—have been interpreted by many organisations as a threat to the legitimate leisure pursuits followed by about 60 organisations. There is a general perception—I think a wrong one—that these fears are expressed only by those involved in hill walking or mountain climbing, in which I have a particular interest. But the fear is much more widespread.

Leisure pursuits cover a wide range of activities: orienteering, angling, photography, cataloguing of flora and fauna, pony trekking, horse riding, geology and archaeology, to name but a few: there are a host of others. Those involved in all these legitimate pursuits respect the countryside, and have no wish to destroy it or to enter into conflict with landowners.

The threat of criminal trespass could be interpreted under such a new law as denying access to that most precious of any country's assets: its land. The land and the people need an harmonious, not an acrimonious, relationship. The few should not deny the rights of the many.

In Scotland, the possibility of a change from civil to criminal law of trespass is seen a break with existing legislation, which describes criminal trespass as

"exceptionally exclusive of civil action",

as defined in the second edition of Professor D.M. Walker's "Delict", resting on the common law of Scotland and the Trespass (Scotland) Act 1865.

There is also great concern about proposals to encourage the sale of Forestry Commission lands. The Forestry Commission has developed sensible and welcome rights of access. It has enhanced facilities for leisure pursuits and has helped to develop tourism, in addition to its highly regarded creation of direct and indirect jobs, which are important not least in constituencies such as mine.

On 30 March 1993, the Secretary of State for Scotland announced a forestry review group to consider options for ownership and management of Forestry Commission land. In England, there are about 700,000 acres of Forestry Commission land; in Wales, there are 350,000, and in Scotland, 1,830,000, representing about 10 per cent. of Scotland's land area. Fifty million visitors a year enjoy the freedom to roam in these lands, but, over the past 12 years during which Forestry Commission land has been sold, it appears that access agreements have become largely ignored.

Many new owners believe that private ownership and public access are incompatible. Research undertaken by the Ramblers Association this year showed that only 14 per cent. of new owners observed the commission's freedom-to-roam policy. One hundred and seventy-five councils throughout the United Kingdom have called on the Government not to jeopardise access any further. If the Government really claim to listen to the voice of local democracy, this must surely be a deafening condemnation of present policy.

One of the greatest problems we have faced is the secrecy surrounding the operations of the review group. Certainly, consultations were requested, and many submissions were made, but even now the Scottish Office, which is responsible for Forestry Commission land, is retaining the final document so that it can make its own recommendations in due course—perhaps in a few months' time. Is it therefore any wonder that there is some scepticism about the deliberations of the review group, given the contradictory statements that have emerged?

On 3 April 1992, the Prime Minister said:

"There is no intention to privatise the Forestry Commission."

That sentence was later said to have been written in the heat of election battles. This strange situation was exacerbated when the Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"Although there would be hurdles to overcome, the key benefits are that it would raise money and get the forestry estate out of public hands."

We know, of course, that a further 100,000 hectares of public land are to be disposed of by the year 2000. That seems to show that there is a clear lack of open debate, a failure to define clear policy and a clear contradiction of the Scottish Office paper of May 1992, which emphasised on page 14 the freedom to roam as part of green rights and responsibilities. Any move to sell further Forestry Commission land and the non-definition of genuine access agreements would be a monumental denial of that freedom to roam.

The continuation—and, indeed, the expansion—of the Forestry Commission is vital both for the industry and for access. It may be useful to remind the House that the percentage of forests that are publicly owned in Canada is 90 per cent., in the United States of America and France it is 28 per cent., and in Germany it is 58 per cent.

I and my party support the continued public ownership of Forestry Commission land in the light of its importance to our economy. Four million visitors to Scotland each year inject £400 million into the Scottish economy.

The third aspect is the continuing investigation by Scottish Natural Heritage into the issue of access. It was recorded in *The Scotsman* on 10 March that, in a recent letter, the chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage, Sir Magnus Magnusson, apparently warned the Secretary of State for Scotland against aggravated trespass, but, at the

same time, said that it would be difficult to balance all interests. There is a fear that that means that there will be a bias towards landowners.

My fear, and the fear of my colleagues who support the legislation, is that a sensible approach will be lost. The Bill seeks co-operation, not confrontation. I have studied examples in other European nations of the codification of the obligations and responsibilities of landowners and those who seek access. In all those examples, particularly those in Scandinavia, a common-sense code has been established. Everyone knows and respects one another's rights—that is what I want my Bill to achieve.

I am aware that, in my constituency, many landowners have a responsible attitude towards access to land, but many fears are caused by the fact that tracts of our land are being bought by faceless bureaucrats and conglomerates who have no interest in enabling and encouraging access to land. That is particularly important at a time when many people require access to leisure facilities.

People and the land are national partners. Let us prevent separation or divorce, and build a lasting, respectful mutually beneficial relationship.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Cynog Dafis, Mr. Robert Hicks, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Chris Mullin, Mr. Eddie McGrady, Mr. Alex Salmond, Mr. Paddy Tipping, Mr. A. Cecil Walker, Mr. Andrew Welsh.

FREEDOM TO ROAM (ACCESS TO COUNTRYSIDE)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing accordingly presented a Bill to provide for codification of law to ensure public access to the countryside and to define obligations and responsibilities for the public and landowners alike; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 April 1994, and to be printed. [Bill 78.]

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance. I have heard today that my local authority, Labour-controlled Waltham Forest, is about to be investigated for maladministration by the ombudsman. Has a member of the Government made a request to make a statement on that matter?

Madam Speaker: My office has not been informed that the Government are seeking to make a statement on that matter.

Orders of the Day

Coal Industry Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Ordered,

That the Coal Industry Bill, as amended, be considered in the following order, namely, New Clauses, Amendments relating to Clause 1, Schedule 1, Clauses 2 to 12, Schedule 2, Clauses 13 to 15, Schedule 3, Clauses 16 to 21, Schedule 4, Clause 22, Schedule 5, Clauses 23 to 43, Schedule 6, Clauses 44 to 49, Schedule 7, Clauses 50 to 52, Schedule 8, Clauses 53 to 65, Schedules 9, 10 and 11, Clause 66, New Schedules.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

New clause 1

MINING MUSEUMS

' .—(1) The Big Pit Mining Museum in Wales, the Scottish Mining Museum and the Yorkshire Mining Museum shall each be a "designated mining museum" for the purposes of this section.

(2) The Secretary of State may, by Order made by statutory instrument, designate any other mining museum as a "designated mining museum" for the purposes of this section provided that there shall be only one designated mining museum within each coalfield area.

(3) Each designated mining museum shall have available to it, free of charge, the services of a mines rescue service established under the provisions of section 55 of this Act.

(4) Any historic artefacts found, by any licensee under Part II of this Act, during the course of mining operations shall become the property of the Coal Authority, which shall offer any such artefact to the designated mining museum for the relevant area within one year of its becoming the property of the Authority.

(5) The Authority shall be required to provide or secure the necessary maintenance and other services to enable all designated mining museums to continue in operation, and, in pursuance of the discharge of this duty, may make it a condition of any licence granted under Part II of this Act that the licensee is required to provide maintenance and other necessary services to any mining museum designated under this section.

(6) The Authority shall make it a condition of any licence granted under Part II of this Act that the licensee shall be required to offer any mining equipment or other machinery, tools, artefacts, etc., as they become obsolete, to the designated mining museum for the area in which the mine at which they were used is located.

(7) The Authority may, with the consent of the Treasury, make grants to any designated mining museum.

(8) Any Order made under this section shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Hinchliffe.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.44 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 13, in schedule 2, in page 74, line 18 at end insert—

'MINING MUSEUMS

4A. In preparing restructuring schemes for the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of the Corporation, the Secretary of State shall take into account the operational requirements of those mining museums, designated under section (*Mining museums*) of this Act, which include underground areas open to the public.'.

No. 11, in clause 28, page 23, line 47, at end insert—

'(8A) Conditions included in a licence under this Part may provide for the provision of rescue and maintenance services to mining museums designated under section (*Mining museums*) of this Act.'.

No. 12, in clause 55, page 50, line 26, at end insert
'and which will provide sufficient cover for any mining museums designated under section (*Mining museums*) of this Act.'.

Mr. Hinchliffe: It shows the impact of Government policy on the coal industry that, in moving the new clause, I am, as a representative of Wakefield, primarily concerned with the future of a museum. My constituency has a proud history of coal that goes back hundreds of years. Vast numbers of people have been employed in the coal industry. Sadly, during the present Government's time in power, all our pits have been wiped out, and we are left simply with a museum. Some 20,000 miners and people with mining-related work have lost their jobs since 1979 in the Wakefield district. Our mining engineering industry is struggling to survive because of the impact of Government policy on the coal industry.

The purpose of new clause 1 is to ensure the continued operation of a number of mining museums, including the Yorkshire mining museum that was established in my constituency at Overton in 1982 on the site of the former Caphouse colliery. Since its opening in 1988, that museum has attracted more than half a million visitors, about half of whom have been children. It receives about 80,000 visitors a year, about 20,000 of whom are in organised school parties. I stress the importance of the museum's work in the education of children and young people from various parts of the country, including many districts where there is no experience of the coal industry.

Fifty people are currently employed at the Yorkshire mining museum, which is obviously a major employer in my constituency. A number of those employees are former miners who have been made redundant. As well as offering —as you are well aware, Madam Speaker, having been to the establishment—underground experience with underground tours and a realistic picture of the working life of miners, the museum has offered a range of exhibitions over a number of years, including exhibitions on mine lighting.

Recently, there was an exhibition on the Bevin boys which was opened by the hon. Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat). Another exhibition on mining art is currently proposed. You, Madam Speaker, will recall the exhibition on the 1842 legislation that took women and children out of work in the mines.

On a personal note, I was proud to take my two children to look at the exhibition. I am proud of the fact that I come from a mining family of many generations of Yorkshire miners. My great grandfather worked, as a 10-year-old boy, in the pit at Silkstone near Barnsley when the Husker disaster occurred and 28 children died. That disaster led to the 1842 legislation that ended the involvement of children and women in the mines. My great grandfather would have known many of the 28 children who lost their lives in that disaster, which was crucial because it led to an important change in history.

As you, Madam Speaker, will be aware, there are other ancient exhibits at the museum, including a unique picture of the Featherstone Rovers under-17 Rugby League team that won the Yorkshire cup in 1946. That unique picture featured Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse)—one of many reasons for us to ensure the future of the important museum.

I shall describe some of the background to the new clause. The Yorkshire mining museum, the Big Pit museum in south Wales, the Scottish mining museum and the Chatterley Whitfield mining museum in Stoke-on-Trent were set up in the 1980s to preserve the mining heritage of the nation. The first two mines and the Chatterley Whitfield museum have been the only places where visitors can go underground and experience the reality of coal mining. Last year, the Chatterley Whitfield museum was taken into receivership, and it has subsequently closed.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that Chatterley Whitfield is in receivership and that, at the eleventh hour, we are trying to save the entire national collection? Local contributions have been made to Chatterley Whitfield, underlining how important it is that we should retain the mining museum.

Mr. Hinchliffe: We all support the efforts of my hon. Friend and local people in her constituency to ensure that the collection is retained for public exhibition. Since that museum closed, there are only two mining museums where people can take underground tours and see the background of the mining industry. It is important to ensure that that experience is available to future generations.

We are worried that the Bill will result in the existing museums no longer being able to survive. I want briefly to set out why that is the case, and why new clause 1 is particularly important.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Has my hon. Friend considered the significance of the mining museums as tourist attractions? As local authorities, particularly Wakefield and Huddersfield, now have to rely more on tourism, will my hon. Friend dwell on the importance of the mining museums in attracting tourism into areas that are not usually designated as tourist areas?

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend speaks with unique experience, as he was a miner for many years. In Wakefield, we are increasingly looking to tourism to create jobs and increase employment opportunities.

Near the mining museum at Overton is the Yorkshire sculpture park at Bretton, which also offers an important tourist facility and attracts thousands of people from many parts of the country.

Returning to our concern about the future of the Yorkshire mining museum and others, when that museum was established in 1982, the then National Coal Board promised that, although it could not supply cash to the project, it would give all possible help to the setting up and operation of the museum in the form of technical assistance and the provision of equipment and machinery.

The Yorkshire mining museum opened to the public in 1988, with investment from local authorities in West Yorkshire, the European Union, sponsors and various Government bodies totalling some £4.5 million. Since then, it has received help from British Coal for such items as rope testing, testing suspension gear and analysing air samples—important features in offering visitors the experience of a working pit. If the museum has to buy those items and services on the open market, it will have to pay some £100,000 each year—money it simply does not have. The Big Pit mining museum in Wales is in a similar position.

The new clause provides that the coal authority should provide or secure the necessary maintenance and other services to enable the designated mining museums to continue, and that the Secretary of State should take into

account the operational requirements of mining museums with underground areas open to the public in preparing the restructuring schemes for the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of the corporation.

The Yorkshire mining museum is the museum for the Yorkshire coalfield and has an obligation to collect historical mining items and a representative selection of machinery and equipment used in the coalfield up to and including the present day.

At present, the museum receives from British Coal all items of historical interest found in Yorkshire from deep mining and opencasting, and obsolete machinery as it goes out of use. Those items are supplied to the museum free of charge. The museum estimates that it would cost a further £60,000 a year to acquire such items second-hand from licensed mines. That is also the case for the Big Pit mining museum and the Scottish mining museum, which collect material from their respective areas.

New clause 1 requires that any historical artefacts found during mining operations should pass to the Coal Authority, which will offer them to the designated mining museum for the area, and that licensees of collieries should be required to offer equipment, machinery, tools and other artefacts to the designated mining museum for the area once those items become obsolete.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Although the Rhondda valley has no designated mining museum, it has a heritage park which fulfils exactly the same function as the Big Pit museum, except that it has no underground facility. Might it not be a little restrictive simply to pass all artefacts and historical items to the one designated museum? As my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) pointed out, facilities such as the heritage park are extremely important to the development of the local tourist industry.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I take my hon. Friend's point, and I would expect the Big Pit mining museum in south Wales to take account of it: it is entirely reasonable. I know of other facilities that might wish to use exhibits that—under the new clause—would be passed to, for instance, the Yorkshire mining museum; I do not think it unreasonable for the various bodies to agree at local level on who can make the most effective use of the exhibits involved.

If the help required in the new clause is not forthcoming, the mining museums will be in grave danger of being unable to fulfil their obligation to collect, preserve and display material that illustrates the development of an exceptionally important aspect of the history of our nation, and of constituencies such as mine.

In view of the heavy financial cost of running a museum with an underground section open to the public, there is clearly a danger that the Yorkshire and Big Pit mining museums will not be able to survive much longer. Without them, there would be nowhere for people to be shown the history of coal mining in the environment in which it was practised, and to appreciate at first hand exactly what working underground was like for coal miners.

The sums involved in securing the future of the three mining museums are minute in comparison with the overall costs of the privatisation of British Coal. If the museums are forced to close, we shall have lost for ever a vital part of our natural heritage, which cannot be restored in the future. I hope that the Minister will listen to those who support the new clause—not just Opposition Members but members of his own party, including those in the other place who have actively supported the preservation of the Yorkshire and other mining museums. I hope that he will accept the new clause.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I, too, support new clause 1, to which I have attached my name. I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) has said. Although I have visited neither the Big Pit mining museum in Wales nor the Scottish mining museum, I have visited Caphouse colliery—the site of the Yorkshire mining museum—a couple of times as a tourist, and, on a more serious visit, discussed its future with Dr. Faull.

The museum is a wonderful example of a working colliery, and a very good example of our industrial heritage. It has educational facilities, and—as we have heard—many schools visit the museum and use those facilities. In future, this will be the only way in which they can see how the coal industry has progressed over many years.

I, too, have seen the picture featuring Mr. Deputy Speaker; I am sure that it is one of the museum's prize possessions. I am not sure whether my hon. Friends the Ministers have visited the museum, but I know that our hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage has done so, and was extremely impressed by what he saw.

The maintenance of the fabric of the mine itself is essential to its future: clearly, no one can be taken so far underground without the existence of the proper health and safety provisions that would obtain in a normal mine. Those provisions must be closely monitored and checked.

Mining museums have always been recognised as a welcome addition to our industrial heritage, and should be available for young people, not only now but in future. In one respect, I am wholly at odds with the Mines and Collieries Act 1842, which was passed on 10 August and which prohibited females and boys under 10 from working down the mines. I am not suggesting that children should work down the mines, but they should be allowed to visit.

During my most recent visit at the new year, very small children were enthralled at being taken on such a visit. They scrabbled about in the dirt and, although they were tiny, they asked lots of questions. If the museums were to disappear, we shouldhave lost a great part of our industrial heritage which we, especially in the north of England, treasure greatly.

The museum is not resting on its laurels and asking for money. It raises much of its own finance and is very well run. It has a well-managed cafeteria which brings in money. However, the museum will continue to need support, support that I believe the Coal Authority or the Department of National Heritage should be able to give. I look forward to hearing what my Front-Bench colleagues have to say.

4 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): The Scottish mining museum, which is worth visiting, is in my constituency, based at the old Lady Victoria colliery. It is a living museum, in that it contains exhibits showing life in the village in the 1920s and even some about the old coal owner, Mungo MacKay, who was a rather dominating character. He was also a very fine mining engineer and many of the exhibits are unique. It has one of the largest

[Mr. Eric Clarke]

steam winders in existence. It wound the hatches and the coal up to the surface in a circular shaft. In other words, this was engineering way ahead of its time.

The same mining engineer and company had the use of arched girders, way before anyone else, and tubular steel props. From an engineering point of view, and in respect of cutting coal, the colliery was ahead of its time. The model village built at Newtongrange is still in existence. After a great deal of renovation, many of the houses have become desirable, and are attracting people to the village.

The museum is part and parcel of our heritage. I worked at the colliery across the road—the Lingerwood colliery —which belonged to the same company. We were far better producers of coal than the Lady Victoria—that is obvious, as I was working there. Seriously, last year the museum had 13,000 visitors, an increase of 20 per cent. on the previous year. Bearing in mind the fact that it opens only between April and September, and the fact that we are hoping for a further 20 per cent. increase this year, it is clear that it is part of the heritage trail in and around the city of Edinburgh.

I am very proud of the people who run the museum, who are bringing in more money all the time. They plead with the Government to accept new clause 1 which I support whole-heartedly. I also congratulate those who tabled it. People who work in such museums argue that they need to be provided with more equipment, and their plea is taken up in the new clause.

Any new mining company that comes across old mining machinery should ask the mining museums whether they would like to inherit it at no cost. Such machinery should be excavated rather than scrapped or melted down, which would be criminal. At the moment, British Coal hands over a considerable amount of surplus machinery. It does not want that to be lost.

The new clause is not asking very much of the Government. It protects our history. I agree with the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) that some of the young children who visit the museums have not even seen a piece of coal and have no idea what one looks like —which includes people in my community. The museums are an important educational facility, which enable children to see for themselves how the wealth of the nation was built and especially to congratulate the men and women who studied hard and put in a lot of effort to ensure that we had the resources to make the engines and other utilities function.

I throw my weight behind the new clause, and I hope that the Government take cognisance of it, because it is an important facet of the Bill. The people in those mining museums are not only paid for but dedicated to managing the resources which are given to them; they, as well as the museums themselves, should be supported.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I ought to declare an interest, as I am a trustee of the Yorkshire mining museum. However, it is an unpaid position, since to be a trustee is voluntary. I am a trustee because I have been associated with the museum since it began. The origins of the museum lay in the desire of many local people to see a museum that represented the Yorkshire coalfield area. While I was leader of West Yorkshire metropolitan county council, it considered one or two mines that it knew were not to continue in existence as mines for much longer. It is on the basis of that research that the mine at Caphouse was selected to be a museum.

As my. hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) said, it was a long time between the conception of the Yorkshire mining museum in 1982 and its opening to the public in 1988. Part of the reason for that was the long dispute in the coalfields in 1984-85; the completion of mining at Caphouse took some time and the opening of the museum was, therefore, much delayed.

Great support developed for the formation of the museum. Not only West Yorkshire county council, but South Yorkshire county council and British Coal supported it and the area was one of the few in which, during that period, there was co-operation and support between British Coal and the National Union of Mineworkers, because the NUM was anxious to see a museum that represented the coal heritage that it had created in Yorkshire.

The Caphouse museum has fulfilled our expectations and our hopes. It has been superb. You have seen it yourself, Madam Speaker. The Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage has visited the museum and has spoken of its high quality. It has won national awards for the quality of its work, which has been provided with help from the local authorities and the European Community, and we all wish to see it remain in existence.

I recognise that, in debating the new clause, we are not dealing with the mainstream points of the Bill, but we are dealing with an unintended possible effect of the legislation. We must make some provision for the service that the Coal Board is making available to three mining museums. We must ensure that there is help available. When I spoke to the Under-Secretary of State on the subject, he referred me to the Minister for Energy and said that it was a matter which needed to be dealt with on Report.

I shall illustrate British Coal's present important role by reading from a letter written by the director of the mining museum, Dr. Margaret Faull, who has directed the museum from its inception and is responsible for the good things that have been created there. In that letter, which was written to the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage following his visit, Dr. Faull spelt out clearly the provision that British Coal now makes:

"At present British Coal supplies the Museum with up-to-date equipment for inclusion in the Museum collections and for display to the public as examples of state of the art mining machinery; we do not pay anything for these items, nor for the cost of transporting what are often very large items to the Museum. British Coal also supplies the Museum with a wide range of services and equipment for use in the running of the Museum, again at no charge. Some of the equipment which has recently been supplied includes fencing, electrical cabling, environmental monitoring and statutory inspections. The services cover a variety of types, including for example, assistance underground when there have been maintenance problems. Throughout the time that the Museum has been open, all design work and costings for new buildings and for major repairs or conversions to existing buildings have been carried out by British Coal free of charge, together with the letting of tenders, overseeing the contracts and authorising payments. We estimate that the amount which we would have to find to pay for all these services and equipment would be in the region of £80,000-£100,000 a year, and we have no moneys in our already tight budgets to cover this amount."

When we were setting up the museum, British Coal said that it could not afford to put any money into it. We accepted that, but the House will realise from the letter that I have quoted that British Coal is none the less at the centre

of maintaining the museum. It also has places on the board of trustees, so that its interests can be expressed and taken into account.

If there is no substitute for the provision that British Coal makes, it is highly unlikely that the museum will survive far into the future. Yet, as my hon. Friends the Members for Wakefield and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) have already said, it is a vital tourist attraction for Yorkshire. It is well supported by Wakefield metropolitan district council, but I do not believe that the council could bear that burden alone.

I know that certain agreements on safety are likely to be made. When other mines in the area were closed there was a danger of flooding, which could have affected the museum. That has had to be taken into account, and there have had to be safeguards to ensure that the mine can remain open to the public—one cannot put the public at risk. It would all be included on the face of the Bill if we accepted the new clause and the amendments.

The three museums—I know the one in Yorkshire best—are part of our national heritage. We have been forced to witness the rundown of the mining of deep coal, and we think it important to ensure that we do not also lose the heritage that the museums represent and preserve. I urge the Minister to accept that the cost of the amendments to the authority would be minimal in comparison with overall costs, and a vital part of the culture and heritage of Yorkshire and other areas would be preserved.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): This is the first subject in our proceedings, so is ironic that we are discussing museums, when the Government are doing their level best to consign coal to history. The new clause, which I strongly support, insists on private mine owners and the Coal Authority being obliged to support the museums. Effectively, they piggybacked on British Coal in the past.

Like Wakefield, which has been eloquently described by my hon. Friends the Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), Big Pit in Blaenafon in south Wales has extensive underground workings and is hugely dependent—it has been for many years—on British Coal. The absence of British Coal has meant the loss of a source of artefacts for display in the mining museum and the loss of a vital source of spare replacement parts for working machinery for the museum, much of whose equipment is now obsolete and unsupported by the original manufacturers. There has also been a loss of the reservoir of technical expertise, particularly on health and safety matters, where British Coal's recommended practices are accepted by the inspectorate as having virtually the force of law.

4.15 pm

Another loss has been that of the repair, maintenance and testing facilities for a whole range of colliery equipment and requirements, such as air sampling, which have been provided free of charge by British Coal in many museums, especially in Yorkshire. Although there has been a small charge at Big Pit in Blaenafon, it has benefited from economies of scale such as shared transport costs with other local collieries.

Our argument is that the museums are effectively supported by local British Coal pits. Without that support, they would be unable to function. The Yorkshire mining museum in Wakefield has estimated that the additional cost that would fall on it once British Coal has withdrawn from the scene would be some £80,000. Blaenafon tells me, through my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), that that is an underestimate; it has found additional costs of more than £100,000 as all the mines in south Wales, with the exception of Tower, have closed.

Although the Scottish mining museum and museums such as Cefn Coed in the Dulais valley in my constituency and the Rhondda heritage park in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) do not have underground facilities, they still rely on British Coal for the sort of support in other respects that I have described.

It is no good the Government's saying that the burden should fall on local authorities. In many mining communities, the local authorities are hard pressed and operating on the edge of viability. I hope that the Government, who showed a Scrooge-like approach towards accepting any amendments moved by my hon. Friends in Committee—and, undoubtedly, they will be the same later—will at least accept new clause 1. It would be a sad epitaph to the Government's philistinism if not only coal was destroyed but a vital part of our heritage and culture of which we are extremely proud in south Wales.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): In addition to mining museums, will my hon. Friend acknowledge that another major part of our heritage is mining records, and another act of vandalism is the way in which mining records have been taken out of the community and deposited centrally? Access to mining records is becoming more difficult.

Mr. Hain: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. Mining records have been centralised in Bretby, which is a considerable distance from places such as Merthyr and Neath in south Wales. Another value of the museums, to which my hon. Friend drew attention, is that they are a source of history about the local area. At least they are relatively near the coalfields, in the case of Big Pit in south Wales, and that is another major reason why they should be preserved.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I shall talk about the living heritage in connection with new clause 1, which I wholly support. You, Madam Speaker, were not able to select amendment No. 59—I certainly do not question your decision—but it would seem to be the appropriate place in which the Minister could consider, when he eventually adopts new clause 1, some way of rescuing the brass bands and associations that have banded together for sporting purposes, and have been fostered by individual collieries. That is most important.

I raise this matter at the urging of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett), who has the Grimethorpe colliery band in his area. Surely, the Grimethorpe band and the Frickley band are two of the finest brass bands that exist.

Mr. William O'Brien: There is also Sharlston.

Mr. Enright: My hon. Friend reminds me of Sharlston. My hon. Friends and I could go through a catalogue of some of the finest sounds in this country. They have reached a high international standard and it is important that they are not swept away.

If you were to examine my constituency, Madam Speaker, you would see that it is a series of communities.

[Mr. Enright]

Those communities were brought there essentially to work at the pit. The communities were fostered in part by the pit in terms of the recreational activity, which was extremely important. One only has to look at the multitude of miners' institutes and at the part that they played in improving a life which was hard. They improved that life with better educational and cultural standards.

We must not throw that away, because the communities have no jobs whatsoever. The result is that we are liable to have young folk hanging around with nothing to do, and the devil does indeed create work for idle hands. However, one can find in the brass bands a combination of young and old folk working together. The bands take them off the streets and give them not only a pastime, but a passion.

I ask the Minister to consider seriously the possible inclusion of brass bands and of sporting clubs that were previously supported by individual collieries. They now have nowhere to go because the corporate purse is dwindling in the private sector. Therefore, the urging of the Government is needed.

Mr. Rogers: I want to speak in particular to amendment No. 11, which deals with the provision of rescue and maintenance services to mining museums. That would probably apply uniquely to south Wales, because the area has become a mining museum. We have one colliery, which is due to close.

However, in my constituency there is a mines rescue service station which is manned by full-time brigadesmen. Those are young men—probably the cream of the mining industry—who have been trained to an extraordinarily high level. They would be, if I may use the expression, the "shock troops" of the rescue service in the event of any disaster or calamity.

There are members of my family in the service in Rhondda, and I know of their extraordinary dedication in achieving high levels of personal fitness, as well as acquiring all the skills that are needed. The proposition that we should go to a part-time force fills me with horror. Regardless of how many collieries will be left, if there is a disaster or a calamity—as the Minister knows—the professionalism required is as high as that required from the police, ambulance and rescue services above the surface.

One could argue that those in the mines rescue service require even more skill because of the extraordinary conditions in which they have to operate. If Tower colliery closes by 1 May 1994—that proposition has been made in some quarters—the only nearby underground shaft facility that would be serviced by that rescue station would be the mining museum at Big Pit.

In south Wales, there are 100 small mines. Many of those are in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Neath (Mr. Hain) and for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and some are in my constituency and throughout the valley communities in south Wales, and they rely on the rescue service.

I know that proposals have been made about the level of service that ought to be maintained and the mechanism under which it would operate. For example, a central service and a service by helicopter that would fly out when emergencies occurred have been proposed. As long as any people are working underground, the thought of a reduced service fills me with horror. Often in emergencies the time factor is important.

Not so long ago, there were 63 coal mines in my constituency. Now there are none. There is a half one in a way; the Maerdy colliery is worked from the Tower colliery, but both the coal and the men are wound in Tower colliery. However, many of my constituents—I say many, but that is a relative term. I should say that some of my constituents work in the coal mines. To withdraw any rescue services while even one man is still working underground would be a criminal abdication of responsibility by the Government. Whatever expenditure is required and however the service is structured in the future, the Minister should take the responsibility extremely seriously.

I accept that the demand for the service will decrease. Therefore, the Minister must think about what he intends to do with the young dedicated people, the cream of their profession, who have devoted their working life to developing the mines rescue service. The Minister cannot simply wash his hands of such people. They are in an incredibly difficult position. They must stay in employment. Unlike other miners, they are not allowed to apply for voluntary redundancy even though, as miners, they have come from collieries into the central rescue station.

As they are full-time brigadesmen, they live in the station so that they can be on 24-hour call. They have to arrange their holidays to ensure that the maximum required coverage is available if a disaster occurs. These people have given complete dedication.

The brigadesmen live in tied houses. They cannot apply for houses outside the station. British Coal, as currently constituted, will not allow them to live outside the station. So they cannot purchase or rent a house outside. What will happen to their conditions of employment after the reorganisation?

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): In view of the dedication of the men, is it not odd that British Coal will not even treat with them about the possible sale of those houses to the men? They want to know what will happen to their homes and property. It is a real shame that British Coal has locked the door and will not talk to them about the possibility of buying the houses that they live in.

Mr. Rogers: I am glad that my hon. Friend has mentioned that point. It is an absolute scandal. I do not understand why the Government behave in that way. Those in the rescue service, of all people, have given loyalty to the industry. I am not surprised that the Government have done what they have. Some years ago, I was the spokesman for the Opposition when we considered the Bill to provide for the contractorisation of the atomic weapons establishments at Aldermaston and elsewhere. The Government sold those houses over the heads of the occupants.

Will the Minister deal with that point when he replies? Does the Coal Board intend to sell the houses over the heads of the people who occupy them? It would be an absolute scandal if that happened. Almost all those young people are under 40 and have young children. They have given up their homes in other areas to live in the rescue station. For their houses to be sold over their heads, as

happened in Aldermaston under the same Government, would be criminal, just as it was in the case of the Atomic Weapons Establishments police.

What guarantee will be given to the young men who work in the mines rescue service? Will they be allowed to remain in their houses for six months, 12 months or some other period? What time period will they be given? I stress that those people have had to uproot themselves from their communities in order to provide this service.

Those young men are the cream of the profession. They have shown dedication, loyalty and, in many instances, bravery of the highest order. They deserve some respect, loyalty and support in return. If the Coal Board is to close these stations these people will have to be treated generously so that they can adjust to the situation outside their current employment. Any action less than that will be a crime committed by the Government.

4.30 pm

Mr. William O'Brien: I will dwell briefly on the value of mining museums to the tourist trade throughout the regions, and particularly on their value to the Wakefield and West Yorkshire area. The closure of mines—in my constituency the last pit, Sharlston, closed last July—has signalled the end of mining in the Normanton constituency. At one time, there were 23 pits in the area and now there is none.

The area has a mining background. People will learn of the traditions of the communities and history will be projected into the future through the mining museum situated in the Huddersfield and Wakefield area. Therefore, the proposals in this new clause and the amendments taken with it are significant. They provide some safeguards for traditional inspections, maintenance of underground corridors, maintenance of inspections for safety reasons, and maintenance of winding equipment, cages and other equipment which are necessary if the museum is to continue operating. That is the purpose of the new clause and of the amendments taken with it.

We are asking the Government for assurances that the back-up services that have been provided by British Coal will continue to be provided. Obviously, local authorities will give all the support they can to maintaining the new museum, but their resources are very limited because of Government restrictions on local government expenditure on local government activities. Nevertheless, the involvement of local government in the maintenance of the mining museum is very important.

There are statutory responsibilities also. We will have to rely upon the mining industry—British Coal in particular—to provide the necessary back-up services. I make one plea to Ministers. Mining areas such as mine have a history going back decades—a history of which mining people are proud. Even though we have witnessed disasters in our communities, those disasters are part of the history of our areas. I refer in particular to a recent disaster at Lofthouse colliery in my constituency. Thirteen men perished because of an influx of water into the coal workings, and there is a memorial in the area to them. When people go underground in the mining museum, it helps to explain the situation that developed at Lofthouse colliery and helps the communities to understand what people endured on that occasion. It helps to explain why mining communities are so proud of their attachment to the mine.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I, like my hon. Friend, recall vividly the Lofthouse tragedy. Does he accept that, in a sense, Lofthouse is unique, because the tragedy is commemorated by a memorial above the place where several of the men who were killed remain to this day? That is not the case in many other parts of Yorkshire and other coalfields where there are no memorials to the thousands of people who gave their lives to the British coal industry, which has been wiped out by the present Government. That fact reinforces the need for museums that offer some insight into what people in our area and elsewhere went through.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful for that intervention because it brings out an argument that should have been made earlier—that the mining museum in West Yorkshire is a memorial to many people who worked in the pits and many people who perished in the pits. I believe that the museum is important as a memorial to the people who worked in those pits, and to the people and communities who relied on mining for their livelihood and standard of living.

Therefore, I consider that the new clause and the amendments are important. I appeal to the Minister to take into consideration the importance of maintaining the mining museums, especially the museum in Wakefield, but no less importance should be given to the other museums to which hon. Members have referred. As we need statutory back-up to ensure that those museums continue, it is important that the Minister answers the points that have been made so that we can understand the effects that the Government's proposals in the legislation will have on mining museums.

I said earlier that in the region of Wakefield, Huddersfield and West Yorkshire in general the mining museum is a tourist attraction. Many people visit the museum because it signifies a past industry in the region. The local authorities now need to develop the tourist trade to increase the flow of resources into their districts. It is a new type of local tax, trying to bring in tourists. We need that because the English tourist board is not being financed to the extent that it was a few years ago, so we need to find new attractions. Mining museums are new attractions. The tourist trade in the mining areas is beginning to develop, and the mining museums are a way of attracting tourists to our areas.

Ms Walley: I shall speak briefly in the short time that is available. I want wholeheartedly to support the new clause which has been spoken to so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), and to congratulate all hon. Members who are supporting it today.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will take on board the special lessons that we are now learning in my constituency from the Chatterley Whitfield mining museum. It is important that we should consider what is happening to our coal mining industry. It is ironic, given that we have spoken so much about pit closures, that we should now have to urge the Minister, at the eleventh hour, to prevent coal mining museums from closing.

Chatterley Whitfield is a coal mining museum. It was set up as a trust, and it was successful in so far as it managed to obtain, as we have heard, the whole of the British Coal collection. It was run on a shoestring. It has been successful in that it attracts about 50,000 visitors annually. People can visit the pit buildings and experience

[Ms Walley]

going down a pit. Those who gave their working lives to the industry work as volunteers to give young people a chance to see what a coal mine was like.

Unfortunately, Chatterley Whitfield mining museum has gone into liquidation. This Friday, I shall have a last-minute meeting with the Charity Commission, the city council and others involved to see whether we can save it. I tabled an amendment to the new clause in the hope that Chatterley Whitfield could be included in the list of museums which the House should have an opportunity to keep open.

Three aspects of Chatterley Whitfield museum are important. First, it houses the national collection, which includes a huge number of items. That is in the hands of the liquidators, who are deciding when and how it will be sold. Earlier today, I was speaking to the regional museums office in the west midlands, which does not even have a comprehensive list of the items in the national collection. It is outrageous that it is to be sold because it includes items of national value. The liquidators say that it cannot be separated but must be sold as a job lot. We cannot afford to lose that national collection. It should remain in regional coal mining museums.

The second aspect of the museum concerns its local collection. People are rightly proud of how local communities have built up the coal mining museums. They have donated in good faith items such as George crosses and other items connected with their fathers' and grandfathers' work in the industry. Although some items have been returned to people, a large number have been sold.

Thirdly, the Chatterley Whitfield museum is a local archive which includes details about maps, shafts and how different companies operated, even before nationalisation. The collection has been brought together over the years and reflects our industrial heritage in Stoke-on-Trent.

By the second week of April, all that will be sold off. This is an important debate. I shall fight 100 per cent. to keep the collection at the Chatterley Whitfield museum and, despite all the odds, to find a way to keep the collection together. Many people in Stoke-on-Trent and north Staffordshire feel the loss of the mining museum far more than the loss of individual items. I therefore urge the Minister to ensure that we keep intact the proud heritage of our mining traditions in my mining museums.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I congratulate hon. Members on their ingenuity in having this subject as the first debate. In some respects, it is appropriate that we begin by giving due recognition to the tremendous contribution that the mining industry has made to this country. It is sad, however, that nowadays hon. Members want to speak more about the museums in their constituencies than about the mines. That is regrettable because of the economic and industrial circumstances that confront us.

We discussed this matter briefly in Committee. At that time, my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) was ingenious in finding a way to raise the issue. Since then, there has been a comprehensive, all-party approach by the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and my hon. Friends the Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). This afternoon, the importance of the mining industry to so many communities has been clearly expressed by Members on both sides of the House. It is essential that we secure our heritage for the future by ensuring that mining museums with mining facilities receive appropriate technical assistance.

4.45 pm

As my hon. Friends the Members for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and for Wakefield said, it is important that due recognition be given to the rescue services. If it is wrong to send men down the mines without proper safety equipment, it is even worse to send people with no experience of the industry. The very purpose of the museums is to give them an understanding of the industry. The last thing that we want is for people to go down in dangerous circumstances.

If we do not preserve the mining museums, all that will be left of the mining industry will be one or two collieries and the unsightly, derelict mine sites that still scar so many mining communities. It is therefore appropriate that, in a debate of this nature, we should draw attention to the great assistance given by British Coal. At a time of limited resources, it has nevertheless backed the development of this "second stage" of the mining industry's life in certain communities.

My hon. Friends have duly recognised mining museums' contribution to tourism. It is sad that museums are all that we have left, but the nature of coal mining is such that people who do not work in the industry or have associations with it have virtually no appreciation of the conditions in that many men worked for so many years. It is therefore essential that people should be able to see the contribution that mining made to people's lives and the price which people paid as a consequence of it.

Reference has been made today to the fact that one or two communities will have, not a mining museum, but a memorial to the miners whose lives have been lost in the winning of coal. Later this year in the village of Fallin in my constituency, where the Polmaise colliery operated for many years, a mining memorial will be erected with the name of every miner who died in the winning of coal in that community. Due to the research carried out by some men who worked in the mining industry, they have tracked down some 150 people who died in the mining industry in that area. Something similar may be happening across the whole country.

We are concerned not just about the past, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsley said. Few people are better equipped for blowing the trumpet of brass bands than my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsley—[Hon. Members: "Hemsworth."] I am sorry. I know the tune, if not the title. We shall discuss the coal industry social welfare organisation later in our deliberations.

Given the extent to which our traditions and heritage are manifest in those museums, it is essential that we have the continuing support of those who will be responsible for running the industry if the Bill is passed. I therefore support the amendment, which is not a matter of party dispute. It is now incumbent on the Government to provide us with good reasons for saying that they cannot support it. If they cannot support it, they must ensure that the Bill is amended in another place to ensure that the contribution that those museums make to the community and our cultural heritage is sustained. Without the Government's

push and the prodding of the coal authority, it is clear that private mine owners will not fulfil the responsibilities that the mining communities expect of them.

On behalf of the Labour party, I give our overwhelming support to the amendment and hope that the Government will go some way towards meeting the realistic claims of both sides of the Committee for support of the mining museums.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I should like to intervene briefly to register my party's support for the new clause.

The Minister will realise that, in educational and cultural terms, it is hugely important that museums be preserved. Experience at places such as the slate quarry museums in north Wales shows how popular they are, not just with local communities but with people at large. If a community cannot have a future in an industry—something to which it can look forward with pride—it must at least be able to look back with pride at its past.

It is vital that it be able to do so on site, where the action happened, so that the facility may be part of the community. It is important that we reinforce what were coalfield communities and avoid doing anything more to undermine them.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): What we have heard in the debate so far shows the wide interest among hon. Members in the traditions and heritage of coal mining areas. I have been asked a number of questions, to which, although they are not directly relevant to the subject of museums, I shall try to respond.

The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) asked several questions about houses currently occupied by members of the rescue services. British Coal is considering which properties will be required by successor companies. These will need different treatment. I understand people's concern about the future of their homes, and I can assure British Coal tenants that decisions about ownership will take their interests very much into account. Clearly, the hon. Member for Rhondda will want to pursue the matter further. In view of his experience, I shall probably want to write to him when I have secured more information for him to pass on to his constituents.

I understand the uncertainty surrounding some of the issues that were raised by the hon. Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), for Neath (Mr. Hain) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien).

The hon. Member for Normanton reminded us of the Lofthouse disaster. This is one of the most recent such events occupying people's thoughts, having occurred, I believe, in 1972 or 1973. The hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong about the date. In terms of the number of people involved, it was a major disaster, and some of us followed the regular daily news bulletins. As the hon. Member for Wakefield pointed out, some bodies were not recovered, having been sealed within the mine. The decision to stop the recovery process was very emotive. Indeed, such situations are always emotive. I understand very well the history and the circumstances of disasters and other events to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

What we have to consider is the best means of moving forward. There has been extensive reference to underground mining museums. I accept that there is a desire to go underground, and that there is huge interest in such facilities. I do not believe, however, that it is necessary to go underground to appreciate the conditions in which miners had to work.

Indeed, by their very nature, some of the more dangerous areas could never be shown in a museum. They are just too dangerous for visitors. Members of the public can be taken only to the stronger and safer areas. There are several examples of the development of mining equipment and the portrayal of mining conditions. The hon. Member for Rhondda made this point. In an intervention during the speech of the hon. Member for Neath, he referred to a particular event in his constituency. Perhaps it did not take place underground—I do not know the exact circumstances—but it may clearly have mirrored people's experience on site.

Mr. Rogers: I was referring to the Rhondda heritage park and museum, which is dedicated not only to the history of coal mining in the Rhondda valley—probably the most famous coal mining location in the world—but to the heritage of miners and their families, who came in tens, if not hundreds, of thousands. If the Minister would like to visit the Rhondda, I shall certainly make arrangements for him. He would have to apply to the Secretary of State for Wales for a passport, but I am sure that that difficulty could be overcome.

Mr. McLoughlin: During the passage of the Bill, I have been invited to a few places. Perhaps I shall one day be able to take up some of the invitations. If I were to go to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, it would be a reverse visit, as he regularly visits my old Cannock Chase area.

The park to which the hon. Gentleman referred is not an underground facility such as those we have been talking about. My point is that it is possible to have an above-ground mock-up portraying underground conditions quite realistically. When I was being trained at the Valley training centre in Hednesford, trainees gained experience above ground before going underground.

Mr. William O'Brien: As the Minister suggests, some of these facilities could be provided on the surface. However, it is not possible to re-create on the surface the descent in the cage, travel along underground roadways, or the negotiation, in very limited space, of what we called sleepers. Museums take people from shallow seams—I worked in seams only 3 ft high—to the massive machinery of today. This is the backcloth. These are the significant issues in the portrayal of the history of mining communities. A working pit is the type of museum that we want to see maintained. Because of its importance to communities, I hope that the Minister will not depart from that idea.

Mr. McLoughlin: I certainly will not. I have not visited the mining museum to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, although it is not very far from where I now live. As has been demonstrated, not all facilities are underground.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall give way, but I want to make some progress, as there are many important matters with which we have still to deal—matters just as important as the one we are discussing now.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Most of the comments that we have heard today imply that these are

[Mr. Alan Duncan]

underground working facilities. If that were the case, it would be perfectly proper and logical that a mines rescue service should be available. However, I can see nothing in the provision to the effect that museums must be underground, even though acceptance of the new clause would involve making a rescue service available. Clearly, this is nonsense in the case of facilities that are above ground. Does not the provision need a good deal of tidying up?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing a distinction between different mining operations, and between different museums. One difference that arises concerns the cost of providing rescue services—a matter to which I shall return shortly.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. McLoughlin: I am being pushed from all sides, but I cannot avoid giving way to my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock).

Mrs. Peacock: I hope that my hon. Friend will not be misled by the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), who, although he was not present at the beginning of the debate, talked about the difference between facilities above ground and those underground. Obviously, we are very keen that underground facilities should remain. If the clause is not quite right, we shall accept amendments.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful. I should point out, however, that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton followed the Bill closely in Committee, and is well versed in these matters—but I digress.

Mr. Gunnell: The seam at Caphouse was specially constructed; nevertheless, if people are to go underground, there must be safety arrangements. The Minister and the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton would not say what they had said if they had been to the Yorkshire mining museum and done the underground visit. Some impression of mining can be gained on the surface, but an underground visit is the most accurate guide.

5 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: There we are, then: now I have been told that I have never been down a mine. I shall let it pass, however.

I have given careful consideration to the views put to me during the passage of the Bill about mining museums and their position once we have privatised British Coal. I should welcome any decision by the privatised mining companies to offer voluntary support similar to that currently offered by British Coal, but I firmly believe that it would be wrong to impose a requirement on the private sector. That applies equally to providing services and to making gifts of obsolete machinery and equipment which may be valuable even if it is no longer of use for mining.

The question whether mining museums should be included in the scope of a mine rescue scheme is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission. The commission will introduce new regulations in June, which will be subject to full consultation with all interested parties.

Hon. Members will be aware that, in its advice to us about the post-privatisation safety regime, the HSC has said that responsibility for regulating health and safety must remain clear and unequivocal and must confirm the need to retain a clear separation between licensing and health and safety regulation. The Government have accepted the commission's advice in full. I therefore cannot accept the proposal to include rescue conditions in the Coal Authority licences.

The Health and Safety Executive is preparing draft regulations on rescue, in full consultation with the national advisory committee on rescue work and rescue apparatus. I assure hon. Members that they will be given due consideration. It is for the Health and Safety Commission to decide on the scope of the proposed regulations, which will of course be subject to full formal consultation with all interested parties.

The Coal Authority will not be in a position to provide the help in kind which the new clause seeks. I believe that the best way for mining museums to obtain technical services and advice is to begin now to explore links with the private mining sector. Specialist museums receive support from a variety of sources, including local authorities, and to some extent from central Government, via the Museums and Galleries Commission. It would seem wrong to single out these museums for exceptional access to central funds, as the new clause proposes.

This is an uncertain time for museums, but I see no reason to be pessimistic. Mining museums are obviously a powerful attraction. Several hon. Members have pointed out how some mining areas are attracting many tourists, thereby bringing in welcome new jobs. They enjoy a fund of good will, as this debate has shown. I feel sure that the museums will find their place in a privatised industry if they respond vigorously to changing circumstances. I believe that mining museums can look forward to a valuable and viable future.

I believe that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley), who mentioned the Chatterley Whitfield mining museum, has also been associated with the Potteries museum, which has won several national awards—

Ms Walley: The point is that we stand to lose the entire national collection at Chatterley Whitfield, not to mention the items donated locally, because, when private business steps in, charity law does not take precedence over company law.

Mr. McLoughlin: I believe that the circumstances surrounding that museum are still in a state of flux. I understand that British Coal gave the exhibits to the museum in the late 1980s. British Coal hopes that it may prove possible so to arrange matters that the exhibits are passed on to another museum, or the like. I know the museum; I believe that I visited it once. As far as I know, the situation is still changing, and other complicated matters come into play as well—designation, relations with the city council, and so on. I am sure that the hon. Lady will continue to be involved.

Opposition Members have described how these museums were set up in the 1980s in recognition of the historic importance of the industry in mining areas. There is no reason to believe that they will not continue to thrive in the near future.

I must tell the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) that decisions on continued sponsorship of colliery bands are a matter for British Coal. I understand

that the corporation is sympathetic to the Grimethorpe brass band and has agreed to support it, so that it can stay intact while commercial sponsors are found. The hon. Gentleman may want to revisit that point when we discuss the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

I hope that the hon. Member for Wakefield will withdraw the new clause. The points that he has raised are important, but are already covered.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am disappointed with the Minister's response. He has heard Opposition and Conservative Members alike presenting a coherent argument in favour of the new clause and in support of the future operations of the mining museums, including the one in my constituency.

The Minister seemed to rest his case—and he a former miner—on the idea that it is not necessary to go underground to re-create the experience of a working colliery. That is quite wrong. I have visited the Yorkshire mining museum often, and have been down a number of working pits. That museum comes as near as possible to re-creating the environment in which men have struggled for generations.

I went down my first pit when I was 15—Crigglestone in Wakefield. The seam runs underneath the River Calder and is full of water. I remember seeing men in the Manor pit crawling along in seams no more than 2 ft 6 in high. We cannot re-create that for the public, but it is possible to show something akin to the environment in which the work was done.

At the Caphouse museum, there is a crawl-through which children like mine can go through and enjoy, but it does not really re-create the conditions that I could describe to my two children, whose great-grandfather spent six hours pinned under a rock at Walton colliery in Wakefield and broke his back in the process. That should mean something to my children and to future generations of youngsters who will never experience the tragedy of so much that went on in the industry, in Yorkshire and elsewhere.

The Minister's second point—his first would be invalidated by anyone who had been to the Yorkshire museum or any other underground museum—was that museums should talk to private owners in an effort to raise funds. They have done that already. It is thanks to the vision of the West Yorkshire metropolitan county council and Wakefield metropolitan district council that we have a Yorkshire mining museum at all. It is also thanks to support from Europe.

The Minister's answer will just leave the museums to wither and die. That is unacceptable. I know that this issue is being taken seriously in another place. I therefore hope that the Minister will go away and think about the points made today and consider what steps the Government might take, when the Bill reaches another place, to deal with them.

On that basis, I am prepared to withdraw the new clause, but I hope that the Minister will take seriously the important arguments that have been advanced in the debate. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 2

MEDICAL SERVICE

'.—(1) It shall be the duty of the Health and Safety Executive to promote best standards of occupational health in the coal industry.

(2) To enable the Health and Safety Executive to fulfil its duty under subsection (1) above, the Secretary of State shall make a scheme before the restructuring date which transfers the staff, property functions and duties of the British Coal Medical Service to the Health and Safety Executive.

(3) The Health and Safety executive may impose a levy on licensed operators to meet any costs of providing occupational health services which are not covered by direct charges to users of the service.

(4) The local authority, on the advice of the Health and Safety Executive, may impose a levy on the licensed operators.'.—*[Mr. O'Neill.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. O'Neill: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 27, in clause 28, page 23, line 19, at end insert—

'(4A) A licence under this Part shall include a condition which ensures that workmen's inspectors appointed in accordance with section 123 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 receive their normal rate of pay, including any performance-related or production-related bonus, for any time spent performing section 123 duties.'.

Mr. O'Neill: The new clause and the amendment are concerned with two aspects that have already been mentioned—the medical service, which is one of the current, continuing and, we should like to think, future legacies of the coal industry, and health and safety.

The medical services provided by British Coal are comprehensive. They employ doctors, nurses and radiologists. No other occupational health service in Britain is experienced in mining—all the nurses are trained or training to be qualified occupational health nurses. Given the decline in mining, it is unlikely that any other organisation will be able to build such a pool of knowledge in the next couple of years. The best way to maintain the expertise of the British Coal medical service is for it to be assumed by the Health and Safety Executive, which will have some responsibility for ensuring that health standards are met in the coal mining industry.

The expertise of the medical service extends far beyond the problems and the conditions of working miners. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) has a private Member's Bill going through the House on the issue of emphysema. Apparently, very few cases of emphysema do not arise from mining. That disease does not emerge immediately, and it is long-term. It is essential that a part of the health service in Britain has the expertise to identify the disease, and that records are kept centrally. New clause 2 seeks to sustain those aspects of the medical service by making them a duty of the Health and Safety Executive.

5.15 pm

The executive is perhaps held in some doubt by some sections of the coal industry, because they assume that it is a poor substitute for the pit deputies in certain safety matters. But we can think of no other organisation that is better equipped to take on responsibility for such matters. We recognise that the Coal Authority is not equipped to take them on. After privatisation, the new licensed mine

owners will not be interested in, concerned about or capable of dealing with those matters. Responsibility should reside with the Health and Safety Executive.

As I said earlier, the executive is not flavour of the month in the mining industry in every respect. The Masham proposals, which have been debated in the House, introduced a new set of health and safety arrangements. They eliminate the role of the deputy. The Bill makes limited reference to matters of health and safety.

We have identified a subject that has not been given proper consideration. Amendment No. 27 deals with people who are almost unique in British industry—the workmen's inspectors, mentioned in section 123 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954. They command the respect of their fellow workers; they have to have had five years' experience; they are appointed by the majority union in the mine; and they are given specific responsibility to tour the whole of the mine twice every month. They do so in the boss's time, they are paid and they have an independence that is almost unique in the coal industry.

The deputies' responsibilities had to be met daily. Their status in the mine was rather different from that of workmen's inspectors, but, sadly, the deputies are no more. We still have an independent core of men in the coal industry who, if they are to carry out their responsibilities to the letter, must have a guarantee that they will be paid.

As we understand it, it was regarded as inappropriate to include workmen's inspectors in the 1992 legislation, which extended the right of payment to safety representatives. The mining industry, however, was not covered by that legislation, and it is appropriate that workmen's inspectors should be given the status and the payment. The 1992 legislation does not cover workmen's inspectors.

We are seeking to put mines inspectors on the same footing as those men covered by the Coal Industry Act 1992. As we understand it, they are not covered by that Act. That would enable them to conduct their duties without impediment or financial penalty. If pay for the work of workmen's inspectors is not explicitly the responsibility of the employer in the privatised coal industry, there is a danger that the work will not be carried out as it should be, and some of the men may feel intimidated.

We have seen that, in discussions on the establishment of the work force in some of the collieries that have been abandoned by British Coal, and are being licensed to private owners, the status of the trade unions is dubious. There are suggestions that there will be elaborate screening processes during recruitment so that union-minded men may be prevented from working in the pits. That may or may not be valid—only time will tell.

We want to ensure that workmen's inspectors, who carry out a unique function in ensuring safety in the mining industry, have the right to inspect the whole of the colliery. They should have access to all equipment, all records and all information. They should work with the confidence of their fellow workers because they are men of experience, they are appointed by the trade union majority in the colliery and their judgment is valued by their fellow workers.

For those reasons, we feel that it is appropriate to fit the two issues together. The medical service of the coal industry should be sustained—it is a unique service in British industry and a unique industry within the British economy.

There is plenty of evidence that the illnesses and injuries sustained by coal miners, in their working lives and beyond, need special care and attention. That expertise should be concentrated in a single medical service. We consider that it would be most appropriate if, after privatisation, such duties were the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive.

As a consequence of the statutory instrument pushed through the House last year, under the health and safety arrangements in the mines the deputy is no longer given his due position in the safety structure. But there is still one independent representative of the working men who is entitled to examine every aspect of the running of the colliery.

Such an inspector should be entitled to continue that work without the penalty, or the fear of the penalty, of being financially disadvantaged for taking time off during his normal shifts to carry out his important tasks.

At first glance, the amendments appear somewhat disjointed. For the sake of the future confidence of those who work in the mining industry and those whose loved ones work in the mining industry, it is essential to make proper provision for their health and safety and their medical care. We are pleased to propose the amendments and we hope the Minister will accept them as they are constructive and designed to help all those who work in the industry.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I start by making the general point that we felt it necessary to move new clause 2 because, as usual, the Government are making a mess of the privatisation of the coal industry, as they have of every other privatisation. There is absolutely no long-term benefit. The consultation between the Government, British Coal and eggheads in various parts of the country leaves much to be desired; there should have been consultation with people who work in the industry.

British Coal had the finest medical safety set-up anywhere—either on the surface, in industry, or in any other deep mining operation throughout the world. Ian McDonald used to be the Coal Board doctor for the Doncaster area. Each area in Yorkshire had its own doctor. Most of them were specialists. Dr. McDonald specialised in back problems associated with the mining industry. I do not envisage for a moment that the privatised industry will be in any way, shape or form financially inclined to provide such a service. It is important that we should try to ensure that the industry that remains has the best medical and safety set-up in the country. Regrettably, the Government's clause does not do that, hence new clause 2.

The British Coal set-up did not come about suddenly; it was built up over many years of practice and discussion and the Coal Board being pressurised by the NUM to make the necessary safety arrangements. The area consultative committee in Doncaster used to have a safety committee tagged on to it. After a couple of hours on the area consultative committee, we then got on to the safety committee. The safety committee was then set up in its own right. As Doncaster had established the safety committee, it won the best major improvements in British Coal three years on the trot. It is important that what remains of the industry incorporates the best possible practices and customs that have been built up over many decades. The Government will not manage that unless they listen to those who work in the industry.

The section 123 inspectors, who religiously went around each month looking for and pointing out to the management any bad practices that were taking place, found that after the miners' strike the Coal Board did not want to know. I am confident that the new privatised mines with their new private owners certainly will not want to appoint or allow the union to appoint 123 inspectors with powers to stop malpractice.

I hope that the mines inspectorate will be kept separate from the Health and Safety Executive. If they merge, all the specialist knowledge that has been built up over the years by the mines and quarries inspectors will be lost and the Health and Safety Executive will not be inclined to make or maintain any improvements.

As one last point in the quest for safety, I ask the Minister to look yet again at the number of disabled people employed in the industry. The percentage was not achieved in the old British Coal and certainly will not improve under the new privatised industry, although there are statutory regulations to that effect.

I hope that even at this late stage the Minister will have the courtesy to accept new clause 2. It has resulted from consultation with qualified people working in the pits, and it is important to have the best possible standards for the future.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I should like to draw the Minister's attention to two specific points.

First, one advantage of a particular occupational health service is the ability to study new methods. The evolution of the coal mining industry from working in a crude way with men shovelling coal to the sophisticated machinery that is now used was taken on board by the medical experts in the industry. Many hazards were unknown at the time. For example, it was discovered that the oil used for the hydraulic supports was giving men severe dermatitis. If a blister burst or had a small pin prick or hole, it went right through the skin and into the limbs and a major operation was required to remove it because of the high pressure. That study is just a quick example of why the medical group had to work in conjunction with new methods. That alone shows that there should always be preventive medical back-up.

Occupational health was a continuous service where people were systemically X-rayed to make sure that they were not contracting pneumoconiosis or silicosis. Many people were discovered to have lung cancer or something else wrong with them and were sent immediately for treatment. That was also a great benefit. The day-to-day knowledge of the medical experts, allied to the engineering ergonomics of the subject in which they were involved and the special strains and stresses of miners working underground, is unique and it would be criminal to destroy it simply by saying that now British Coal has gone they can have their P45s.

My second point refers to the section 123 inspectors. I should like to correct my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill). He referred to their appointment by the NUM or the mining unions, but they were elected; there was an election at the colliery for workmen's inspectors.

The role of the NUM was second to none in educating and training those people, in conjunction with Her Majesty's inspectors of mines in Scotland, who lectured to them on many occasions. It was not them and us; experts on strata control from British Coal and experts on other types of mine plant and machinery also lectured to them. We were not the custodians of all knowledge; there was a flow of knowledge among workmen, management and Her Majesty's inspectorate, all of them looking after the industry on behalf of the people.

Another unique feature of the 123 inspector was the fact that, by statute, he examined his own place of work. Following that examination, a report was made out and was hung on the pithead and subjected to close examination for seven days; a copy also went to the inspectorate. Moreover, the manager of the mine had to reply to questions and comments in the report within seven days. That illustrates the power of the inspectors—a power, incidentally, that was never used in the context of industrial action: the use of safety provision for such purposes was strongly discouraged, and the inspectors' power was employed only in a sensible, reasonable and constructive way. They were generally admired, and their position was guaranteed.

5.30 pm

Pay is an important issue. We do not want a second-class person to be paid a second-class wage; we want someone at the point of production—at the coal face, in the front of the mine—who stands for election because he will suffer no loss of earnings. If, through no fault of his own, he is elected, why should he lose earnings? After all, he is helping an area, or a section, to exist.

There have been arguments about who is responsible for safety on North sea rigs. An ideal solution would be to transfer responsibility to the people whom I have described: they should become 123 inspectors on the rigs, having received appropriate training. I hope that both management and workmen would be satisfied with such an arrangement, and that it would secure the level of safety that is desirable in an industry that can be at least as hazardous as mining. The status of such inspectors is important, and I hope that it will be maintained.

In the past, some people were blacklisted; despite the law, they did not become 123 inspectors because they had no union protection. If the union was anything, however, it was there to protect the safety of men at work—and this was one way of doing that. Moreover, the safety provision was not granted directly by some divine movement; it was secured as a result of considerable sacrifice and strife, and a terrific loss of blood and, indeed, life. The clause providing for inspectors was earned over many generations by my forefathers and others, who wanted a statutory right to inspection of their workplaces.

I hope that the Minister will take this constructive new clause seriously, and accept it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friends the Members for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) mentioned the role of the deputies. Let me put something on record, in case it was not said in Committee.

We would not be discussing the sad role of the deputies —and the fact that the Government have kicked them into touch with their privatisation measure, giving them responsibility for mine safety—if they had not played a significant role in 1984-85. If they had delivered the goods when they secured a ballot vote of 80-odd per cent., we would not be here today talking about privatisation. In her book, the last Prime Minister made it abundantly clear that

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

if the deputies had decided to act on that ballot result in the middle of the strike she would have lost the battle against the NUM. Now we find ourselves in strange circumstances.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford) *rose—*

Mr. Skinner: I do not think that I can give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have not much time, and he has plenty to do looking after his own businesses. He is up to the neck in it: he has all sorts of moonlighting jobs. I have just looked them up, and if he wishes to intervene I shall mention them all, so his constituents can learn how much moonlighting he is doing instead of doing his parliamentary job. I shall read them out, if necessary—and refer to one or two more besides.

It is a strange irony that the NUM members among us, and others who supported the miners during the strike, are now battling to introduce a clause giving deputies some power and responsibility—albeit in a roundabout fashion —so that they can perform the duties that they used to perform before the introduction of the Bill and last year's changes.

Mining is an extractive industry; it is not like factory work. That is one of the reasons why privatisation will fail, and why it will be impossible to implement the Government's so-called safety measures. We are dealing with people who, by and large, work down a hole in the ground, where the strata change from day to day. How can such an industry operate on the same basis as, say, the car industry or any other manufacturing industry? We are talking about people who have to deal with mother nature every hour of every day. The Minister should understand that coal mining is an extension of the pit community. Coal could not be dug if people did not collaborate underground in one way or another: that is why it is important to make safety a prime responsibility.

Sadly, safety is no longer the prime responsibility of the deputies. Those who will masquerade as deputies in the future will be responsible for production. Indeed, according to our information, under this privatisation measure the new Coal Authority will have no responsibility whatever for safety; it is not even mentioned. Neither deputies nor anyone else could carry out such responsibilities, because the Bill is all about making vast amounts of money in a relatively short time. That is all that the Government are interested in. They are not interested in a coal industry that will last for 20 or 30 years; those who will run the authority on behalf of the Secretary of State will run it for as short a time as possible to make as much money as possible.

As with the health authorities and all the rest, Tory spivs will be in charge. Perhaps some Tory Members even have little sinecures lined up for the time when the Bill becomes law. They will already be on some board or other, making representations, acting as advisers or consultants and picking up £10,000 or £20,000 a year; then they will talk about idle people who have no jobs in society. You can bet your bottom dollar that they have already lined up some of those jobs run by Tory spivs. Everyone knows, however, that the coal industry cannot be run by people who are interested only in profit; it is a very dangerous industry.

How would the industry manage without the St John's ambulance teams? I do not think that that has been mentioned today, although it was probably mentioned in Committee. In every pit village, the industry has been run by an assembly of men—sometimes assisted by women —who formed the backbone of that organisation, free of charge. It would be impossible to operate without them. I do not think that the Government have paid any attention to all the free assistance that has been given in respect of health and safety.

According to the latest figures available, a major incident, accident or death is 20 times more possible in a privatised pit than in one in the public sector. Up until 1992, such incidents were five times more likely in the small number of licensed mines—there are more now. According to the latest available figures, it is 20 times more dangerous to work in a privatised pit. The Minister may shake his head, but those are the facts. It is a simple calculation. I know that the Government fiddle the dole figures and the cost of living figures—they fiddle all the figures that they get hold of—but they cannot fiddle the safety figures because they represent people who have died or suffered injuries of one kind or another.

Post-privatisation will be like the pre-war days my father used to tell me about. He said that so many men were available for work in the pits that if it were a question of replacing a man or a pony, the management would sooner replace a man because there were so other men up on the blocks, waiting for a job. There were thousands of such men in every pit village—we all know what it was like in the run-up to the second world war. The cost of replacing a pony was £80. If there were an incident and people were injured or killed, the first thing that the manager asked was, "Have you saved the pony?" He knew that he could replace any number of men. That is what privatisation is all about, and there are 4 million people out of work under this Government.

The Bill and its safety aspects are a deliberate attempt to make a bob or two for the Government's Tory friends and some of the Tory Members of Parliament who will be allied to the industry. It has nothing to do with safety, which is why I believe that we should support the relatively moderate amendment No. 27—it does not ask for the moon —to make safety matters a little more prominent in the Bill.

It will be a sad day when the mines are taken over. The Government are not bothered about people suffering injury and illness—they never have been. They have stripped away many social security measures and the social fabric of all the pit communities and now they are trying to provide a platform for making money. They do not care tuppence about the men, and the women, who have to endure the consequences of their proposals.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): New clause 2 and amendment No.27 are extremely important. The new clause calls for the continuation of the medical service which has been built up since 1947 and which provides a bank of information about various diseases connected with the industry. For example, in the case of pneumoconiosis, the qualification period is 10 years underground. If a miner could not prove that he had fulfilled that qualification, he would call on the medical service to prove it.

A man may have worked in the coal industry for many years and sustained an injury perhaps 20 years ago. Having left the industry, he may begin to be troubled by that old injury. When he makes his claim for a disablement assessment, he will be required to show that he has worked

in the industry and that the problem from which he was suffering was the result of an industrial injury. He would most likely call on the coal industry's medical service to substantiate his claim that he had worked in the industry and sustained his injury when he informed the Department of Social Security that he had sustained it. It is important, therefore, that the service is maintained.

Another disease—chronic bronchitis and emphysema—has been accepted in relation to coal mining. The qualification period is 20 years. When a man finds that his period of work in the industry is questioned, the only way in which he is able to substantiate his claim is by calling on the records kept by the medical service. The service is important not only for the keeping records but for monitoring the health and safety of the men who work in the industry.

Radiographs are taken of each miner. The mobile X-ray van travels around the coalfields and tries to ensure that each miner is X-rayed every two years so that his health is continually monitored. Such a provision must be maintained and I hope that the Minister, who was nodding, will confirm that it is to be maintained.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) mentioned the industry's safety culture, which is second to none. The British deep coal mining industry is the safest in the world. If one compares the safety record of public sector and private sector mining, it is clear that there is a marked difference. It has already been said that the public sector industry is as much as 20 times safer. We should bear it in mind that, after privatisation, the safety culture is likely to be reduced, and it would be sad and disappointing if the number of accidents in the industry were to degenerate to the level now experienced in the private sector.

5.45 pm

The Minister appears to frown at the suggestion that the level of accidents and fatalities in the private sector is that much higher than in the public sector, but I refer him to the fatality record which is about eight times greater in the private industry than in the public industry. Consequently, there is a need to ensure that the safety culture, which has been maintained in the public sector, is carried on when the industry is privatised.

One way to ensure that the safety culture is maintained is to ensure that workmen's inspectors continue to be elected and to be paid for the duties that they carry out at the collieries, as mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill). The workmen's inspectors buttress the safety culture in the industry and have made British mines the safest in the world.

I hope that the Minister will tell us that the section 123 inspectorate will continue in the same way when the industry is privatised as it did when it was in public hands. Will he also ensure that payments are made to the section 123 inspectorate? In Committee, the Minister said that he would ensure that the safety culture of the public industry was maintained when it was privatised. If he is genuine in that endeavour, he will be able to tell us now that the section 123 inspectorate will continue and that payments will continue to be paid.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I missed the first part of the debate because of parliamentary duty, but I felt it appropriate to speak for a minute.

The Minister has already done the cause of safety in the mining industry a profound disservice by the changes to the mine regulations, which had such a catastrophic effect on the historic role of the colliery deputy. He may recall that I had a meeting with him a year or so ago at which I said that I trusted that, for historic reasons, he would have a care about his position. I said that if more men died or were maimed as a result of a shift in the Government's approach to safety, his name and that of the Secretary of State would go down in history for rather different reasons and with rather different emphasis than they might appreciate now.

There is a vital need to maintain the safety culture in the mining industry. The amendment is vital in part because of the way in which the Minister wishes to structure the industry. If he must have a number of private coal owners, I fear, as many other people fear, that the standards will be those of the lowest required. If he must ensure that some standards of health in the mining industry are retained, there is no better way in which to send signals to that effect than by accepting the amendment, which seems to be perfectly sensible and one which any intelligent or moderate Government would be eager to accept.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): First, may I say that I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) back in his place after a short absence?

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): After a short substitution.

Mr. Hughes: Yes. I had the pleasure of substituting in Committee for my hon. Friend.

It is imperative that we retain some safeguards in mining operations and new clause 2 will do exactly that. I hope that the Minister will accept it. In preparation for coal privatisation, the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 was repealed and replaced by a set of guidelines. That repeal, along with the impending privatisation, will mean—not may mean—that safety standards will be undermined.

The new regulations were introduced via a statutory instrument. I must say to the Minister, as I have said before, that those regulations were slipped through by the Secretary of State for Employment during the summer recess; he presented a statutory instrument in August, which was to be implemented before Parliament resumed in October. When Parliament resumed, we insisted on having a debate, albeit too late. On an issue as important as the scrapping of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, we were allowed a three-hour debate.

The new regulations abolished the pit deputy. As most people who worked in the industry knew, the pit deputy was a buffer between management, which was not only, but mainly, interested in production, and the maintenance of safety. He was not always popular, even among most of the men. Through those regulations, power has been being handed over to the pit manager, who may just be tempted to put production before safety. I hope that that does not happen, but I have a feeling, given my experience in the mining industry, that some people may be a little over-eager and may tend to overlook safety aspects in striving for production goals.

The statutory instrument eliminates statutory duties. It eliminates the words "shall", "will" and "must" from the regulations and introduces words such as "as far as practicable". What does that mean? Who will interpret that

[Mr. Hughes]

phrase? As far as practicable for what, for whom or for what purpose? That phrase is very dangerous, but the words "shall", "will" and "must" are specific. Everybody knows what "shall", "will" and "must" mean, but not everybody knows what "as far as practicable" means.

Let us consider the private sector's track record in the mining industry, which has already been mentioned by one or two hon. Members. It is absolutely appalling when set against the record of British Coal. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has already mentioned that the number of fatalities in the private sector has been five times higher than it was under British Coal. In the first six months, the major accident rate was 62 per cent. higher than that among people working for British Coal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) mentioned that, over the years, miners who worked for British Coal developed a safety culture attitude. He is absolutely right. It appears that there is no such culture in the private sector; if there were, there would not be such a high accident rate.

Make no mistake, there are probably more miners working for the private sector in British Coal mines than there are British Coal employees. Many jobs that used to be done by employees of the then National Coal Board and British Coal have been taken over by the private sector. Miners who have already started work in the private sector are being shipped around from pit to pit on short-term contracts—one month here, two months there, three months in another pit—and are being asked to work longer hours.

Private companies are insisting that miners work only on short-term contracts and we all know the reasons why. What is really disturbing is that, when they sign the short-term contracts, they are being told that they must work seven days a week and 12-hour shifts or they are not employed. The private companies know that they can go elsewhere for workers. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said, when he recounted the words of his father from many years ago, the self-same thing is happening to miners now as happened then. The private companies know that there are unemployed miners aplenty who are looking for work and that if people are not prepared to work seven days a week on 12-hour shifts, they can find somebody who will be prepared to work such hours.

Longer hours compromise safety, especially in the mining industry, where there are problems such as humidity, lack of light, dust and heat. Under such circumstances, miners working 12-hour shifts, seven days a week, whether they like it or not, become fatigued. The Government will not accept that longer hours have compromised safety. I suggest that they take another look at the figures and reconsider their attitude on long hours and their relationship to accidents. Clearly, longer hours, stress and fatigue inevitably lead to more accidents.

May I say a few words about amendment No. 27 on the section 123 workmen's inspectors, considering that I spent 11 to 12 years as a workmen's inspector at the Brodsworth mine? Among the management and workers at most collieries, the position of a workmen's inspectors was well respected. They worked hand in hand with the inspectorate, the safety engineer and the safety officer at the pit and, on many occasions, with management, because their attitudes on many aspects never clashed. It was a coveted position. People stood for election and, once they were elected, they were generally respected by their colleagues. It is essential to support the amendment so that their pay is not affected by carrying out duties as a section 123 inspector. It is not an easy task being a workmen's inspector. Sometimes one receives a little criticism, like the deputies—

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I bet that my hon. Friend did not.

Mr. Hughes: I did on many occasions. I can remember one occasion when I was a new workmen's inspector, full of enthusiasm, fresh from the joint courses with British Coal and the inspectorate of mines and having being taught all the ins and outs of the Mines and Quarries Act, going into a heading and discovering that there were more men in that heading than there should have been by law. There were about 10 men and there should have been only nine. For a workmen's inspector, all that was out of order because there were too many men in the heading. Those men were lugging a great big heavy electric cable; it was unbelievable—and one of them had to leave. The next day when I returned to work I got some aggro from my colleagues, because it meant that fewer of them helped to hump that enormous cable through the heading. So there can be criticism, too.

6 pm

The duties of a workmen's inspector start when he arrives at the pit and systematically goes round the chosen district for that day. There is usually a joint inspection, because the inspector is accompanied by the safety officer or safety engineer and the district under-manager. When he gets down to a particular coal face, the senior overman or the deputy accompanies him. Often, many of the little problems spotted by the inspector can be put right on the spot, or the deputy can deploy somebody to sort them out.

The more serious problems would go into a report posted at the colliery and displayed there for seven days, and also sent to the mines inspector so that he could pick up recurring issues that the management were not systematically putting right.

The job was not simply a matter of visits; the inspectors put a lot of their own time in, too. That is why I am arguing that they should not lose pay by carrying out the inspections. They need to keep checking up to see how the problems raised during the inspection have been dealt with —whether they have been dealt with properly, or even at all. Often, after an inspection a discussion will take place in the safety office, and if there is a serious problem the workmen's inspector will ask to see the manager and take the issue up with him.

With a more serious issue, if the inspector feels that he is not getting satisfaction from local management he can get directly in touch with Her Majesty's inspector of mines. The position of a section 123 inspector is a serious one, and people genuinely take their duties seriously. So it is essential that the Minister accepts amendment No.27.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I declare an interest: I am sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers, and I am proud of it. It is a sad day for the NUM when the Bill is going through Parliament—and a sad day for the country as a whole, too. I cannot help thinking that the Conservative Benches—Conservative Members would have been in opposition in those days—

must have been fuller when we were going the other way and nationalising the industry; Conservative Members must have shown more interest then.

I shall speak briefly because I had my say in Committee and I know that others are anxious to speak now. In Committee, we spent many hours discussing the subject. It is partly because the Opposition members of the Committee were not totally satisfied with the Minister's assurances that we tabled the new clause and amendment No.27.

I do not want to go over ground that has been adequately covered by my hon. Friends, but I must tell the Minister, as I have told him before, that one of the most important aspects of the duties, responsibilities and functions of the British Coal medical service was the keeping of records. People could find out about accidents that had happened many years ago and examine information about their chest X-rays. Because there has been such a rapid rundown in the industry it is vital that in the years ahead people who find that they have health problems should be able to get access to such information. It is imperative that that information be vested in a good reliable body. The Health and Safety Executive could well take over that function.

The present pneumoconiosis scheme agreed by the Government, the union and what was then the National Coal Board, came into existence because of the Pickles case—the first successful attempt to obtain damages from the employer for pneumoconiosis. That came about because the Coal Board did not have adequate records of the dust samples from the colliery in which Mr. Pickles had worked. Emphysema, bronchitis and so on can take many years to develop and we do not want the Pickles case to be repeated in years to come when people find that they have such conditions. I therefore hope that the Minister will accept the new clause, which would do nothing more than the Minister said in Committee he was willing to do.

As for amendment No.27, like my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) I have been involved in section 123 inspections. I used to be a member of an ad hoc body run exclusively by section 123 inspectors, with no involvement by trade union officials or management. I have a gold watch in my pocket that was presented to me by that body, and I am proud of it.

There is more in the provision than meets the eye, because there seems to be a genuine misunderstanding not only of the role of the section 123 inspector but of how that role came about. In 1872, miners first acquired a statutory right to inspect and report on their own workplaces, because the Government realised that the Government inspectorate was not large enough to deal with the many inspections required in an industry that was both dangerous and not very well run—which is what one would expect under private enterprise.

With one or two exceptions for very small workplaces, those rights became the province of all working people 105 years later, under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977, SI 500, which gave the right for inspections to be carried out quarterly at all workplaces. Because the mining industry did not have that statutory right, there was a collective agreement between the Coal Board and the union to provide for inspections to be carried out in every part of a mine every two months, and to be paid for by the employer. Over and above that, the miners had the right to carry out a monthly inspection at their own expense. If they wished to carry out that monthly inspection, they would pay for it themselves; the second month the employer would pay, and so on.

I want the Minister to bear in mind the fact that we do not want the section 123 inspectors to be reduced to conducting quarterly inspections. One reason why that should not happen was revealed in a conversation I had some years ago with a Government inspector—we used to talk to them, and even to the Coal Board, at times. That inspector was concerned about the appalling rate of accidents in private mines and asked whether the NUM would mind if he concentrated more on the private mines and less on the nationalised sector. We agreed because we understood that that need was paramount. The Government inspector was having great difficulty in getting people in the private sector to accept the section 123 inspector's job. That was why he was having to devote more of his time to the private sector.

Unlike the Government, I believe that things will get worse in the industry after privatisation. The Government inspectorate will be engulfed with problems. Never has there been a time when the section 123 inspector—the miners' own inspector—has been more necessary. As my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) said, it should never be forgotten that when the section 123 inspector writes his report and the local colliery manager has made his responses, the completed report goes to the Government inspector, who can have an overview of what is going on at any colliery without having to visit it himself.

I hope that the Minister will ensure that any employer who tries to prevent any workman from carrying out those duties, which are more than 110 years old, will be vigorously dealt with. I hope that the Government will ensure that the Health and Safety Executive does its job properly and brings any such employer to book.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): A few weeks ago, in my home village of Resolven, I was woken up early by an ambulance coming through the village. As my hon. Friends who live in pit villages will know, that sends more than the usual tremor through a coal mining community. When I phoned the Lyn mine above the village of Cwmgwrach a few hours later, the person who answered the phone told me not to worry, because the worker who had attracted the ambulance had only broken his jaw.

That is against a background of two deaths in private licensed mines in the Neath constituency in the past two years. Another worker was paralysed from the waist down. He was an excellent rugby player as well, so that was especially tragic.

There are 36 private mines in the Neath constituency —more than anywhere else in the country—employing nearly 450 workers. There are many good employers among them. There are many family firms that have mined for many years, and they have a good relationship with their work force. They produce coal for the domestic market and are well regarded in the community.

We also have Ryan Mining International, which has rightly been heavily criticised in recent weeks for the treatment of its work force. Nevertheless, it has made a huge investment in the community and is building a major railhead to reopen the Vale of Neath railway line to transform the transportation of coal from road to rail, and that is welcome.

[Mr. Peter Hain]

That picture shows the ominous future which the Bill will usher in and make the norm throughout the country —the ominous future of privatisation. For many decades, men have been treated at least like human beings by British Coal, but they will no longer have that certainty. In the Neath constituency, for example, private mine workers go around the pubs on Friday night to find the foreman so that they can get their pay, because they cannot find him anywhere else. If they are unlucky and he does not happen to be in a particular pub, they must wait until the following week to be paid.

Health and safety are cut to the bone. Men are often not paid with proper pay slips,as required under the contracts of employment legislation, which stipulate their bonus payments, Saturday work, overtime and so on; they are simply handed a lump sum of money. They are instructed to work over Christmas in defiance of agreements with their employer, as is the norm in the coal industry. They are often dismissed before two years are up—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going very wide of new clause 2.

Mr. Hain: I accept your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I simply wanted to paint the broader picture in which the conditions that men work under in the private mines in my constituency have a bearing on health and safety. I shall now concentrate on that.

The figures—I had this argument with the Minister in Committee—provided by the Health and Safety Executive, and supplied by the Library of the House, show that the fatal accident rate is much higher for licensed mines, at 1.82 per 1,000 employees, than it is for British Coal mines, where it is 0.08. That means that a miner is 23 times more likely to die in a private licensed mine than in a British Coal mine. There has been a marked deterioration in the fatal accident rate in licensed mines since 1989-90.

Mr. Eggar: To give a fair balance in what is an important debate, can the hon. Gentleman read from that same agency report the major accident rate, and the fatal and major accident rate, in British Coal and licensed mines? It is right that he should put that on the record.

Mr. Hain: I am happy to do so. According to the statistics of the Health and Safety Commission, the major accident rate in British Coal mines in 1992-93 was 8.60 per 1,000 employees; in licensed mines, it was 4.24. The fatal and major accident rate for British Coal in 1992-93 was 8.68 per 1,000 employees; in licensed mines, it was 6.06.

The Minister invited me to draw attention to those figures, and it is proper for him to do so. However, with regard to the accident figures—unlike the fatal accident figures—the Health and Safety Executive specifically draws attention to the fact that there are sharp fluctuations because of the smaller statistical base, especially in private mines.

The important point about fatal accidents—after all, if a man loses his life underground, he loses his life; there is no argument about that—is that a miner is 23 times more likely to die in a private mine than in a British Coal mine, according to the latest figures.

Mr. Rogers: Does my hon. Friend accept that, in many private mines, proper records of accidents are not kept and the accident book is not always kept up to date, as it should be?

6.15 pm

Mr. Hain: I listen to what my hon. Friend says. It is fair enough to paint the wider picture of accidents in private mines. I regret that the Minister seems to be reluctant to concede—as he was in Committee, and as the Department of Employment refused to do in a written reply to me on this matter—the fact supplied by the Health and Safety Executive: that a miner is 23 times more likely to die under privatisation, although that is the regime that the Government are ushering in and sanctifying in law.

Mr. Redmond: As figures are being bandied about, I wonder whether the Minister has the figures for the accidents and fatalities that took place before nationalisation of the industry, because the search for profits brought a complete lack of safety. As privatisation is about profits, I am sure that my hon. Friend probably wants to say a few words about that.

Mr. Hain: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He makes his point tellingly, because we are now in an era—we have seen it in the Neath constituency, and we have seen the consequences in terms of fatalities—in which life is increasingly becoming cheap, and in which profits and the stiff winds of competition which restrict those profits, and the ability to provide health and safety conditions and other support for working conditions, which have been the norm of British Coal, are inevitably constrained in private mines.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) mentioned the situation since nationalisation, I draw the attention of hon. Members to the fact that, in December 1990, the Select Committee on Energy published a report on safety in coal mines. That report said that, between 1900 and 1946—in other words, in the privatised era—the chance of a man being killed at work in the United Kingdom coal industry reduced from one in 770 to one in 1,300; in other words, it roughly halved.

However, in the 40 years since nationalisation, the chance of being killed has reduced much further, to one in 11,600 in 1987-88, the safest year in terms of fatal accidents. In other words, the chance of being killed has reduced 10 times since nationalisation. We now have the safest pits in the world—or at least we will have until the Bill becomes law.

We are seeing history go in reverse. We are going back to the future. We are going back to an era in which accidents and fatalities will increase, because the Government are obsessed with deregulation, and with profit being the driving force of all the activity, rather than the protection of mineworkers who generate the wealth on which the country has depended for many decades.

Mr. Eggar: It is fair to say that we have had a general debate about safety matters. I make absolutely no complaint about that, because, obviously, safety is extremely important to anyone who is in any way associated with the mining industry. The Government have made it absolutely clear that the paramount issue as we approach privatisation of the mining industry is the preservation of high safety standards. It is precisely for that reason that we have accepted the recommendations of the Health and Safety Commission at every stage.

I understand the involvement of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) with the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, and his genuine commitment to the cause of improving safety in the mines. However, he must appreciate that the Masham package has been the result of extensive consultation. It is not the act of some wicked Tory Government, but rather the recommendation of the tripartite Health and Safety Commission after as much as eight years of consultation. The hon. Gentleman should have been fair to me and the House by putting that on the record and putting it in perspective.

I will not say that the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) made a speech which was word for word the same speech as he made in Committee, but it bore a remarkable similarity to it. If one were to run his speech through a word processor, one would find considerable repetition. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would do very well in the game that one occasionally hears played on the radio.

The hon. Member for Neath returned to the same points that he had raised, but this time—carried away, as usual, with his own eloquence—he went further. I did not get the precise words down, but he said that the figures which he quoted show that privatised mines were 23 times more dangerous than British Coal mines. He has moved on from looking at the statistics for fatal accidents for last year, and has now, so to speak, made a prediction as a matter of certainty. The hon. Gentleman is ignoring such simple facts as that the privatised industry will include many of the mines that are currently owned and run by British Coal.

I do not want to belittle the extremely important issue of safety, and the need to make sure that the privatised industry carries forward mining at least as safely as, and, let us hope, more safely than, British Coal, by bandying statistics across the Floor of the House. I recognise, as every hon. Member does, that one fatality or one major accident in the mining industry is one too many. We all have a duty to try to make sure that the improvements that have been made both in the private licensed sector and in British Coal continue.

The hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) mentioned the safety record pre-nationalisation. It was, by today's standards, absolutely appalling. It is because the record was so bad, and because there have been so many improvements as a result of the work done by the Health and Safety Commission and through health and safety legislation, that we want to make sure that the recent improvement in the record is maintained.

I turn now to the precise terms of new clause 2. First, I understand the significant contribution that has been made by the medical service. I met a number of individuals who were associated with the rescue at Bilsthorpe when I went there with the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping). I am aware of the major contribution that the medical service has made, not just to the particular problems associated with mining but to furthering occupational health in this and other industries. The service has contributed considerably to the general expertise in that area.

As with all other safety matters, the Government have taken the advice of the Health and Safety Commission. The Commission believes that there is already a sufficient framework of law in place which will require employers in the mining industry, including future private sector employers, to carry out all necessary health surveillance.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) said that the necessary medical records must be maintained, and that is obviously extremely important. The commission advised us that it must be for employers to determine how they should best meet the established standards, and it is for them to choose how they should carry out medical examinations. The commission's view clearly was that new legislation of the type proposed in the new clause is not required.

Mr. O'Neill: Was the Health and Safety Commission advice based on the experience of British Coal or on the experience of the existing private mines, the way in which they operate in the United Kingdom, and the way in which they keep records and look after the health of their employees?

Mr. Eggar: My understanding is that the commission's advice was based on its analysis of the present framework of law, and on experience within the mining industry as a whole. The commission, having first said that the framework was right, then expressed the view—as have Opposition Members—that British Coal's medical service provided a valuable centre of expertise. The commission expressed the view that employers within the privatised industry might well wish to continue to have the opportunity to purchase the services of the medical service.

A body of expertise has been built up. The commission recognises that, but it does not think that it is essential to continue it. However, it feels that the option should be made available to future purchasers. British Coal is looking at the advice that has been given and the views put forward by the Health and Safety Commission, and it is currently considering options for the future of the medical service.

British Coal is responsible for the medical service, and has assured the Department that its proposals for the future of the service will be fully consistent with the commission's advice.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: Will the Minister assure the House that British Coal will give some consideration to how medical records are to be co-ordinated for people who work in the private sector, both now and in the future? Those people are working on the short-term contracts I talked about. How will the records be co-ordinated? At the moment, they are moving from pit to pit and working for different companies. It may be difficult to co-ordinate the health records, and it is important that that is done.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that. The Health and Safety Commission has made it clear that it believes that the legal framework is the right one, and an additional amendment is not needed. I am sure that British Coal will want to take into account matters such as that referred to by the hon. Gentleman when it looks at the future of the medical service. Of course, it will be a matter for the private sector purchasers, but I will draw the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of British Coal. I recognise that, certainly in the short term, it is a matter of considerable concern.

I hope that I have been able to give the reassurance that is necessary because of the genuine concerns in the new clause. Turning to amendment No. 27, I say—not least because the hon. Members for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) and for Sunderland, North have been so active on section 123 inspections—that the Government completely accept that section 123 plays a valuable part in the health

[Mr. Eggar]

and safety system. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that those section 123 inspections continue to play the role that they have done for a number of years.

The House will understand that this is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission and for health and safety legislation. The medium suggested by amendment No. 27 —in other words, the inclusion of the condition with regard to section 123 in the licences, which is the precise methodology used in the amendment—is, I suggest, not the right way forward. The Health and Safety Commission has made it clear that it believes that it is important that there should be a separation between its powers on the one hand and the conditions, licences and any powers of the Coal Authority on the other.

The Health and Safety Executive is examining how best to strengthen the existing section 123 system by extending to mines the provisions of safety representatives and safety committees regulations—this is the point which was made almost universally by Opposition Members—which provide for the payment of safety representatives while they carry out their duties.

The Health and Safety Executive tells me that a consultation document with proposals will be published shortly, and that the proposals will relate to recommendations for payment. I understand that it is the commission's firm intention that the consultation document should be in place, and that consultation should be concluded by the time privatisation takes place.

Mr. Eric Clarke: The division worries me a little. One of the problems raised when the law to create the commission was passed was the dilution of the powers of the mines inspectorate under section 123 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954. Will the Minister give me an assurance that he will recommend something along the lines of what is contained in amendment No. 27? That would satisfy me, and I am sure that it would satisfy my colleagues.

6.30 pm

Mr. Eggar: I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman that I will recommend the contents of the amendment, because it goes against the basic split recommended by the Health and Safety Commission. We have accepted that there should be a difference between the health and safety aspects of mines and the licence terms and the role of the Coal Authority. We do not want any interweaving or double-tracking in safety matters. It seems to me that there must be clarity.

The basic thrust of the amendment relates to payment of section 123 inspections. The Health and Safety Commission will consult. It is a matter for the commission, but my understanding is that the consultation paper it puts out will include recommendations on payment of representatives involved in section 123 inspections. I hope that the Opposition will feel able to withdraw new clause 2 and amendment No. 27.

Mr. O'Neill: Amendment No. 27 has fulfilled its purpose, because we now have a clearer idea of the Government's intentions, although we shall have to wait and see what emerges in the form of a consultative document. Therefore, we shall not seek to press amendment No. 27 to a vote, on the understanding that, when the appropriate mechanism is available to us, we shall undoubtedly wish to debate it further. The Department of Employment will undoubtedly be the lead Department in the matter. Given the close inter-relationship between the Coal Authority and the Health and Safety Commission, no matter how much the Minister wishes to separate the two, we shall need to look at the matter again.

The Minister has conceded our case on the medical service. He has given notice that the Health and Safety Executive has come a long way on the issue, but we are not satisfied with what has been said. We believe that it is essential that the medical service continues to exist to care for existing mineworkers and those who have worked in the mining industry in the past and will suffer from illnesses and conditions related to mining, such as industrial deafness and the pulmonary diseases which are so much a facet of the lives of retired miners or those who have left the industry.

For the reasons that I have given, we insist on pressing new clause 2 to a vote. We consider that the medical service is of vital importance. It is one of the jewels in the crown of British Coal. We do not wish to see the coal industry lose it. We do not think that medical services should be left to the philanthropy of private mineowners. If there is one group that has been characterised by its meanness and indifference to the health and safety of its work force, it is private mineowners.

Various statistics have been bandied about today on what life was like in the coal industry before nationalisation. All I can say is that, in 1946, immediately before the mines were taken into public ownership, one miner died every eight-hour shift, and 1,000 men died every year in order that we could have coal. That figure has fallen dramatically, partly because fewer miners are employed, but more than anything because of the care about health and safety and the medical service that mineworkers demanded. We do not want to see what they have achieved thrown aside. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby in support of new clause 2.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—
The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 298.

Division No. 174] **[6.35 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Boyes, Roland
Adams, Mrs Irene	Bradley, Keith
Ainger, Nick	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Allen, Graham	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Burden, Richard
Armstrong, Hilary	Byers, Stephen
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Cabom, Richard
Ashton, Joe	Callaghan, Jim
Austin-Walker, John	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Barnes, Harry	Canavan, Dennis
Barron, Kevin	Cann, Jamie
Battle, John	Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret	Chisholm, Malcolm
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Clapham, Michael
Bell, Stuart	Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Bennett, Andrew F.	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Benton, Joe	Clelland, David
Bermingham, Gerald	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Berry, Roger	Coffey, Ann
Betts, Clive	Connarty, Michael
Blair, Tony	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Blunkett, David	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Boateng, Paul	Corbett, Robin

Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 3

MINEWATER

'.—(1) Conditions included in any licence under Part II of this Act shall include a requirement on the holder of the licence to prevent discharges of minewater from the mine at any time unless authorised by the National Rivers Authority.

(2) The duty under subsection (1) above shall include a duty to continue pumping operations until the licence is transferred to another person or the Authority assumes responsibility for pumping.

(3) The Authority shall not permit the holder of a licence under Part II of this Act to allow minewater to be discharged unless authorised by the National Rivers Authority.

(4) In an emergency, any person authorised by the Authority may enter a coal mine or pumping station operated by a holder of a licence under Part II of this Act to ensure that pumping is continued in pursuance of the Authority's duty under subsection (3) of this section.'.—*[Mr. Bell.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 41, in clause 1, page 1, line 20, leave out 'and' and insert

'(dd) monitoring, controlling and preventing pollution arising from present and former coalmining activity, including that caused by polluted minewater, in a manner that ensures the protection of the environment; and'.

No. 14, in clause 2, page 2, line 33, after 'subsidence', insert 'or minewater'.

No. 55, in clause 3, page 4, line 17, at end add—

'(9) It shall be the duty of the Authority, in carrying out its functions under this Act, to use its best endeavours to protect the water environment.

(10) In this section "water environment" means water quality, and land drainage and flood defence systems where that water and those systems are affected by coalmines operated by any person licensed under Part II of this Act, or are affected by abandoned coalmines.'.

No. 7, in clause 53, page 48, line 41, at end add—

'(5A) Section 89(3) of the Water Resources Act 1991 shall be amended by inserting after the word "mine" the words "other than an abandoned coal-mine."'.

No. 15, in schedule 11, page 155, line 26, at end insert:—

'1991 c. 57
Section 89(3)'.

Mr. Bell: We are now discussing one of the major items of the Bill, dealing with mine water. You might feel,

Madam Deputy Speaker, that mine water is not a subject of great attraction or of great interest, but it is a matter of major concern, not only throughout the former Durham coalfield, but throughout the country where there have been mine workings in the past. In my area of Durham today, *The Northern Echo*, our local newspaper, devoted much of its front page to the problems that will, and can, arise from mine water.

The new clause deals with licences and the need to pump the mine water out of the ground. That subject is not limited to the debate tonight. The issue was first mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), whom I was very glad to see in his place. He raised the issue in an Adjournment debate. He spoke of water table rebounds, of iron pyrites, of adits—a horizontal or near-horizontal tunnel from the surface into a mine for entry, drainage or exploration.

We also had a ten-minute rule Bill from my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell), who is also in his place tonight. In a short and eloquent speech, he described the effects of pollution from abandoned mines. He gave a graphic description of what can happen with such pollution, when he described the red stain sediment from dissolved iron salts. He also described the effects on the overall ecosystem of such pollution. My hon. Friend rendered us a service and widened the debate by giving examples from south Wales of the effects of pollution of rivers from abandoned pits.

One of the essences of the debate tonight has arisen already from that Adjournment debate and that ten-minute rule Bill is the question, who will take ultimate responsibility for mine water pollution? Where does the buck stop? We have asked in Committee, on the Floor of the House, in meetings with Ministers in the Department of the Environment and with Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry: who will eventually take responsibility for that mine water?

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is even more important, because one would have thought that, in the light of Wheal Jane —which my Cornish colleagues became very exercised about—the issue would have been resolved. It was not resolved adequately then. The historic lesson has not been learnt and the issue still has not been expressly tackled by the Government.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for referring us to Wheal Jane, and I think that he will speak later. If my memory serves me right, the problem of Wheal Jane was the problem of a tin mine. There was a discharge of red-brick-coloured metal-laden waters. That was of great concern, obviously, to all Government Departments as well as local citizens. One of the aspects of Wheal Jane was that we realised that we were falling foul of EC directive 80/68 on groundwater protection. One would have thought, as a result of all that anxiety, that the Government would have responded more strongly.

In fact, we realised that there was probably a legislative loophole on the subject of mine water. Section 85 of the Water Resources Act 1991 provides for prosecution of river polluters and for recovery from a polluter of the costs of cleaning. There was one exemption—an important and significant exemption, to which the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) can refer, because she has tabled an amendment on the same subject. Abandoned mines were exempted from the 1991 Act.

The Royal Commission on environmental pollution in 1992 recommended legislative action to cover the fact that no one would be responsible for polluted water from abandoned workings. We have gone through the Bill in Committee, and various statements have been made by Ministers, yet we are still here, confronted by the situation that, when pumps are switched off in a pit, the natural forces that make that water rise will come into play and will be allowed to operate.

A sombre picture has been painted of what will happen when the pumps are finally turned off in what we can now describe as the "old Durham coalfield". That coalfield once produced 35 million tonnes of coal every year, and now it does not produce coal through a nationalised industry.

What will happen when those pumps are turned off? We know as a matter of fact that British Coal currently pays about £6 million a year to pump the coalfield, as it is. It certainly spends £1 million on pumping 10 disused pits in the coalfield. If the pumping stations at Vinovium, Page Bank and Ushaw Moor were to close, the consequences might be catastrophic for Durham.

It is not for a Member of Parliament to use excessive language on the Floor of the House and to communicate fears to a population, but nevertheless the consequences will be extremely grave in locations along the Wear valley, south-west of Durham, in the vicinity of Bishop Auckland —I am glad to see my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip, the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) in his place —and in Durham city. Members of Parliament are here from the Durham coalfield, and my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) is here, among others.

My hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings), who played such a strong role in Committee and made some strong statements, said that there could be an "orange collar" around a world heritage site. He meant the Norman cathedral at Durham and the peninsula around the city.

In addition to the expressions of Members of Parliament, statements have been made by experts in the field. Dr. Paul Younger of Newcastle university has said that Durham could experience

"potentially the biggest single drainage of acid from mines we have seen . . . 300 years of stored up pollution could be coming to the surface."

It has been said—we have heard it many a time—that coal mining in Durham goes back about 400 years. There is a honeycomb of former mines under the ground there. We all learned from pit village to pit village when we were young the background, the history and the traditions. We all know the consequences of water in a pit.

We are discussing tonight nothing less than a Domesday scenario, which could affect the former Durham coalfield and the people who live there. There has been some movement in relation to British Coal and the National Rivers Authority. There has been a slight movement to the effect that British Coal—

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): My hon. Friend has clearly and vividly described to us the problems of the Durham coalfield. May I draw to his attention the fact that we are very worried that the south Wales coalfield will manifest the same problems? The River Rhymney showed similar problems when the pumps stopped at the Britannia colliery, and I fear that, with the closure of Taff Merthyr, we could be facing similar

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

problems on the River Taff. When my hon. Friend speaks for Durham, he speaks for the whole of the south Wales coalfield, too.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because I tried to preface my remarks by saying that this was a national problem wherever coal had been mined in the country. That included south Wales. It certainly covers Durham and Northumberland. My hon. Friends the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) and for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) are in their places.

We are conscious that what we are debating tonight is not only Durham, but any part of the country where there have been coal mines, and, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) reminded me, tin mines in the south-west of the country. So we are aware that the context is far greater than the narrow issue confronts us in the Bill. The consequences are greater than those that affect the Durham coalfield.

The only result of the pressure and the publicity and the anxieties of our people has been an agreement by British Coal to give the National Rivers Authority two weeks' notice before it switches off pumps at any of its pits. That is not a satisfactory response to the important matters that have been brought to the Government's attention.

I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) in his place. Unfortunately, he had an accident in heavy snow on the first day of the Committee and could not take part in its further proceedings. Nevertheless, when he was there he said that the two-week period of grace was simply a "short-term palliative". I entirely agree with him.

The Minister gave his view on the matter in Committee. He said that the Coal Authority will be responsible for water pollution from abandoned mines except to the extent that any part of the responsibility may be passed to the private sector through leases. That is not an adequate response for people who live in those areas or those who seek to protect the environment.

7 pm

The new clause says that it shall be a condition of a licence that there be

"a requirement on the holder of the licence to prevent discharges of minewater from the mine at any time unless authorised by the National Rivers Authority"

and that there shall be included

"a duty to continue pumping operations until the licence is transferred to another person or the Authority assumes responsibility for pumping."

That seems to meet the point which my hon. Friend the Member for Gower made in his 10-minute Bill. What will happen if the Coal Authority grants a licence to a company to work a mine and the company eventually abandons the mine? Who will be responsible for pumping the water? Shall we not be back in the same position if British Coal, the Coal Authority and everybody else wash their hands of the responsibility? It will simply become an abandoned mine with no one responsible for the mine water pollution.

A strong delegation, particularly from Durham county council, has come to the House today to brief Members of this House and the House of Lords from all parties about the risks in Durham if no positive steps are taken to maintain pumping.

Under the Bill, we have discussed licensing of mining safety, pension rights, concessionary fuel, coal bed methane, exploitation and subsidence, but we cannot discuss mine water pollution or pumping because that subject is not in the Bill. In Committee, we tried to put it on the same footing as subsidence, which is why we have moved another amendment to cover mine water pollution.

We do not accept that clause 3(7), which deals with the Coal Authority's duties, sufficiently covers mine water pollution. My hon. Friends the Members for Neath (Mr. Hain) and for Easington explained people's anxieties about that matter in different parts of the country. In Committee, the Government sought to shuffle their responsibility on to the Coal Authority and the National Rivers Authority without being specific. They will simply set the National Rivers Authority and British Coal at each other's throats in the courts, trying to bring injunctions to avoid taking the necessary action.

The time has come for the Government to make a clear commitment by accepting new clause 3 and to recognise the serious dangers of water pollution where coal has been mined, such as in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. Wherever coal has been mined, people will be affected. The running and shuffling must stop, as must the buck passing between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry. The Government must take the necessary action and accept the new clause. As there is all-party support for other amendments on this issue, we hope to carry the House with us, should it come to a vote.

Mrs. Peacock: Pollution from contaminated mine water occurs when water floods old mine workings and carries pollutants, notably iron and sulphur, to the surface via rivers and other water sources. The polluted mine water contaminates those sources, destroying wildlife and discolouring the water.

British Coal has always kept its working mines free of water by a network of pumping stations, which it may shut down when pits close. It now has an agreement to inform the National Rivers Authority before turning off any pumps. Like other mine operators, British Coal is exempted by the Water Resources Act 1991 from prosecution for knowingly permitting water pollution and has not yet been successfully prosecuted for causing pollution.

British Coal has no clear liability for pollution from mine water, although it has operated a "good neighbour" policy and maintained pumping. It is therefore not possible automatically to transfer liability to the Coal Authority, which must be specifically directed to take on responsibility for mine water pollution from former British Coal mines. The new industry will not be obliged to adopt British Coal's "good neighbour" policy or take up its existing agreement with the NRA.

I appreciate that the Department of the Environment is reviewing laws on water pollution, but there is no indication of when that will be completed or whether this issue will be addressed. The Bill should establish liability for the historical environmental legacy of coal mining. Once pollution has occurred, remedial action is costly and it may take years to reverse the damage.

It is important that we ensure, during the passage of the Bill, that we do not allow pollution of our water courses. We currently spend millions of pounds on cleaning up our

rivers, beaches and water courses. My hon. Friend the Minister will agree that we would not want to put that at risk by allowing a loophole in the Bill.

Ms Armstrong: The problem has already been outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). It will affect any area where coal has been mined. I wish to speak specifically about how the problem affects my part of Durham.

My constituency is at the western edge of the Durham coalfield. Many of the thousands of old mine workings under the ground are not on maps because they operated centuries ago. Mines in that part of the county closed 20, 25 or 30 years ago, but British Coal has consistently pumped the water from the mine workings, so the water table has not changed. Throughout that period, the county has continued to attract Government grants and has worked with the Government to clean up the environment after the closure of mine workings.

Anyone who now visits Durham county finds a beautiful environment that is attractive to visitors but is also re-attracting much of the wildlife, flora and fauna that existed in the past. We have also cleaned up the rivers. I am told that, at the edge of the coalfields in my constituency there is good salmon and trout fishing because the river water is of good quality.

Apart from anything else, we should be incredibly negligent if we were to fail to guard the public money that has been invested in the area for the purpose of reclamation to provide an environment offering a high quality of life. This has taken work; it has not just happened by accident. What is achieved by way of cleaning up the environment is the result of the commitment of local people working in partnership with the Government and with the European Community.

The work that has been done in Durham is second to none, but there will be a threat—a real threat, not an imagined one—if pumping operations are not continued. British Coal has already shut down some pumps. On at least one occasion, it failed to give even the two weeks' notice that had been promised. Some of the problems caused by water pollution from old mines are already manifesting themselves in the western part of my county. The water table has risen, and some fields are now flooded. As one drives past, one notices the orange muck. The river and some streams on the western edge of the county are affected already. In addition, in my part of the county, there are problems of subsidence. The water authority and the rivers authority put this down to the closure of mines.

This is not an imagined problem, but one which we already have to deal with. With members and officers of Durham county council, I took part in a delegation to the Minister following the publication of the Bill. We sought an assurance that the hon. Gentleman understood the problem and an undertaking that, under the Bill, appropriate measures would be taken to deal with it. I am sorry to say that such measures have not been taken. The assurances that have been given are simply not strong enough to make us confident that the new authority will accept responsibility.

7.15 pm

I understand that the Minister does not want to write an undertaking into the terms of the Bill. That reluctance will give rise to real problems. Recent court judgments make it very clear that assurances given in Parliament by Ministers are not sufficient in court. I cite a case in a totally different realm—the terms of the contracts of lecturers in colleges of further and higher education. The assurances given by Ministers during the debates on employment legislation were dismissed by the judge, who said that he was guided not by things said in Parliament but by his understanding and interpretation of the law. That is the problem.

Outside experts who have looked into this matter say that assurances given in the House and in Committee by Ministers are simply not sufficient. Their judgment is that, in the event of problems arising and being taken to court, there is nothing in the Bill to make the new Coal Authority responsible in such a way that they could be tackled. I am sure that no hon. Member wants such a situation to arise. No doubt the Minister does not want to see problems that no one is able to tackle. If he wants the new authority to have this capacity, he will have to accept our proposed changes or write in his own.

If changes are not made, much of Ministers' push for privatisation will run into difficulty. It is my view that many private operators would be very cautious about starting business in Durham. People will not have to wait five, 10 or 15 years before problems occur. As I have said, what is going to happen is already visible. We know already the potential extent of the problem and what it may mean. People who are thinking of investing in the area will need to be assured that the Government will cover them. We are asking for assurances on the face of the Bill. We are asking for a commitment to the provision of resources to tackle any problems that arise.

We want to ensure that, whatever happens, the quality of life and the environment of future generations, as well as of those of us who will be around for another few years, will not be destroyed. Many of my hon. Friends have personal experience of, for example, the gases and poisons in mine workings. These will accumulate in water and may become explosive when they reach the surface. In saying that, I am not being fanciful—people who know about these things make the same point.

It is critical that this matter be tackled seriously in the context of the legislation that we are considering. Regardless of the Government's ideological wishes, we cannot afford to have our environment threatened in the way that the Bill, as drafted, threatens it. In saying that, I refer not just to Durham but to other coalfield areas. The adjoining constituencies of Durham, North-West and Bishop Auckland are the first to face the problem. We are beginning to see examples of what the rest of the county and the other coalfields in Britain will encounter. I therefore urge the Minister to realise that, in respect of this matter, he cannot simply give assurances, hoping that they will be observed in the future. The evidence is that courts are not being bound by such assurances. We need actual words in the legislation. I hope that the Minister will reconsider what he said in Committee and indicate that he is prepared to write into the Bill a provision to the effect that any problems arising will very firmly be the responsibility of the new Coal Authority.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House await with great interest the Minister's response to the concerns that have been expressed so far—concerns which are felt equally by the residents of Nottinghamshire and by the people of the other areas that have been mentioned.

[Mr. Richard Alexander]

When the Bill was first mooted I was asked by constituents in north Nottinghamshire what proposals would be made, under the new arrangements, to deal with mine water pollution. I said that I would be very surprised if arrangements were not spelt out clearly when the Bill came before the House and was considered in Committee. I am indeed surprised that we have reached this stage without being able to give our constituents the assurances that they seek. We shall listen most carefully to such assurances as the Minister can give us during the debate.

The primary cause for concern about mine water stems from the provisions of the Water Resources Act 1991, section 89 of which states that it is not an offence to permit water from an abandoned mine to enter controlled waters. That has created great concern, not least in Durham, whose county council has given us a briefing on the subject.

To switch off the pumps and allow the mines to fill up, and then to discharge polluted water, is a positive act, but it is not illegal or actionable under current law. My amendment would restrict the possibility of widespread environmental decline. It proposes that it should be an offence to allow mine water to escape from any mine in the ownership of British Coal. With the unparalleled number of mines that are closing, there is growing concern about the possible harm from the escape of contaminated water from abandoned mines and thence into the water system.

Reference has been made to the arrangements between British Coal and the National Rivers Authority. Fourteen days' notice of cessation of pumping is minimal, but even that number is not written into the Bill. Once mines have been abandoned, with no responsibility on operators to prevent water from escaping, not only will existing provisions come to an end but an unknown quantity of new hazards is likely to appear. What is required is a holding operation until each closed colliery can be properly assessed and measures taken to prevent polluted water from entering the system.

At the very least, we must ensure that polluted water does not escape or that it is cleaned before its entry into the water system. If neither the operators nor British Coal or the Coal Authority is responsible for this pollution, there is a real fear that the long-term costs of the problem will fall on local people. Local resources will have to be found, in the form of the council tax, to clean up the problem in the very areas suffering the greatest hardship from the closure of coalfields.

This is an important issue; the House looks forward to hearing what reassurances my hon. Friend can give on the subject.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister will have begun by now to get the message—

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I doubt it.

Mr. Hughes: —although the hon. Gentleman appears to have lingering suspicions.

Hon. Members have spoken about their local communities and concerns, but we also need to tackle this problem nationally and in the light of the experiences to which I alluded earlier. With the tin mines in Cornwall we have seen what can happen if water leaking from mines into the water system is not controlled: there was a huge regional panic and many regional resources had to be deployed. In fact, the problem was not adequately dealt with even then—it was too late.

The Minister well knows that there is widespread support inside and outside the House for tightening up the Bill. Local government in particular is determined that there must be a better system—not only the Association of County Councils but local government generally. The Minister has had representations from the Coalfield Communities Campaign and from all the amenity organisations: the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association, and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors have all added their voices, saying that something must be done.

As the hon. Members for Newark (Mr. Alexander) and for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) have said, we were greatly helped just today by a briefing given to us by Durham county council, which briefed Members of both Houses and of all parties and which provided us with a comprehensive document which we heard discussed only this morning.

Neither the President of the Board of Trade, on Second Reading, nor Ministers in Committee appeared to honour the obligation that the Government had seemed willing to undertake. In effect, the Government said that they were going to privatise the coal industry and transfer liabilities from British Coal to the Coal Authority. That prompted one question and did not deal with another. Are the current arrangements adequate? They are not. Furthermore, with the transfer of responsibilities, no corresponding duties have been transferred, let alone resources. Such obligations must be placed on people in advance, so that we all know who will be responsible.

The Government have often argued that the polluter should pay—that, they say, is one of the principles in their environmental legislation. It is all very well, provided the polluter can pay; and, much more importantly, provided the polluter is given a duty to prevent the sort of incidents that might result in his having to pay. That means imposing duties.

The Minister has before him a whole menu of amendments. New clause 3, for instance, requires that the holder of the licence prevent discharges. The Minister and I attended the same law course and were taught the same things about legal duties. He therefore knows that the duty on a licensee can be written into statute.

New clause 3 includes a duty to continue pumping—a duty that must not be allowed to wither just because that may be in the interests of the Coal Authority or the licensee. In the same way, in County Durham the Coal Board has no interest in continuing pumping because certain mines will never be reopened. The point is not to serve these bodies' interests: it is to serve the wider interest.

New clause 3 also provides that no permission should be given to the holder of a licence to allow mine water to be discharged. Moreover, as the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) argued, a method of preventing pollution must be written into the Bill to protect the environment. Certainly that is a general duty, but it is at least a starting point.

Another amendment would extend the obligation, in clause 2, to persons in respect of subsidence to include

damage from mine water. And a general duty should be imposed on the Coal Authority to look after the environment.

As more than one hon. Member has argued, there is also a need to deal with the exemptions provided for by the Water Resources Act 1991—and there are ways of dealing with them, such as the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Newark. However we do it, the point remains the same: to create a criminal offence. As the Minister knows, the Water Resources Act specifically gives exemptions in relation to permitting water from an abandoned mine to enter controlled waters. Another exemption in the same legislation means that the NRA does not have the power to carry out works to prevent such pollution or to recover the costs involved. That, too, needs to be changed in law.

We are left with the obvious need to tighten up the Bill. To be consistent with their environmental principles and their claims about the importance of water quality and consequent environmental duties, the Government cannot resist the new clause. A few minutes ago, I heard the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) say very quietly—unusually for him—from a sedentary position that organisations will need resources. It is impossible to place a duty on someone and then say, "You have got to carry out that duty, even if you do not have the resources." Whether the organisation involved is the National Rivers Authority, the Coal Authority or the local authority does not matter. If an organisation breaches its duty but does not have the resources to prevent pollution, it is nonsense to give it that duty.

Week in, week out we place legislative requirements on people without giving them the resources to carry out the duties. It is too late to hold an inquiry and a departmental inquiry to find out what happened and pour money in after the damage has been done. That is not good enough. The Minister has been warned and I hope that he and the Government will be responsible and will respond to the warnings and the requirement.

7.30 pm

I know that the Government are concerned that if they include in the Bill the fact that a duty will be placed on purchasers, it will frighten off some of those purchasers. We know the score, we are not silly about the matter, but the Government's view is unacceptable. It is no good trying to flog off bits of the coal industry and to make it more saleable without making it responsible.

Mr. Hardy: Will the hon. Gentleman note that the South Yorkshire mines drainage unit, based in my constituency, was set up in the inter-war years by the private mining industry? If the private coal mine owners accepted at that distant time that a responsibility existed, it is reasonable to expect the new private coal mine owners at least to be asked to consider it.

Mr. Hughes: The National Rivers Authority has said to the Government that the present legislative proposals are unacceptable—it said that expressly in relation to Tyne and Wear and also generally. It advanced that argument during the Committee stage of the Bill. It has conducted research and it has done its homework. It realises that the issue is controversial because it might affect the saleability of the coal industry once it is privatised. It is not acceptable, however, to put at risk not only the immediately affected communities but the water network, which could extend not just locally, but down estuaries to the sea. There is no limit to the damage that could be done. We have a chance to prevent it.

I hope that Ministers will act responsibly. They may say that the amendments are defective. We do not mind if that is their response. There will be time for them to introduce tougher and better amendments. The county councils and the Association of County Councils will help. Plenty of work has been done and there are many people out there who know what they are talking about and can assist. They could even be seconded to the Department for a week on a higher salary. I hope that the Minister will not let the warnings go unheeded. He has a great responsibility.

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): I apologise to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) for not being able to be present to hear him move the new clause. I want to speak in support of what has been said about the importance of ensuring that pollution from abandoned mines does not enter the rivers, rendering them useless for any environmental purpose and making them, almost literally, a blot on the landscape.

I declare an interest. I am a council member of the Anglers' Co-operative Association, which has a reputation for vigorously prosecuting water polluters. It recently took the British Coal to court in south Wales over a pollution case, which is still sub judice, so I shall make no further reference to it. It is important that the Minister should respond to the spirit of what has been said in the debate.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House share a desire to see our countryside improved and not to let it deteriorate. In that context, nothing is more important than keeping our rivers pure so that everyone can enjoy them, not least anglers. Although I have not had the opportunity to fish in the rivers in the constituency of the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong), I envy those who have, because I know what a reputation they have gained and how much they have improved.

My hon. Friend the Minister does not need me to remind him that section 141 of the Water Resources Act 1991 requires the National Rivers Authority to maintain, improve and develop fisheries throughout the country. I do not see how it will be easy for it do that if it is faced with the problem of polluted water from abandoned coal mines flooding into water courses.

I hope that the Minister will tell us that he is sympathetic to the arguments that have been advanced. On behalf of anglers and anyone else who enjoys the countryside, I hope that he will ensure that we have an effective defence against pollution.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): This issue has been around for a long time and it is astonishing that it has not been dealt with before. As has already been said, the present legal position is unclear. It is one of the problems about which there appears to be some buck-passing between British Coal and the National Rivers Authority and between their respective political masters, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment. The Bill will not improve matters, but will make them worse.

The key to the issue is that we are talking about big money and nobody wants to pick up the responsibilities and liabilities. We should remember that at Wheal Jane colliery the National Rivers Authority has worked hard to clear up a real mess. The cost in grant aid to the

[Mr. Paddy Tipping]

Government has been £8 million—that is the scale of money about which we are talking. Given that scale of money, it is not surprising that British Coal and the NRA, so I am reliably told, are talking to each other through their lawyers because they are frightened of committing themselves and picking up any liabilities.

The issue affects the whole country. It affects the Nottinghamshire coalfield, which still operates and still has a future, I hope, in the privatised industry. It has recently been announced that the Annersley Bentinck colliery is to close. It pumps out mine water from the east of the Derbyshire coalfield and the west of the Nottinghamshire coalfield. That water is treated on the site of Annersley Bentinck colliery and is taken by pipeline some 10 miles to be discharged into the River Trent. Only the volume of water in the River Trent can deal with that level of pollution.

What will happen when the pumps are turned off at Annersley Bentinck colliery? It is all very well for the Minister to say that there is a memorandum of understanding between British Coal and the National Rivers Authority. That memorandum is not backed by law; it is a short-term palliative. It requires British Coal to give the NRA only 14 days' notice. That is not good enough. There will be real problems if the issue is not dealt with in the Bill.

It is clear that mine water discharge not only discolours the water by introducing heavy metals like iron, but has a knock-on effect on water companies. Mine water is pumped into rivers. Some of those rivers are associated with sewage works. Many of those sewage works only just meet emission standards. If there is a drop in water volume —and there will be if the pumping stops—it is clear that a great deal of remedial work will need to be carried out at those sewage works to meet environmental standards. The cost of that will be immense. The Minister should consult his colleagues to find out the water companies' estimates for that remedial work.

We will pay for that remedial work through our water and sewerage costs. We shall pay in other ways because polluted water will inevitably lead to the loss of plant life and wildlife in streams in Nottinghamshire and other coalfield communities. Some 80 per cent. of the drinking water in Nottinghamshire is pumped from the underlying aquifer, the bunter sandstone. That aquifer is fissile—it has been affected by mining subsidence.

There is a real possibility of discharged polluted mine water penetrating the bunter sandstone. The Government should listen to good professional advice. The British Geological Survey, based at Keyworth in Nottinghamshire, put forward a proposition that has great merit: that no pumping at collieries should be switched off until a full geological survey of the effects of ceasing pumping has been undertaken.

We should remember that the quality of Nottinghamshire water has attracted inward investment. The Toray factory at Mansfield came to Nottinghamshire specifically because it required high-quality water to treat its textiles. It drilled a new well in Mansfield to provide that water.

We need and deserve new investment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) said, one of the ways to attract new investment into coalfield communities is to portray an attractive and forward-looking environment. The proposals in the Bill do nothing to secure that.

The new clause and the amendment secure the future; they tackle the problems. The Minister told us in Committee that he was aware of, and sympathised with, the problems. He told us that at the end of the day the Coal Authority would underwrite the Bill. If that is the case and his understanding of it, I hope that he will give us some comfort and say clearly—if not tonight, very soon—that he will introduce into the Bill provisions to protect our future environment.

People in coalfield communities are used to dirt and discharge, but they also want the benefits of the other side of the coin. People who work in that environment respect the countryside; they want better for their children than they had for themselves. The issue must be tackled, and I hope that the Minister will listen to the views from all parts of the House.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): It is a pleasure to see the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) in his place. I hope that his leg is improving and that it has not caused him too much pain to take part in the debate; his presence is a measure of his concern.

Mr. Skinner: He will last longer than Gazza.

Mr. Lester: He is not under as much strain as Gazza who is trying to play for England.

I support my hon. Friends the Members for Newark (Mr. Alexander) and for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and all those who have already spoken.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) suggested an integrated approach, and the abstract concerns are important. In my constituency there was a mine overflow. For some reason, a mistake was made at Moorgreen pit and the overflow of water came gushing down a narrow ditch into a broader brook and flooded a whole row of houses. I vividly remember being called to the emergency and seeing the terrible problems that the people in those homes suffered.

We are all used to seeing pictures on television of people in wellingtons plodding around two or three feet of water in their homes. In this case, it was two or three feet of black slurry which could not be washed out or wished away. It was a serious emergency. If it had not been for the council being able to mobilise a great deal of help to stop it getting worse, the flooding would have extended to many more homes. Much work was required to ensure that it would never happen again.

It is one thing to talk in abstract; it is another to see the consequences of an overflow and to recognise how important it is we get it right. Amendment No. 7, which seeks to remove the exception, is one way forward. I also follow what the hon. Member for Sherwood said about the catchment area and the importance of clean water.

Hardy Hansons brewery in my constituency has been brewing beer for 150 years. One reason why it is there is the quality of the water. Over the years, it has sought to protect the catchment area whence it gets its water, as the well that serves the brewery is important to the quality of the beer. Any concern of Hardy Hansons would be considerable, especially as there are many old mine workings in the area and no one has specific responsibility to ensure that an overflow could not pollute that catchment area.

It is important that my hon. Friend the Minister listens carefully to all that has been said. We need specific assurances on responsibility and financing, which cannot be left in limbo or addressed in a vague way. If the composite of new clauses and amendments is not the right and total answer for the Department, it behoves Ministers to introduce clauses to deal with the issue to the satisfaction of hon. Members on both sides who share this concern.

7.45 pm

Mr. Mullin: First, let me welcome the new clause and the amendments. Most of us here tonight have been trying to draw the attention of the DTI and the Department of the Environment to the problem for some time. I had an Adjournment debate on the subject last July.

I find it incredible that the Bill should be published in the face of the enormous amount of advice that has been received from all quarters and from people of all political persuasions and should contain no explicit mention of responsibility for the consequences of mine water pollution.

Our attention in the Durham coalfield was first drawn to the matter when Easington council, which played a very helpful role in exposing the likely consequences, commissioned a report from Dr. Paul Younger, a lecturer in water resources at Newcastle university. He set out graphically what the consequences would be for the River Wear, which is one of the most beautiful rivers in the country and flows through Sunderland, if the pumps were switched off. The water table would rise; the long-term effect would be catastrophic; the flora and fauna of the River Wear, part of which runs through National Trust woodlands, would be devastated; the water supply to the city of Sunderland would be imperilled; wildlife would be endangered, as would livestock grazing near the river; use of the river by human beings for sports purposes would probably have to be restricted to wet weather; and there was a danger that parts of the Durham and Sunderland coastline, which has fine and well-used beaches would be contaminated.

The Minister has received warnings; hon. Members from both sides have agreed that the Bill needs to make it quite clear where the responsibility will lie. No quantity of assurances from this or any other Minister will get round the fundamental problem that the Bill provides for no responsibility when things go wrong. Things are already beginning to go wrong, as my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) has mentioned. We can already see the consequences in some places.

Nothing in the behaviour of British Coal until now suggests that we need have any confidence in its assurances. Such concessions as have been obtained have been wrung out of British Coal by the National Rivers Authority. It has delayed, it has not provided information that it should have provided and at one stage it ridiculed the assertions by Dr. Younger, whom I quoted a moment ago.

British Coal has now signed the memorandum of understanding which provides for just 14 days' notice before the pumps are switched off. The memorandum is useless for any other purpose except that it gives 14 days to take legal action or perhaps to obtain an injunction. As everyone knows, the law is so unclear that no one can be confident of the outcome of legal action.

Elsewhere, British Coal has walked away from its responsibilities. The waters of Girvan, in Ayrshire, were polluted in the 1970s, and mine water seriously polluted the River Ore in Fife. Wheal Jane, in Cornwall, has also been mentioned; that, of course, is a tin mine.

The Minister has no excuse for not knowing about those problems. He has been warned by people of all persuasions: as I discovered this afternoon, he has even been warned by the National Rivers Authority. I should like to hear from him in that regard. I was a member of the Standing Committee considering the Water Bill, which was enacted in 1989, and I heard all the assurances about how effective the NRA would be. I understand that the authority—chaired by a former Tory Cabinet Minister, and set up by the present Government—has written to the Department of the Environment, saying that something must be written into the Bill to clarify the position. Is that so?

I appreciate that the Minister does not come from that Department, but no doubt it is represented here tonight. What response has been given to the NRA? It is incredible that a body set up by the Government specifically to advise on what should be done about this kind of pollution is being ignored.

Many of my constituents are very angry. We can all see the problem coming. Durham is one of the places that will be affected at an early stage; it is a world heritage site. Why are we standing by and allowing this to happen, when the solutions are reasonably obvious?

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): The River Wear runs through the centre of my constituency, which my hon. Friend visits regularly. Literally hundreds of people are now terrified of what will happen to the river in the event of pollution. I know that my hon. Friend often walks along its banks; he will be aware that pollution would devastate the city of Durham. He will also be aware that hundreds of thousands of people visit Durham each year: it is now one of the most sought-after tourist spots in the north of England.

Mine water pollution would have a catastrophic effect throughout the city. Why in the name of heaven does the Minister not take the advice that he has received from virtually every expert? He has been told that the problem will arise, but he is taking no action. Even at meetings that I have attended, he has failed to respond to the genuine fears of my constituents.

Mr. Mullin: My hon. Friend has the privilege of representing the most beautiful city in England. As he says, the consequences for his constituency will be worse even than the consequences for the city of Sunderland.

Real anger is felt about the lack of action. The problem has been repeatedly drawn to the attention of the Minister's Department, and other Departments; the National Rivers Authority is attempting to draw it to the Minister's attention. I particularly want to hear what response his Department, or the Department of the Environment, has given to the NRA.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) for his kind words at the beginning of this debate.

The issue involved in the new clause and amendments is clear: British Coal, or any other pit owner, is effectively responsible only for pollution from working mines. Once a mine has been abandoned, the responsibility ceases. The

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issue was examined in detail in March 1992 by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, which I still have the proud honour to chair; and, on 10 February 1993, I presented a ten-minute Bill to examine it further.

The environmental aspect is very simple. During mining operations, the mineral pyrite, or iron sulphide—which is often found in the coal seam—is exposed. When exposed to air and water, pyrite is oxidised into ferrous sulphate and sulphuric acid, a process which may be catalysed by the presence of chemo-synthetic bacteria.

The effects of that process were clearly spelt out in the debate in February last year, and many hon. Members have made the same point this evening. Let me say merely that the oxidisation of those metals ruins the spawning gravels for breeding fish, and leaves only some species of alga to grow into thick blankets of unpleasant-looking cover. That affects the overall eco-system of flora and fauna, especially bird species. Sometimes the water is also contaminated by traces of cadmium, zinc and other heavy metals. Such invisible pollution has far more serious implications for the food chain.

I congratulate the Welsh Office on commissioning a detailed study of the problem from the NRA. The study, published last Wednesday, is entitled "A Survey of Ferruginous Minewater Impacts in the Welsh Coalfields". It is extremely interesting: it examines two stages of a scientific analysis of the problem. In stage one, the NRA in the Welsh region located 90 discharges in Wales, and found that 59.4 km of river had been affected by ferruginous discharges; an area measuring 220,000 sq miles had been affected by iron hydroxide deposition.

In stage two, the NRA examined 33 of the top-rank discharges—those with the greatest environmental impact—selecting them with chemical, biological and fisheries impact assessments. That analysis is extremely interesting, but I wish to concentrate on a specific river identified by the NRA as the worst in Wales, in terms of biological impact. It clearly illustrates the possible effects of such discharges on life in a Welsh river polluted by an operator who has then walked away—in this instance, British Coal.

I am sure that the Minister has read the NRA survey with his customary diligence. I should be grateful if he would put his mind to considering how he intends to clean up the site identified by the NRA, and tells us in his reply. On page 19, the survey states:

"The site at which the greatest environmental impact occurred was below the discharge from Morlais colliery, Llangennech, Llanelli"—

in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). That refers to the drainage of mine waters from beneath old coal workings in my constituency, particularly at the various coal measures on the eastern side of the Burry estuary.

The survey states:

"The minewater was having a dramatic impact upon the invertebrate fauna . . . The degree of deposition of iron hydroxide at the site was very high and the downstream iron concentration (max. 26.42 mg/l) was the highest of the 33 sites studied and well in excess of the environmental quality standard . . . for total iron. Such a high iron loading had a highly deleterious impact upon the invertebrate fauna causing a complete loss of 14 families and a reduction of 3 families at the site immediately downstream of the discharge . . .

The ferruginous deposits impacted upon a wide range of families some of which are recognised as tolerant of other forms of pollution".

I use that quotation because the NRA clearly showed that it is the worst polluted river in Wales in terms of the chemical, biological and other elements that it examined in detail. I want to know what provision in the Bill will help to clean up the mess.

8 pm

On 16 December last year, in my capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Wales to ask him for his comments on the Bill. In his reply of 12 January this year, he wrote:

"On the matter of water pollution from abandoned mines, we will ensure that both the historic and current liabilities of British Coal will continue to be discharged following privatisation. Those liabilities not transferred to mining operators will be discharged by the public sector. We have also announced our intention to review the legislative framework relating to water pollution from abandoned mines of all kinds. These matters are currently under careful consideration."

I am interested in eliciting from the Minister some form of assurance that the problems highlighted by hon. Members of all parties will not be avoided but will be dealt with.

I conclude by drawing attention to what the Royal Commission on environmental pollution made clear in its 16th report published in 1992. It said:

"where the owners of the site are unwilling or unable to carry out work to reduce the risk of pollution, the authorities should seek from the Government the support and necessary funds to have the work carried out".

Will the Minister accept the amendments? It would be a welcome change if he were to do so. but, if he cannot, will he at least give a more substantial assurance than merely saying that reed-bed technology is being examined and that that is the limit of the further consideration that the Government are giving to the issue?

The problem exists and it will not go away. I very much hope that the Minister will give an answer that is a little more comprehensive than that of the Secretary of State for Wales who said that the issue was still under consideration. Has that consideration now finished? If so, what provision is to be added to the Bill? If the Minister is not prepared to give us the assurance that we seek, we shall have to hope that it will be added in another place.

Mr. Skinner: All the hon. Members who have spoken this evening have said that some form of words should be added to the Bill to relieve the problems that will ensue in every area where there are coalfields and where there are, in any case, already a lot of problems.

The problem of mine water pollution is not new. It just so happens that there has been a massive closure programme, especially in the past 10 years. There were 170 pits 10 years ago, and there are now about 17. In many cases, pits have had to take over the pumping that was done by pits that have been closed. The problem became chronic with the result that, at one pit in my area, it is costing £5,000 per week per pump to pump out the water that has gathered as a result of the closure of the adjacent seven or eight pits. That has been the problem in Durham and in every coalfield in Britain.

Because of the massive closure programme, the problem has now become too big to handle. The Government are simply standing aside, believing that as no one has bothered much about the problem until now they can shunt off the coal industry—or the small number of remaining pits—to the Coal Authority. They think that they can heave a sigh of relief and, as happened with the establishment of the Benefits Agency and the rest of the quangos, then tell Members of Parliament, "It is nowt to do

with us." The matter will be left to the National Rivers Authority and the local authorities. The poor old local authorities, which are mainly Labour controlled, will be told by a succession of Ministers that they must find the ways and means to resolve the problem, but without adequate money or standard spending assessment grants.

Only a weeks ago—we are still talking about it—the Government found about £230 million for the Pergau dam. It is not as if the Government cannot find the money. We are probably talking about a much smaller sum than that for the pits, but, because it suited the Government to line the pockets of their friends operating in Malaysia, they came up with the money there. The Government were worried not about jobs but about making money, so they were able to find the necessary brass. We want no excuses from the Government that they cannot find the necessary money because this is not a minor issue. The Government talk about Rio, the environment and all the rest of it, but this is a classic example of the Government's having been found out. They make abstract generalisations about saving the environment, but they do absolutely nothing at all.

The Minister has a duty to find a form of words to enable local authorities and people who live in the communities to provide for proper water in their areas. One of the things that antagonise people in the coalfield constituencies is that for a century or more—in Durham, it goes back for many centuries—people have had to put up with all the muck associated with pits. They have had to put up with pit tips and water running off them. Everything associated with coalfields has been muck and mess. Now that the pits have closed, many people are asking why they cannot have a bit of greenery and some clean water. That is the anger that my hon. Friends are expressing and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are no exception: you cannot participate in the debate, but you know and understand the problem.

Pits have been closed and opencast mining has taken place, resulting in great big holes and water running all over the place. It has now become such a big problem that no one knows how to tackle it. What is the water like? It has been described as black and oily, but we used to call it ochre water. I do not know whether it was the same in Nottingham, but I see my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) nodding. Nothing could live in it, but we used to mess about in it when we were kids and we got a dear old belter for doing so—

Mr. Eggar: Those were the days.

Mr. Skinner: They were indeed the days. They were not golden days, but they were the days when my father worked two or three days a week if he was lucky. The hon. Gentleman who masquerades as a Minister yearns for those conditions to come back and the Government are working towards it. They have already chucked 4 million people out of work and they would like to see people on three and three. They would achieve it after privatisation if they were to remain in office, but they are being run by a tinpot wimp who does not know whether he is on this earth or fuller's earth. We shall soon be seeing the back of the Prime Minister and then we shall get around to dealing with the water problems in the coalfields. I know that I took a long, circuitous route in making that point, but the Minister provoked me.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): You are easily provoked.

Mr. Skinner: I am easily provoked when it is all about workers. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) does not have to put up with such problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman return to the new clause before the House?

Mr. Skinner: We are talking about dirty water. We are talking about a dirty, rotten, lousy Government and the two things go together. One cannot draw a line between them. The Government can find money for their rich friends—£50 billion in tax cuts—but they cannot find money to resolve the problem of mine water. What is that water like? It has been described as black and oily.

When I worked down Glapwell colliery, the water was 800 yards deep in parts and it came off the seam. The miners who worked on the coal face did not wear shirts; they had only knee pads, shorts and boots. That water used to come out of the strata. I used to take the miners to the social security tribunal—this is water that we are discussing—where cases were carried to the extent that it was agreed that the water was so full of chemicals that it caused ulcers on the miners' backs and it was made a prescribed industrial disease.

That water permeates the water courses, it travels down the valleys in Wales and everywhere else and finishes up in drinking water. The Government would not tolerate that kind of water if it was anywhere near Buckingham palace. They would resolve the problem there. But the water happens to be in the coalfields where the Tories do not care. They know that there, by and large, with rare exceptions, people support the Labour party.

I want to draw the Ministers' attention to that problem and I want some answers. He sits there grinning like a Cheshire cat. Let us sort out the problem. Some people have said that because of the closure of the pits, the water courses have risen substantially. I believe that that is true in Bolsover.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Skinner: What is up with the hon. Gentleman? Has he got St. Vitus's dance? He is another one who has several jobs and is not satisfied with living on £30,000 a year as a Member of Parliament. He lines his pockets on the side. Perhaps his constituents would like to hear about that as well.

In the Bolsover area, several pits are closed—

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): You are a bully.

Mr. Skinner: What's up, fatso?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough of such talk from both sides of the House. Let us get back to new clause 3.

Mr. Skinner: Bring them to order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I said that that was enough from both sides of the House.

Mr. Skinner: In the Bolsover area, several pits have shut over the past several years and a landslip has occurred —like the Scarborough hotel which slid down the pit cliff. I hope that the Minister is listening because it affects many constituents of mine. There are watercourses on the hillside. The neighbouring pits have been shut and, more recently, Bolsover colliery has been shut. So hardly any

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pumping takes place at all, with the result that the hillside has begun to fall away. Already six houses have been demolished, with the prospect of up to 80 more being in jeopardy. When the Scarborough hotel fell down the cliff, money was found under the Coast Protection Act 1949, but because Bolsover is not near the coast the Government do not want to know.

I ask the Minister again to consult his friends at the Department of the Environment to ensure that the people in that area receive grants to resolve the problem on that hillside. As surely as night follows day, that problem is due to the rising water levels in the area. My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood has heard about the problem. Six properties in my constituency have already been demolished and the people do not know which way to turn. We need £1.5 million from the Government to ensure that we can put the hillside right. If the Minister cannot find that money in the Bill, he should tell his colleagues at the Department of the Environment to deal with the matter.

8.15 pm

Privatisation is about replacing a little public intervention—although the Coal Board never practised it properly—planning and organisation with market chaos. Nobody will care about anything. When people are striving to make money without any concern for the community, obviously the water will not be taken care of and the environment in general will be discarded because people cannot make profit out of such things.

The Government want to get rid of the problem by just forgetting all about it. If they can just get through the debate and manage to survive the passage of the Bill in this House and in the other place, the local authorities will be saddled with the problem. We are demanding money from the Minister. The debate amounts to a political will and the provision of money. That would enable those who have to deal with the problem to manage effectively, without having to deal with it themselves and without being deprived of the opportunity to receive proper grants through the Bill.

Mr. Dickens: The debate about water flowing through disused mines gives me an opportunity, in response to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), to tell one or two home truths to the House of Commons. First—

Ms Armstrong: The hon. Member has just come into the House.

Mr. Dickens: I was in earlier, my dear. First, let us consider why we are in this position and why coal mines have closed. The hon. Member for Bolsover laid the issue square on the shoulders of the Government, but to my mind that is not correct. I ask hon. Members to cast their minds back to the year-long miners' strike when—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already had to draw the attention of the House and of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to the fact that we are discussing new clause 3 and not the miners' strike of 1984.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before the hon. Gentleman speaks, may I point out that he has not been here for most of the debate? He has not apologised to the House for the fact that he has not been present. Will you ensure that if he trespasses again he does not abuse the time of the House when other hon. Members have been present throughout and want to make specific points and not widen the debate out to totally different issues?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member may safely leave that to the Chair.

Mr. Dickens: To put the record straight, I spent about an hour at the beginning of the debate sitting here, while the other Deputy Speaker was in the Chair. To say that I have not been here during the debate is a falsehood. I have been to have a meal and I have returned.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): Was is it a good meal?

Mr. Dickens: It was a good meal, but the debate is no better than it was when I left.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has not just returned from having a meal; I saw him asleep in the Library.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Both sides of the House must settle down and debate new clause 3. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will get to the new clause.

Mr. Dickens: New clause 3 relates to flooding water in the coal mines and the sort of action that the Government are proposing, either financially or in kind, to deal with the problem and to place an obligation to be fulfilled by the people purchasing the mines. I know exactly what the debate is about and I intend to speak to it.

First, it is important to explain to the House why we are in this position. It is about continuity of supply. The lights have to be kept burning. Industry in an industrial nation must have—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair does not want to hear anything about the past. I repeat that we are debating new clause 3 and I must tell the hon. Gentleman to debate that clause.

Mr. Dickens: With respect, you allowed the hon. Member for Bolsover—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair is responsible for the Chair's actions. I have allowed the hon. Member for Bolsover and any other hon. Member to debate within the bounds of new clause 3. Apart from the time I pulled him up, the hon. Member for Bolsover was quite in order. Once again, I ask the hon. Gentleman to address new clause 3. He should get on with it.

Mr. Dickens: I understand that you represent Pontefract, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that you have always taken a great interest in the coal mining industry. I say that sincerely, because I served with you on the Select Committee and you always put the details, desires and interests of the coal mining industry first and foremost, so I know about your sincere views on the subject.

I had hoped to explain the reasons for the mess that we are in today, but since I must concede to the Chair and respect what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall move on and simply say that it is not the Government's fault that we are in our present position. The mines closed because of circumstances in the past that were beyond the

Government's doing. There must be continuity of supply, so it was unfair, unjust and incorrect of the hon. Member for Bolsover to blame our Minister for the problem.

I am afraid that because of the restrictions placed on me this evening I cannot extend my speech any longer.

Mr. Clapham: I should like to trespass on the ground that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) opened, but I have watched the Minister in Committee and I know that he can look after himself.

The new clause, and amendments Nos. 41, 14 and 55, are essential if we are to avoid widespread pollution. Using an example from my constituency, I shall explain to the House what may happen unless the Government are prepared to accept that the Bill must allocate responsibility.

The River Don begins its flow in the Pennines, in my constituency. It flows swiftly towards Penistone and then meanders through the beautiful countryside towards Barnsley, making a turn towards Sheffield. To the west of the A628—the Manchester road—at Millhouse Green, Bullhouse colliery closed in 1961 or 1962. Because it was privately owned, British Coal has denied any responsibility for it.

Just after the colliery closed, the mine water from the old pit started to seep into the River Don, and it has now been running into the Don at quite a pace for several years. For about four miles from the spot where the water from the Bullhouse pit enters it, the River Don is totally polluted; it is an orange colour due to the iron salts in the water. There are no fish, no flora and no fauna—or at any rate, the flora and fauna are greatly deterred by the polluted water. Yet west of the point where the polluted water joins it the Don is an A-grade river whose waters are coveted by the local angling association. We have been pressing for many years to try to get something done about the pollution.

Because the mine was private, British Coal denies any responsibility. We have been corresponding for a year with the National Rivers Authority, but that body says that it does not have the money to deal with the problem. I have also corresponded with the Minister, as well as with the Department of the Environment, to try to persuade them to explore the possibility of making grants available, perhaps through the European Community, to give us the opportunity to start to clear up the river.

That example shows clearly what can happen if no responsibility is laid on the authority or some other body to which we can turn to ensure that a cleaning-up job can be started if an area becomes polluted. It is therefore clear that the new clause and the amendments must be accepted, so if the Government are not prepared to make the required changes I ask Conservative Back Benchers to support the Opposition.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I shall be as brief as I can, but I must draw the attention of the House to the increasing pollution of the Neath waterways by mining effluent. My hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) has investigated the matter in detail through the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, and we are most grateful for what he has done.

The pollution was first identified at the village of Tonmawr, in the River Pelenna, which has suffered increasing pollution and is now a dirty orange-brown colour; it is at present the subject of a five-year, £1 million-plus programme whose intention is to try to clean it up. The significant aspect of that is that the burden falls not on British Coal or on previous mine owners—the mines were private before nationalisation—but directly on the taxpayer, through the Welsh Office and West Glamorgan county council.

The River Pelenna is not the only heavily polluted waterway; the Neath river, the Neath canal and the River Dulais are all increasingly polluted with mining effluents. Those three waterways are the subject of an interesting story that illustrates the nature of a problem that the Government seem unwilling to recognise, or at least unwilling to concede openly.

When discoloration and pollution started to appear in the Neath canal and the Neath river, it was first thought that it came from the Ynysarwed mine, which closed in 1938 and which had worked the No. 2 Rhondda coal seam. That mine had been discharging a little water for several years, but it had not constituted any threat until spring 1993, when the National Rivers Authority first noticed an increasing discharge from the mine. There was then a sudden but steady increase.

On further investigation, it was realised that the water was coming not from Ynysarwed but from Blaenant colliery, which closed in 1991. How was that happening? Although both the collieries had worked the No. 2 Rhondda coal seam, they were separated. But as the ground water rose in the Blaenant colliery, it started to seep through a barrier of at least 90 m of coal into Ynysarwed, and so to discharge straight into the Neath canal and the Neath river.

I seek to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that the problem is complex, and that unless it is tackled comprehensively we shall not get to grips with it. The Minister is nodding; I am grateful for that, and I look forward with anticipation to his reply.

Pumping has now ceased in the Blaenant colliery. When pumping was occurring it artificially depressed the groundwater level there, but when it stopped the water rose to a sufficient height to start entering Ynysarwed and coming through the rock. The position is further complicated by the fact that the mine water is still rising in Blaenant. The National Rivers Authority says that it is increasingly seeping into the River Dulais.

Partly as a result of NRA pressure, Blaenant drift was sealed up in December 1993, but that in turn forced water up the nearby Cefn Coed shaft, where the two mines were linked. We are now told that the water has reached about 30 m from the top of Cefn Coed, which is one of the deepest shafts in Britain, and it is rising at the rate of half a metre a week. We seal up one apparent cause of a problem and the water seeps out elsewhere.

The same thing is occurring all over the Neath constituency. The Neath canal has now been declared ecologically dead below the level of Resolven, near Neath. There are intense concentrations of dissolved iron and oxidised iron; there is settlement of iron oxides. Fish have had to be recovered and relocated and are in very poor condition. The canal overflows into the River Neath at several points, helping to form deposits of iron hydroxide on the river gravels and causing red discoloration. It has also been blinding the gravels, which has affected the spawning areas, resulting in their destruction. As a result, salmon that spawns in the River Neath is being threatened and in some cases destroyed. Similar problems are affecting the River Dulais, which is also a salmon river. The recent discharges in the river bed at Blaenant are also

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causing iron oxide of the river gravels and affecting the whole of the river for 3 km downstream from Blaenant, which is also affecting salmon spawning.

8.30 pm

The problem has an effect on tourism. The upper Dulais falls, which have been regenerated over the past few years with an impressive project—it is a major tourist attraction attracting some 30,000 visitors a year—is affected. A fish pass is embedded in the new project. Salmon are coming up the River Dulais, but they are meeting the pollution from above.

The point of that description is that when a mining area starts to be affected by increasing neglect—as it will be over the years as the problem continues to grow—pumping stops, the water level rises and water seeps all over the place. Elderly residents have told me how the Neath river used to be black in the old days when the mines on each side of it were working—except during holiday periods when local children used to swim in it. That was a relatively benign form of pollution through coal. The river now has a deep orange-brown toxic form of pollution which is threatening fish and the environment. It will increasingly threaten the health of local residents as the pollution seeps into local water supplies, and it will increasingly threaten tourism.

I am not talking about an isolated problem. Across Wales, the National Rivers Authority has identified 90 sites that are heavily polluted with mine water effluent. We face an ecological nightmare in south Wales with pumping stopping, the Government abandoning their responsibilities and with pollution increasing throughout the area.

In Committee, the Government showed a cavalier attitude to the problem; regrettably, I anticipate the same attitude from the Minister shortly. Effectively, the Bill is a charter for passing the buck between mine owners, old mines and the National Rivers Authority. Neath borough council, West Glamorgan county council and other authorities believe that the protection allegedly offered in the Bill is totally inadequate. That is why new clause 3 is absolutely essential. If the House does not carry it tonight, I hope that at least it will be carried in the House of Lords.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): It is interesting that new clause 3 has been supported by every speaker except one—the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), whose contribution could be described as neutral at best. I have spent almost as much time listening to the debate as I spent working in the mining industry looking after mine water. Mine water is the topic which we are debating, although apparently the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth was not aware of that.

I listened carefully to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) about the situation in his constituency and what was applicable in Wales. We must remember that the mines that were worked on each side of the Pennine chain through Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire and Lancashire discharged water. The mines then closed and the water accumulated there. The water came down into the lower areas and there are problems on the coast, certainly in Northumberland and Durham. As my hon. Friend said, the problem goes right through.

Having had some experience of dealing with mine water for a number of years as an engineer in the industry, I understand the extent of the problem. The mine in which I worked pumped out 4 tonnes of water for every tonne of coal. That was the scale of the problem. Of course, there were problems other than mine water being discharged from the mines. A mine in my constituency that closed in 1966 worked coal reserves under the North sea. The mine closed, but pumps in the shaft still pump sea water. We have the same problem in the coastal areas of Durham and Northumberland; we must now pump out sea water to control the problem. Once the pumping system stops, the water accumulates.

I shall make a final comment that is relevant to the debate. There is an historic precedent for this problem. I am old enough to remember that when the mines were nationalised in 1947 the National Coal Board took over the problem of spoil heaps. The board came to the Government for support and, happily, Governments throughout the years have provided financial support to get rid of the spoil heaps. The spoil heaps were created by private coal owners before the mines were nationalised, and they did not spend one penny on dealing with the problem. The National Coal Board, British Coal and successive Governments have had to deal with the problem, and local authorities, taxpayers and ratepayers have paid for it.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): We have all had the benefit of the brilliant briefing on the general problem given to us by Durham county council. May I illustrate the problem in terms of my constituency? We have a first-class new cricket ground at Durham. If the weir in front of the ground is polluted, it will not be a good advertisement for all that has happened. In addition, we have the Lumley waterworks, which draws from the river and supplies clean drinking water to Sunderland. If that is polluted, it will cost £24 million to replace. Does my hon. Friend agree that that figure alone makes the case for the amendment?

Mr. Thompson: I certainly agree. I am sure that when players at the Durham cricket club put a ball into the weir, they will be lucky if they get it back again.

I was making a point about spoil heaps. Over the years, major spoil heaps were created by the private coal industry before it was nationalised. The nationalised industry had to cope with the problem, although I accept immediately that it has had Government support over the years since 1947. The spoil heaps have now been dealt with, certainly in my area.

If the problem of spoil heaps is not dealt with properly now, we shall have a similar problem with mine water 10 or 15 years from now. The Government should deal with the problem now. If they do not, it will remain and 10 years from now hon. Members will be spending hours in the Chamber trying to find a way of dealing with it. New clause 3 would provide an opportunity to deal with the problem now, and it should be accepted on that basis.

Mr. Eggar: Understandably, we have had a lengthy and good debate. I was delighted to see the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on his feet again.

The theme of speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House is that there is genuine concern about the Durham coalfield, the south Wales coalfield, Nottinghamshire and elsewhere. It may help the House if I briefly try to allay some concerns which I think are completely ill founded. There are other concerns, which I shall discuss later.

The first concern, which seems to have been put across by Durham county council—it was repeated by the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong)—is that the Bill will in some way weaken the environmental controls. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) also went down that route. That simply is not the case. The Bill makes it absolutely clear—it is all there in clause 7(3)—that the environmental obligations that currently rest with British Coal under separate environmental legislation are to be passed on to the Coal Authority unless and until separate licences are given to private sector operators. Therefore, the environmental legislation follows through from British Coal to either the Coal Authority or private sector operators. I thought that we had got that basic fact across to those who are genuinely concerned about environmental regulation.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose—*

Mr. Eggar: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I am keen to try to reply in detail to the points that have been made by other hon. Members. It would be for the convenience of the House if I did so as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Hughes: I do not think that the Durham document seeks to say that there has been a weakening. Will the Minister address specifically the proposal on page 7 of the document, which relates to precisely the clause of the Bill to which he is referring? The Minister will see that the left-hand column refers to an amendment that would add liabilities, including environmental liabilities, in relation to abandoned coal mines.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman abuses the right of intervention. I was going on to develop the arguments clearly with respect to that question. If the hon. Gentleman lets me continue, I shall seek to reassure him.

The obligations in terms of responding to existing environmental law and regulations relate under the contents of the Bill either to the Coal Authority or to private sector licensees. It is fundamental to the construction of the Bill both with regard to both safety and environmental obligations that we do not seek in any way to duplicate or mix up the role of the environmental regulatory organisation on one hand or the responsibility for safety on the other. It is a theme of the Bill that the National Rivers Authority remains responsible for environmental regulation.

That is why I must say to the House that I simply do not accept the logic behind new clause 3, or amendments Nos. 41, 55 and 14. They blur the structure which says that there should be an external environmental regulator. The concerns of my hon. Friends and of a number of Opposition Members—particularly the hon. Member for Sunderland, South—are whether the environmental regulations as laid out in the Water Resources Act 1991 are adequate for the future.

When people talk about the need to tighten the environmental rules and regulations, they are really addressing the perceived adequacy or otherwise of section 89(3) of the Water Resources Act. The debate is about that section, which provides that a person does not commit an offence by reason only of permitting water from an abandoned mine to enter controlled waters.

The legislation is there in that form because when the Bill was introduced and the Act debated it was felt to be unreasonable to place an absolute obligation in respect of environmental damage on a landowner who may never have been responsible for mining at all and who may have bought the land without being aware that it was undermined.

Much to my surprise, I must pay tribute to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain); I hope that I shall not ruin his reputation by doing so. The hon. Gentleman recognised how complicated the whole problem is because water flows are not fully understood. That is also true in Durham. It is not a simple matter of saying that there is an absolute obligation on a landowner because he may not in fact have any real responsibility for causing the environmental damage in the first place.

8.45pm

It is precisely because of the concerns expressed by my hon. Friends and by Opposition Members, and because of a more general concern about the whole statutory position with regard to contaminated land, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is currently carrying out a review of the legislative framework of water pollution in general. My right hon. Friend is conducting that review in tandem with a broader review of contaminated land and liabilities. It is obvious that the review must be careful. My right hon. Friend has asked for consultation, and responses are requested by 3 May. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside announced only two weeks ago that he expected the review to be completed later this year.

In the meantime, the Government will make sure that all British Coal's current liabilities continue to be discharged. We have made that absolutely clear in the Coal Authority explanatory note that we have published. I very much hope that when my right hon. Friend introduces his proposals, he will be able to take account of what I recognise as hon. Members' genuine concerns. I hope that he will be able to get the balance right and that he can take account of all of the consultations. On the basis of those assurances, I hope that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) will be willing not to press the new clause.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful for the explanations that the Minister has given. He seems again to have passed the buck to the Department of the Environment. We have seen the buck passed during the past two or three years and it is still being passed. The Opposition made it clear in Committee that we were not satisfied with the explanations that were given by the Minister and that we would bring the matter to the Floor of House.

My hon. Friends and I can hardly be satisfied with the way in which the Executive have disregarded the views of the legislature tonight. The House heard interesting remarks from the hon. Members for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), for Newark (Mr. Alexander), and for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), and from the right hon. Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow). They are Conservative Members, and that suggests that there is cross-party support for the suggestion that phrasing on contaminated water should appear somehow in the Bill. On the basis of that, I will not press the amendments, but will seek to divide the House on new clause 3.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—
The House divided: Ayes 269, Noes 293

Division No. 175] **[8.50 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. John Cummings, and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*

Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 4

Research and Development

'.—(1) It shall be the duty of the Authority to assist the long-term future of the coal industry by ensuring that there is adequate long-term investment in mining technology and coal utilisation research.

(2) In pursuance of its duty under subsection (1) above, the Authority shall impose a levy on all licensed operations.

(3) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the Authority fulfils its duty under subsection (1) of this section.

(4) The Secretary of State may, out of money provided by Parliament, pay the Authority such money as the Authority requires to perform its duty under subsection (1) of this section.'.
—[Mr. O'Neill.]

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. O'Neill: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

For many years, the mining industry had very little in the way of research and development. In fact, it was the newly nationalised coal industry which, after the second world war, developed what are the two remaining research establishments—the establishment at Cheltenham, and the technical services research executive establishment at

[Mr. O'Neill]

Bretby. Both establishments have contributed to the technological advances that have been made over the years by British Coal which have resulted in the British industry being the most efficient, productive and indeed the cheapest deep mining industry in the world.

Although the industry has contracted considerably in size, it is nevertheless essential that if this country is to produce coal at a competitive price which can be utilised in the most effective way, we should continue with the programme of research which is presently under way.

The establishment at Cheltenham has been regarded, in the words of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, as a "world centre of excellence". The work that has been done there—particularly the work on clean coal technology and the coal topping cycle—when applied in major power stations will increase the thermal efficiency of generation from about 36 to 47 per cent. That would be a major breakthrough.

At the moment, the people at Cheltenham assess that they are about 18 months ahead of their American competitors, but that lead is being whittled away as a result of the amount of money that the American Government spend on research and development into coal technology, and by the commitment of the American Government, the makers of generating equipment and the American coal generators to develop clean coal technology. As with pressurised fluid bed technology, which was sold abroad at a much reduced price and incurred, as a consequence, the condemnation of the Select Committee on Energy some years ago, we are in danger of losing world leadership in the sector.

The new clause requires the Government, in conjunction with the Coal Authority, to establish a levy to fund coal research. We already have a levy to fund coal research. It is used to ensure that we are able to secure money from the European Community coal and steel fund. That means that a great deal of the work that is done in Cheltenham is funded from sources outwith the United Kingdom. We need to ensure that, in addition to that work generated from outside the UK, work is generated from inside the United Kingdom.

For those reasons, we put forward the new clause. We believe that this issue lies at the heart of the future of the British coal industry. If it is possible to develop and apply the new technologies, funding will become available for future developments and future investment.

It is not simply a matter of being in love with technology for its own sake; it is important because the new technologies will be far more environmentally friendly. They will enable Britain to meet the commitments that we entered into at Rio. The levy would enable the continuation of research and expertise and it would ensure that the United Kingdom continued to play a leading role. That leading role would not only enable us to secure markets for coal or coal technology, but ensure that the generators were in a position to sell British equipment when they offered their services to other countries.

In recent months, much has been made about the capacity of British Gas to offer a worldwide service—to develop the gas industry in other countries. As British Gas enters world markets, its suppliers will work abroad as well. It is our belief that, even if it is in private hands, the coal industry would provide opportunities for the development of coal equipment and coal use abroad. We believe that the research that is done in the two establishments to which I referred—research which, on occasion, has been done on a shoestring budget—should be sustained and supported. Nowhere in the Bill is any reference made to that. The new clause is an attempt to ensure that such work can be given its due place and its due recognition in the Bill.

We recognise that there are, among the prospective owners of the new coal industry, comparatively few people who will have their own research and development facilities. If they are to make use of research and development, it will be on the basis of buying in from abroad unless the money is raised at source. That is why we advocate a levy and why we have advanced our argument for research and development. The Coal Authority could redress the imbalance by ensuring that adequate long-term research is funded by the Government and private coal owners so that Britain's lead in the world is sustained.

The United States spends $163 million a year on coal research while Japan, which has virtually no coal resources of its own but imports most of its coal, invests some $177 million in coal technology and research. Britain's commitment of just $10 million has already resulted in our leading the world in the important area of clean coal technology. It would be nothing short of criminal if the House did not duly recognise that achievement and ensure that appropriate funds were available to sustain it once private ownership is established.

The new clause will go some way towards dealing with that, and we hope that the Minister will look favourably at it. Nothing in the Government's ambitions or intentions for the coal industry will accommodate research and development in the technologies required, which is why we have advanced the new clause and why I hope that hon. Members will be prepared to give it the fair wind that it deserves.

Mr. Redmond: One reason why we are so opposed to privatising the coal industry is what happened prior to nationalisation, when private mine owners made no effort towards research and development.

Bretby research centre springs to mind because the old area director in Doncaster, Trig Ellis, went there. Much of the research and development carried out there has brought about improvements in the industry and saved many lives. Bretby helped to cut down and, in some cases, eliminate dust, which plagued miners for years and caused pneumoconiosis.

It is important that research and development continue. I doubt whether private owners will invest in them, so some sort of levy must be imposed to enable them to continue. In the days of the Yorkshire miners summer school, Bretby researchers used to give excellent talks every Wednesday to miners at those schools.

I tabled a question to the Minister for Energy about imported coal, which has caused fatalities in France. The Minister is looking into why that happened. The amount of foreign fuel being imported is 18.5 million tonnes. It is important that the industry should know whether that fuel is safe for domestic and industrial consumption. Establishments such as the research and development stations will provide assurance in this respect.

The research stations have done such an excellent job that the country has earned a substantial amount from the export of technology resulting specifically from their

achievements. The export of technology is helping our balance of payments as well as ensuring safety in the coal mines. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Minister will accept this very modest new clause.

9.15 pm

Mr. Dickens: In fairness to Opposition Members who want to participate in the debate, I shall make a short contribution.

Our mining industry is perhaps one of the finest in the world, and we have consultants all over the world helping nations to develop their skills and their industries. This must continue, but that will happen only if there is research. Whether in respect of clean coal technology or in respect of the gasification of coal, it must be remembered that the Government do not have any money, that funds are provided by taxpayers or raised through a levy, which consumers then have to pay.

Strangely enough, in Europe and in the United States it is the oil companies that are putting money into the technology involved in the gasification of coal. British Gas, in conjunction with Lurgi, is investing a good deal and will continue to do so if it is satisfied about commercial viability. In other words, there will have to be a pay-back for all the research. This has happened with the pharmaceutical companies. Those undertakings pumped money into research, knowing what success with a drug would mean.

Mr. Clapham: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Americans are investing about $700 million in new coal technology? That certainly is not being done just by private companies; it is supported by the Government.

Mr. Dickens: The American Government are very much more wealthy than the British Government. It is up to them to make their own monetary decisions, just as we do. We have to set expenditure priorities.

I hope that all the current research projects will continue. It is desirable that, at the end of this short debate, the Minister should be able to tell us that none of them will be stopped. Let us hope for an undertaking that if private sector technologies look like becoming world winners the Government will consider providing some priming money. In the meantime, market forces must be allowed to dictate, as projects must be bankable. Banks must analyse projects and see the prospect of a pay-back.

I can envisage the gasification of coal becoming quite big, but only when gas resources have become depleted. It is at that stage that the process will become much more viable. In the meantime, the gas companies and the oil companies are investing money, and they will continue to do so. I want to see market-led research, which seems to work very well. Research and development that results in a return for individual companies and for the United Kingdom as a whole is the most healthy type.

Therefore, as I have said, it is to be hoped that the projects currently under way will be allowed to continue. I hope that if someone comes up with an innovation that looks like a winner for the United Kingdom some priming money will be found.

I have some sympathy with the case made by the Opposition, but research and development should be dictated by the market rather than funded by taxpayers and electricity consumers, who always seem to pick up the bill.

Mr. Jack Thompson: For once in my political life, I find myself in agreement with something said by the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) —his comments about investment and market forces. Over the years, the private sector has certainly made a limited contribution to research and development in the industry. At Grimethorpe and Point of Ayr work is being done on producing oil from coal, for instance.

At Westfield in Scotland, there have been experiments on the Lurgi system of producing gas from coal. I was interested to see what happens there. The system is well advanced; 2,500 tonnes of coal at a time are put through the equipment, producing an exact equivalent of natural gas. That gas is put straight into the grid for consumers' use.

I am not an economist, but I am interested in what happens in America. The Americans are sending their coal to put through this equipment for test purposes, because they believe that there is a market for it. We have to think ahead to the time when North sea gas runs out—it may not be too far off. We have to produce new sources of energy —gas from coal, for example—in preparation for that time. What are the alternatives? It would not be a wonderful idea to get gas from the middle east, I imagine. To avoid that, we must start producing our own gas from coal.

As an engineer in the industry, I have benefited from technological developments over the years. Indeed, I have seen phenomenal progress in the mining industry, much of it started at the grass roots by engineers. Many years ago, a colleague of mine developed a piece of equipment for controlling conveyor systems; it regulated them in such a way that, when one stopped, the next one stopped, too— and so on. The equipment was taken away to Bretby and developed from its crude original form into a sophisticated piece of equipment that is sold all over the world. A company in Derbyshire, Davies, manufactures it, and private sector companies have benefited from it.

A conveyor signalling system has also been developed at Bretby. It is the best of its kind in the world, and we always found it a first-class device. Fire protection equipment also began life in the industry. Nowadays, we all have smoke alarms in our homes; 25 years ago, I saw similar equipment specially designed for the mining industry being installed in mines. From those early radioactive devices, the domestic alarms were developed.

It would be criminal if we were to lose all this experience and knowledge. The new clause suggests that the Coal Authority impose a levy on licensed operators. I suspect that they will benefit enormously from that arrangement. Even a small levy, combined with Government support, could help to maintain research and development and help the operators to produce coal in the amounts that they want, while keeping the mines safe.

Mr. Hardy: The House may recall that three or four years ago, I sought to raise the issue of the closure of the Coal Board science establishment at Wath upon Dearne in my constituency. It was unfortunately closed to concentrate research at Bretby—because Bretby was in a marginal Conservative seat. It decided that it would be better to move that resource southwards, although it is interesting that the hon. Lady who represents that area has not taken any interest in the debate.

It is essential that we maintain mines research. Conservative Members tend to think that the coal industry is finished and that coal is the energy of the past, but

[Mr. Hardy]

countries with more sense than us are investing more in mining and are sinking more new pits in preparation for the day when reserves will be needed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said that Japan has remarkably little coal of its own. It depends heavily on imports, yet the Government and industry there decided together that some of the biggest earnings would come from environmental and energy-related development. That is one reason why my hon. Friend was able to quote Japan's enormous investment in energy and environment research, even though it is not a producer of that energy.

In a little while, the Government will discover industry. It would not surprise me if, in the next two or three weeks, the Prime Minister were to make a speech recognising that industry is important. The Minister and his ministerial colleagues will jump on the Prime Minister's bandwagon and say that Britain has to start to seize its trading opportunities, enter world markets, increase its sales of manufactured goods and expand its technological base; yet we have here an enormously important industrial opportunity which we are likely to imperil.

We need to make earnings to compensate for the appalling balance of payments, for which the Government must bear heavy and historic responsibility. The balance of payments deficit will not be cleared unless we see the re-emergence of industry in Britain. There must be a reasonable home base to allow the coal technology industry to prosper. We have a world lead. Britain does not still lead the world in many sectors, yet the Government are about to throw away our lead in one of them. There is not much point in speaking to Ministers at great length. We tried it in Committee, without in any way filibustering. My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) may laugh, but he is well aware that that was the case.

If the Minister and his colleagues have any sense, they will recognise that Britain has a considerable opportunity and that there is enormous potential for record breaking. To throw that away would be an example of crass irresponsibility.

The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) talked for most of his speech about the need to rely on market forces. Towards the end, however, he began to talk about the market-led economy and the possibility of a bit of seed money being thrown in by the Government, which seemed to contradict his earlier remarks. Even he perceived the need to maintain research and a role for the Government. Why are the Government less than interested in co-operating with business—be it in the public or private sector—and in stimulating investment to secure jobs for our people and earnings for our country? Why have they failed more than the Government in any other industrial nation to pursue the course that even the hon. Gentleman began, in the second part of his speech, to recognise was valuable?

The debate represents the last gasp of opportunity, unless the House of Lords has some wise words and a little weight to put into the debate, for Britain to cling to a sector in which she has displayed some international leadership, which is likely to bring a great deal of international profit. One hopes that the Minister and his colleagues will not throw the opportunity away.

9.30 pm

Mr. Tipping: I do not think that anyone can deny that there have recently been some bleak years for our coal industry. I have heard Conservative Members say that there is no future for coal. But if we look at what is happening internationally, we see that new coal-fired power stations are being built in China, India and Pakistan. They are, to some extent, using British consultancies, British professionalism and British equipment. There will be life after gas here in Europe. Gas will run out and when the much-vaunted and much-delayed nuclear review comes, we shall get to the bottom of the financing of nuclear electricity. In perhaps 10, 20 or 30 years, Britain and Europe will be looking at a future for coal.

Is it not sad that the Bill says absolutely nothing about research and development? In contrast, the Coal Research Establishment near Cheltenham is a world beater, a centre of international repute. Some of the consultants mentioned by the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) go from the Coal Research Establishment and offer consultancies abroad. That brings money, jobs and investment back into this country.

Even in these bleak years, we must offer a beacon of hope for the future. Unless we are careful, we shall destroy the Coal Research Establishment at Cheltenham. It is important that its staff should be kept together, and we can do that by looking for sources for funding. Funding needs to be pump priming, but it cannot be short term—research takes years. A good example of that is liquefication—the topping cycle has taken many years to get right.

We must show in the Bill that there is a future for investment and for a cleaner environment. We must give the people who work at the Coal Research Establishment and at the centre at Bretby that opportunity for the future. We must keep the flame burning and, even in these bleak times, the new clause provides an opportunity to do so.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I want to speak in support of new clause 4. It is regrettable, particularly for those of us who sat through the Committee stage of the Bill, to find that, after all our deliberations, it contains no mention of research and development. That is why it is important that the new clause should be accepted.

The new clause would set down for the first time in the Bill that there would be an organisation with a duty in statute to monitor and encourage research and development. That is important because we cannot leave such matters solely to the private sector. The new clause states that there will be a levy on the private sector—the new owner of the coal industry—to ensure that some of the profits are ploughed back into research and development to create, for example, clean coal, more efficient ways of producing coal and to increase the ways in which the British economy can be expanded by improvements in the quality of materials produced from the coal market. We have not heard anything from the Minister about what is to happen now that such factors have not been included in the Bill and the coal industry is to be privatised.

There must be an overview of the industry and its performance in terms of research and development. If the Minister rejects the new clause, the key question for him to answer will be how—in the absence of the Coal Authority's having responsibility for such matters, having the power to set a levy and having Government support to implement such a levy—the private sector will be able to,

or want to, invest in developments such as clean-coal technology, improved machinery and improved productivity. There has to be an external body, particularly when the coal industry faces short-term contracts of three to four years at the most.

I asked which private sector industry coming into the new invigorated market, if the Bill receives a Third Reading and is approved by the other place, will undertake investment in research and development when we have three-year contracts and short-term operations for the coal industry.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said, the idea of a levy and having some Government overview of research and development is not revolutionary. The Australian Government provide a 150 per cent. tax rebate for research and development matters. As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), some £700 million from the American federal resources is pumped into the private sector industry annually to provide research and development. Even the South African coal industry —not one which I would recommend whole-heartedly to the House—has in principle a levy on production and future investment into the industry.

In comparison, if our industry is privatised and no safeguards are built into the Bill, research and development will be left to the private sector. If that happens, it will cut corners; it will not do it because it will think about the short term.

I shall complete my remarks with two important examples from my constituency. The Point of Ayr colliery is currently using the continuous miner system—a system of mining developed in the United States, through the investment of some of the £700 million that my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone mentioned earlier. That money was invested in the industry, making vast productivity gains in how the pit in my constituency develops and produces coal. It is much more efficient; productivity has soared in the past three to four years.

Each of the new machines cost £3 million to install. They cost millions of pounds of American money to develop. Why will we not be in that market after privatisation? Where will the private sector be in that market after privatisation?

My hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) mentioned the Point of Ayr liquefaction plant. I went to the opening of that plant, which turns coal into oil, when I was prospective candidate for my constituency before the 1987 election. Since then, until it was sold to the private sector some six months ago, that facility had not made a penny profit; it probably still does not now and will not for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Hardy: Probably not in this century, but the next one.

Mr. Hanson: As my hon. Friend says, it probably will not happen this century.

The investment and development of the process took place under the auspices of British Coal. If the new clause is not accepted, how would the equivalent of the Point of Ayr liquefaction plant in my constituency fare in the private sector jungle that will exist after privatisation? Very few private sector operators will invest seven to eight years of massive resources into developing a process that may or may not produce a profit.

The clause should be accepted because it guarantees the future of research and development and makes sure that next century we will have an efficient coal industry that produces goods that people want to sell and develops processes of which Britain can be proud, rather than importing processes from those countries that have had the foresight to put in the money.

Mr. Etherington: In 1979, I visited Bretby and the Stoke Orchard research centre near Cheltenham. At that time, it was an exciting prospect for the coal industry, which appeared to have a future. I also recall that people in my union and in the industry in general rightly pointed out that the amount of cash being put into research in the coal industry paled into insignificance against that being spent on the nuclear industry. Yet at that time, we were told that the coal industry had a viable future.

It has since been proved that those who were sceptical about the coal industry were correct, and unless the Government accept the clause, it will prove something that was pointed out to me many years ago. I was told, "When you look at investment in an industry, look first at the proportion that goes into research and development." That —rather than the amount spent on redundancy payments, giving industries away, producing glossy brochures or paying a city to get rid of industries by putting them into the private sector—gives some idea of the industry's potential future.

I take issue with the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), who is keen to leave everything to the private sector. This country can provide the finest proof ever seen anywhere in the world that that does not work. If the hon. Gentleman casts his mind back to the 1950s, he will recall that, in those days, we had a fine motor cycle manufacturing industry—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Benn killed it.

Mr. Etherington: If the hon. Lady wishes to intervene, I shall be happy to give way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: We would still have that motorcycle industry, had not the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) backed one of the companies against the other. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me remind hon. Members that we are not discussing the motor cycle industry.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: He was.

Mr. Etherington: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is unfortunate that, following your ruling, I am unable to reply to the hon. Lady's intervention; there is an answer, as I am sure you are well aware.

The fact is that the motor cycle manufacturing industry was left to private enterprise. While our Government and private enterprise were spending nothing whatever on research and development in real terms, the Japanese were, and we have all seen the result: Japan has become the predominant motor manufacturer in the world.

If the Government do not accept new clause 4, they will prove what many of us have believed for a long time—that the privatisation of the coal industry is an interim measure

[Mr. Etherington]

in advance of its total destruction. The money spent on nuclear energy and nuclear development comes not from the private sector, but from the Government.

We are always being told how wonderful Japan, Germany and the United States are, and what marvellous industries they have; what the Government do not tell us is that those countries' Governments believe in supporting their industries. This Government do not believe in supporting the coal industry. We are always being told about the amount being invested, but examination of the amount spent on research and development shows it to be minuscule.

The same can be said of research and development in renewable energy. The way in which the money is being invested suggests that we shall have a burgeoning nuclear industry in the future. That is what it is all about—nothing else. Many people in this country believed that, after Chernobyl, there would be a moratorium of many years on, and perhaps an eventual rundown of, the nuclear industry. That is not the Government's intention, as is shown by the amount being spent on research and development.

As I have said, the industry is now at an interim stage. The rip-off merchants will move in, and get the remainder of the coal out with the minimum investment. I feel that research and development is too important to be left to the private sector. That has been proved by other nations: all nations that are successful in any given sector ensure that a fair amount of public expenditure goes into research and development, for the benefit of those nations.

The Government do not believe in that; they believe in leaving everything to market forces. The new clause clearly states:

"It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the Authority fulfils its duty".

The Secretary of State does not want that duty, as the result of the vote will demonstrate.

I am pleased to see the Minister smiling. He often makes me smile, and I do not mind his reciprocating; that is fine. However, anyone who wishes to establish the position of any given sector should find out what is being invested in research and development.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: He has said that five times.

Mr. Etherington: If the hon. Lady wishes to intervene again, I shall be happy to give way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was commenting on the fact that the hon. Gentleman has already said that five times—as he will see if he reads *Hansard* tomorrow.

Mr. Etherington: It does not matter how many times I say something: I shall certainly make more sense than the hon. Lady. However, I am pleased that she is at least taking notice, because that is not one of her prevalent characteristics.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am interested in the nuclear industry, not the coal industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We should have less chatter across the Chamber. Let us get on with the debate.

Mr. Etherington: The coal industry will be doomed unless new clause 4 is accepted—not only its words but its spirit—which is why I suspect that the Government will not accept it.

9.45 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke: I shall be brief, as there is clearly some repetition.

We all agree that Britain is renowned for its innovations and its research and development—so much so, that many international firms have come here, not to pick our brains and leave but to establish their own research and development. I am thinking especially of IBM and other companies involved in research and development in the coal industry.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) said, the budget for research and development in the coal industry is only a fraction of what the nuclear industry receives, yet, with only that fraction, it has produced many innovations which have been picked up worldwide. I will list a few.

Fluoridised bed combustion boilers are an efficient way of burning even low calorific, wet fuel such as slurry, but the development is going abroad although it can be used on a small scale by, for example, a farmer heating grain or other products.

We led the field in the flame-proofing of underground electrical equipment. We have developed safety equipment such as self-rescuers for men to carry underground, and hydraulic splints. We also worked on underground methane monitoring, and my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) mentioned smoke alarms. Water barriers for explosions were perfected at Bretby, and I saw them tested there many years ago.

We have improved lighting underground and ventilation through the design of portable and surface fans. Companies such as Thermotank sell their products abroad. Of course, we now have machines with built-in sensors which cut coal but not the roof or the floor.

We should be proud of our manufacturing industry and the position we hold, but we are now fighting a rearguard action. The export potential of our innovations is obvious. Anderson Strathclyde was bought by a South African company, which recognised its potential and is now manufacturing for international markets rather than the home market.

Only last week, I was invited to the Chinese embassy for a reception. I was asked about my visit to investigate the Chinese coal industry 10 years ago. I was told that China is now the largest producer of coal in the world, and the Chinese believe that their coal industry can continue to expand—they realise that coal has potential. China is only one nation, but much of the equipment I saw there was British, and I was proud to see it in use. We ask that the Government put a levy on this newly evolved private enterprise, so that establishments and many schemes will survive.

One thing that worries us is that where there is no coal industry, there is nowhere to perfect machinery, plant or methods. What is more, there is no showpiece where potential buyers can see machinery working; adaptation cannot easily be undertaken from afar. Companies are now inclined to remove their manufacturing base from Britain,

to go where the customer is. In other words, they are moving to where there is expansion and where people are investing in coal mining.

I am talking sense based on the facts— I believe that Britain knows what is good for it. I am talking sense to the Government, who seem to be in some way biased. As the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said, they are all for the nuclear industry. It is peculiar that the City of London is not for the nuclear industry. It would not buy it, or touch it with a bargepole. The Government could not even sell it or give it away, because it is a liability. I suggest that the hon. Lady talks to her capitalist friends, who will tell her the same. What can be done with an old nuclear station?

If we had invested in research and development in the coal industry, we would have been light years ahead of any other country. Will the Government at this stage take on board and support the amendment? I shall go as far as my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington), and say that if we do not invest in research and development, the country is dead. That applies to all industry. If we do not invest in research and development, which we are good at, our workers will be head-hunted and taken abroad, and manufacturing will occur abroad. We shall be just a screwdriver society, which Conservative Members seem to think is marvellous.

Mr. Clapham: I shall be brief and to the point.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) said, it is important that the Minister say that he is prepared to take on the provision outlined in new clause 4, because no clause provides for an authority for research and development. My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) has already referred to the great steps that the Coal Research Establishment has made in developing the combined cycle and the topping cycle techniques, which are now used worldwide. We have heard reference to their use in China and Pakistan, but countries closer to Britain with great gas resources are also using that new technology.

The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) referred to market forces bringing forth other resources to replace coal.

Mr. Dickens: It was not my intention to give that impression. I was outlining alternative uses for coal, such as gasification: I was advocating not the replacement of coal, but its further and different use.

Mr. Clapham: I take on board the hon. Gentleman's comments, but his reference to market forces gives the impression that he is talking in terms of the replacement of coal through the interaction of those market forces. May I refer him to the situation in Holland, where, for example, in Buggenum, a $600 million clean-coal technology plant was opened? It is a 250 MW plant, and the Dutch are looking to the future and talking of building another six. That country has 70 years of gas reserves, yet it is looking to new, clean-coal technology, because it believes that gas prices are likely to increase.

New clause 4 refers not only to the Coal Research Establishment, but to new technology in the coal mining industry. I hope that the Minister will be prepared to tell us that he will ensure that that technology will be available to the industry. Unless we can run an establishment that provides for a universal application of new technology throughout the industry, we are likely to find high-technology collieries competing against low-technology collieries, forcing down wages, and terms and conditions, to 19th-century levels.

It is extremely important that we have an establishment such as the Technical Services and Research Executive, which took over from the Mines Research and Development Establishment, so that new technology will be available to the new owners. If we do not take that route, we are likely to find that we degenerate towards 19th-century working practices. I hope that the Minister will be prepared to take on the provisions of new clause 4.

Mr. McLoughlin: Some of the points covered relate to the useful debate that we had on amendment No. 23 in Committee. The Government recognise the importance of ensuring that full advantage is taken of advances in coal research and mining technology. However, it must be primarily for the industry to decide what research it will need to develop—where appropriate, in partnership with the Government, through bodies such as the Advisory Committee on Coal Research.

The Government have already established a firm foundation for coal research in the United Kingdom, first by increasing Department funding from less than £3 million to £7 million a year until 1995-96. Precise funding needs after that will be agreed following the planned review of the programme involving the industry in 1995. We are also establishing the new Advisory Committee on Coal Research, to replace the coal task force and advise on United Kingdom coal research needs across the board. United Kingdom industry and universities are playing a leading part in the work of the new committee.

The Government are also establishing collaborative research links between United Kingdom industry and universities, and with other EC countries and the United States. There is therefore no need for the authority to take on a co-ordinating role that we believe is already being adequately fulfilled. The authority is intended to be a non-interventionist body, and should not support the R and D work that is more appropriately funded by the industry itself. I have every confidence that the future coal companies will be able to find the most appropriate mechanisms for co-ordinating their activities where there is benefit to be derived from doing so.

The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) let the cat out of the bag: he revealed his hatred for the private sector when he referred to it as a jungle. Without the research that has come from that "jungle", there would not have been the levels of investment or the developments that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) mentioned.

The Department's coal research and development programme is increasing, and contributes to about 115 projects, with a total value of more than £170 million. Since the coal review White Paper, we have initiated more than 60 coal research projects covering coal utilisation and mining issues. Many more are at the planning stage, and involve the Coal Research Establishment as well as the United Kingdom industry, universities and overseas agencies. In 1994, we intend to publish a detailed strategy paper setting out our future plans for coal research and describing the work under way in the present programme.

Several hon. Members spoke about the CRE. Its future is a matter for British Coal, and I understand that no decision has yet been taken. However, the Government believe that the best way of widening the opportunities

[Mr. McLoughlin]

available to the CRE in world markets is for it to become more of an independent organisation. The increased support that the Government offer over the next two years will ensure that senior management have sufficient time to develop CRE's business further and to attract funds from elsewhere.

My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) rightly told us that industry should decide on its own research and fund it, but funding should also be available through national bodies. The Department of Trade and Industry helps in several ways, some of which I have already outlined.

British Coal is managing the arrangements for the future of the ancillary parts of its current business, and is considering the options for the Technical Services and Research Executive. One aspect of TSRE's activities—the health and safety expertise—was highlighted by the Health and Safety Commission. The commission said that it would be desirable for that expertise to continue to be available after privatisation.

The corporation is fully aware of the commission's advice to the Government, and shares the Government's determination that safety should be the first priority. It has assured us that its proposals will be fully consistent with the commission's advice.

The House will want to know that we have agreed with the corporation that additional public funding of more than £2 million will be available between 1995 and 1998 to ensure that that valuable programme of research continues, and that the necessary expertise is available to the new owners of the industry. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy answered a parliamentary question on the subject yesterday, and his reply is recorded at column *43* of *Hansard*.

We have demonstrated that the Government take the issue seriously, so I ask my hon. Friends to reject the new clause.

Mr. O'Neill: The Opposition will press the new clause to a vote, because the Minister's answers were wholly unsatisfactory. The engine that has driven coal technology research and the other research programmes in Britain has been British Coal and its predecessor, the National Coal Board. The Opposition believe that, in the absence of such a state-owned agency, we need something else. The Coal Authority operating a levy would be the best means of doing that, so I urge my hon. Friends to vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 296.

Division No. 176] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheff'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis

Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hexham NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*

Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No.14 (Exempted Business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Coal Industry Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—[*Mr. Wood.*]

Question agreed to.

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

New Clause 5

British Coal Enterprise

'.—(1) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that British Coal Enterprise is adequately funded in order that it may continue to assist the regeneration of coalfield areas.

(2) The functions of British Coal Enterprise shall include:

(a) providing counselling and job search facilities for current and former coal industry employees;

(b) assisting current and former coal industry employees to obtain training which is likely to improve their chances of finding alternative employment;

(c) providing assistance and advice for persons who wish to provide additional employment in areas affected by the closure of coal mines, including former coal industry employees who wish to become self-employed; and

(d) providing business premises on concessionary leases to assist employment growth in areas affected by the closure of coal mines.

(3) The Secretary of State may make payments by way of grants to British Coal Enterprise to fulfil his duty under subsection (1) of this section.'.—*[Mr. O'Neill.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. O'Neill: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

British Coal Enterprise has enjoyed something of a love-hate relationship with some Opposition Members. We have on occasions viewed with some cynicism the somewhat extravagant claims that British Coal Enterprise has made for its success in placing people and creating jobs. Certainly, on occasions we have had to look carefully at the statistics and have found them, to say the least, unconvincing. If some of the employment was translated into full-time equivalents, the figures would not be anything like so high as those that British Coal Enterprise suggested.

Although I make all those qualifications, as one who represents a mining area I know that a number of businesses have benefited from, if not soft loans, loans that would otherwise have been difficult to obtain. The level of interest charged is not necessarily low, but the security required is not substantial.

On occasion, the training facilities provided by British Coal Enterprise have been of great use to the communities that have been so ravaged by unemployment. It has become evident during today's debate, and in past debates on the coal industry, that areas that have enjoyed reasonable standards of prosperity in the last 20 or 30 years have often been those where the future of the coal industry seemed assured. It is in those areas that the rapid contraction, and indeed collapse, of the coal industry has meant that those communities and economies have been well nigh destroyed.

10.15 pm

Poverty is once again returning to coalfield areas. In South Yorkshire, the average income is only 75 per cent. of the European average. The only parts of the United Kingdom that are below that rate are Merseyside, Northern Ireland and the highlands and islands—all areas which are accorded special status and recognition by the European Union. Mid Glamorgan is the most impoverished county in Britain, with an average income lower than that in Taiwan. Rural Nottinghamshire is the most depressed rural area in Britain, with 39 per cent. of the population in poverty. I make that point because while the standards of living in some of these areas have never been particularly high, they are now at levels of catastrophic disadvantage.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Merseyside lost its last pit when Parkside closed 16 or 17 months ago. A recent Coalfield Communities Campaign survey of those Parkside miners who had managed to get jobs found that they had suffered an average drop of £72 per week in their earnings. Is that not the kind of poverty that my hon. Friend is talking about?

Mr. O'Neill: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I know that the level of income now being enjoyed by many former British Coal employees bears no comparison with that which they achieved previously, especially when they were working underground as face workers and the like. It is very difficult to obtain alternative employment, and where it is available it tends to be poorly paid. Often, employment is of a kind that requires very little training because it tends to be the stacking of supermarket shelves and the like.

If we are to have any chance of restoring those local economies, we need to sustain present resources over this period of uncertainty in the coal industry. I attended a meeting in my constituency last week in the former mining village of Cowie where the local enterprise group blithely told me that British Coal Enterprise had ceased and that no more money was available. That is not so—British Coal

Enterprise will carry on for some time—but we have had no satisfactory undertakings from the Minister on how long it will continue, the level of funding that it should have, and the functions that it will be able to perform as the coal industry falls further down the ranks of major employers in this country.

What we are asking for in the new clause is quite clear. We want it to be the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that British Coal Enterprise is adequately funded to carry on its existing duties and responsibilities, which should cover aspects such as counselling and job search for current and former coal industry employees. British Coal Enterprise should assist those employees to obtain training, where appropriate, and to enhance their chances of finding alternative employment. It should also provide assistance and advice to people who wish to provide additional employment in the areas affected by the closure of mines, including former coal industry employees who wish to become self-employed.

We recognise that in many instances British Coal Enterprise has played a critical role in affording people second or third chances when others have said that they were not the best bets for financial help. We know that on occasions British Coal Enterprise had imaginative plans for the development of industrial sites where other organisations were reluctant to put money. We believe that British Coal Enterprise has a contribution to make throughout the range of employment creation and employment stimulation activities, and that it should be enshrined in the legislation that creates a new coal industry in this country. We are not confident of the long-term future of that industry and we feel that it is essential that the Government be committed to providing whatever financial support is necessary in the event of further pit closures occurring after privatisation.

As I said at the outset, we are not in the least critical of British Coal Enterprise. Several of us have built up, of necessity, good relationships with the local officials and we like to think that we can get whatever is available. Although invariably it is not enough, we are thankful in many respects for the small mercies that we can get.

We are adamant that the climate of economic opportunity for people who are made redundant and who lose their jobs in the coal industry, and for the communities in which they live, will be bleaker if British Coal Enterprise does not exist. It is not the ideal answer, and it is not the only answer, but it is one which we have and one that we do not wish to lose.

I am sure that there are Conservative Members whose constituencies have benefited, albeit in small measure, from the activities of British Coal Enterprise. We urge them to come with us into the Lobby and support new clause 5.

Mr. John Evans: As a Member of Parliament who represents an ex-coal mining area, I strongly support the new clause, which calls for a strengthened British Coal Enterprise, properly funded to assist the regeneration of the ex-coalfield areas. I echo the closing remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) and expect—nay, demand—that the Government will also support the principles outlined in new clause 5.

The Government's policy has closed 33 pits since October 1992. There was no rationale for the closure of those collieries—there was no economic rationale and no energy case was made out. The closure of those collieries, as events will prove, was not in Britain's national interest. However, we have made those arguments and we are not here to rehearse them tonight. I do not think that anyone will disagree with my belief that the closure of those coal mines was devastating to the miners' interests.

Parkside colliery, in my constituency, closed in October 1992. The average age of miners in that colliery was 37 and the average pay at Parkside colliery was £249 a week. More than 800 miners were employed in the colliery and probably about 500 related jobs disappeared when the colliery stopped production. The loss of earnings of those miners and the impact on them and their families—most were young men with young families—has been devastating.

The Coalfield Communities Campaign has just conducted a survey into what has happened to those miners in the 17 or 18 months since Parkside colliery closed. One might have assumed that the Government would be interested in what happened to those men and would have conducted such a survey. However, in the absence of interest from the Government, the CCC has conducted it. The saddest and most important feature of its report is that some 45 per cent. of the miners who were sacked at Parkside colliery are still unemployed and their chance of finding work in the St. Helens area has virtually disappeared.

In the past few months, more than 700 people have lost their jobs in the continuing rundown of Pilkington, the largest private employer in St. Helens. A fortnight ago, Beechams announced that 580 jobs would be lost with the closure of its factory, which had stood in the centre of St. Helens for 100 years. So the unemployed miners have little chance of finding a job in the future.

Even more devastating is the study of what has happened to the 44 per cent. of miners who have found jobs. Only one has found a job in the mining industry. He is now a contract worker in a pit in another area. When one examines the earnings of those who have found employment since they left Parkside colliery, one realises precisely what has happened to those men. The vast majority now earn between £100 and £200 a week, with an average drop in earnings of £72 a week. They were not very highly paid in the past, but they are now very low paid. There is now little demand in this country for men with mining skills. No doubt the electricians, fitters and colliery craftsmen have a better chance of getting a job because they have excellent skills, but unless miners find work in another colliery—a remote chance indeed—they have little chance of finding other than low-paid work, which some have managed to pick up.

That is a criminal waste of the skills and talent of the men who worked at Parkside colliery. It shows that impoverishment and long-term unemployment are worsening the lot of the people of St. Helens. They feel threatened by what is happening in their society. Last Saturday, well over 500 people marched through the centre of St. Helens to protest about the Beechams closure. They were joined by Pilkington workers and ex-miners from Parkside colliery.

We desperately need a properly funded programme of investment in the skills and the people of St. Helens and the north-west. We need great emphasis on retraining the men who lost their jobs at Parkside, which is why we need a British Coal Enterprise as outlined in the new clause. The

[Mr. John Evans]

people of areas such as St. Helens are entitled to something of that nature. They are proud people and they are not begging, but they want employment.

If Tory Members vote down the new clause, it will show once again their utter cynicism and contempt for the men who worked for so long to produce the coal which Britain needed in the past and which it will need again in the future.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I hope that when the Minister replies, he will not use the dreaded words "job opportunities", which we have heard trotted out by British Coal Enterprise on so many occasions. Ministers glibly say, "We have created 1,000 job opportunities in the past four years." I shall tell the Minister what job opportunities mean. If he goes along to a British Coal Enterprise exhibition and looks down the lists of jobs hung up on boards everywhere, he will see those wonderful job opportunities for doubling glazing salesmen working on a commission-only basis in a town 40 miles away.

A redundant miner is expected to sell his house, if he can, in Worksop or Mansfield. Then he ups sticks and goes for job opportunities elsewhere. If ever there was a misnomer it is "job opportunities". British Coal Enterprise ought to be ashamed of itself for using the words continually.

In my constituency, thousands of miners have been thrown on the dole. I have met many of them. They do not have an entrepreneurial background such as might be found in London and some other areas. Some become taxi drivers, and some work in Skegness holiday camps or bingo stalls during the summer. Generally speaking, the training that they need is not provided within the culture that they know. They have worked collectively throughout their lives. They are highly skilled, but are used to being told what to do—starting work at six o'clock in the morning and finished at two in the afternoon, day after day. The assistance that they now need is not available. They may receive advice about loans to set up in business and may borrow at 1 per cent. above the going rate. The statistics and the public relations are very good.

10.30 pm

I have met quite a few people who have tried that, including one I encountered the other week, who had lost £7,000 in starting up as a milkman. A big firm provided him with a round. But people no longer have milk delivered; they buy it in the supermarket. Before he knows where is, a person paying for such a franchise realises that he cannot make the project pay and that his redundancy money has gone down the drain.

People put redundancy money into all sorts of insurance schemes. Door-to-door salesmen invade areas, and the advice that is given is either being ignored or failing to work.

There has been mention of rural areas of Nottinghamshire. In this connection, I think of Worksop, which is in my constituency. In 1970, when the Labour Government were in power, we had what were called grey areas. It was one of the first grey areas in the country. There were 30 per cent. grants for buildings and 40 per cent. grants for new machinery. What is now available with assisted area status? There is merely some tax relief—and the bureaucracy is such that people who might be encouraged to take over old buildings are actually discouraged.

I do not want to be too parochial, but I can tell the Minister that Warsop vale, which is in my constituency, looks like Bosnia or Beirut. Many of the houses look as if they have been machine-gunned or bombed. Following the pit closure, half the houses look like the back-to-back terrace dwellings depicted in D. H. Lawrence's "Lady Chatterley's Lover".

Houses that have been improved many times are rented out by private enterprise, often to people who cannot get accommodation anywhere else. Occupants do a moonlight flit, leaving rent unpaid. The following day, kids come along and throw bricks through the windows. The day after that, organised gangs move in and strip everything worth taking—sinks, radiators, gas fire, and so on. Out of 200 houses in Warsop vale, 25 are now in such a condition. Nobody can afford to renew them.

As soon as a house becomes empty, the Mansfield council has to erect steel grids over windows and doors. Each of these grids costs £55 a week to rent. The other Saturday night, someone came along with an oxy-acetylene device, burned right through the steel on a door and stole the contents of the house.

That is what is happening in mining areas. What occurred in West Virginia when the mines closed is beginning to happen in rural mining areas of this country. What we hear about assisted areas and about British Coal Enterprise is nothing but talk. What is the point in talking about helping someone to set up in business as a window cleaner by providing him with a ladder or a wheel barrow or to open a shop with no future?

More than that is needed. The Department of Trade and Industry must, for example, fund the Robin Hood railway line, phase three, which runs from Mansfield to Worksop. That has been promised by the Department of Transport many times. The cost would be £4 million, and the money is available for the regeneration of coalfield areas. That is the sort of investment that is needed. Mansfield, with a population of 70,000, has no railway station. In the end, the local council had to build it and then extend it to Worksop.

These are rural areas, well away from the cities. The mines have been the framework for the whole culture and life style of the people—the colliery institute, the social welfare organisation, the sports field, the brass band. When the industry collapses, the area dies because it is off the beaten track and no one wants to know about it. Some of these places hardly feature on the map.

As far as the Government are concerned, these places can be left to fester and rot. Kids grow up with no hope of anything better than a part-time job if a supermarket opens. It is just not good enough. British Coal Enterprise, for all its boasting of the past three years, has achieved virtually nothing. When it was set up, we likened it, to paraphrase the words of a famous politician of the past, to the silver plate on a coffin. BCE has created the odd job here and there, but neither it, nor assisted area status, has done anything for the coalfield areas.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): British Coal Enterprise operates in my constituency, and I endorse in part what the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said about the limitations on what it can do. It can do but

little, but we cannot afford to turn it away. We need it, we need assisted area status, and we need everything else we can get.

I wonder whether the Government really appreciate the scale of the problem. When Ellington was closed, more than 1,000 miners and their families were plunged into insecurity, having expected to have jobs for a reasonable number of years. My experience of this and other pit closures over the years has been that the redundancy payments cushion people temporarily, so that the impact of losing work appears more slowly than it does in some other industries. When the impact comes, though, it is desperate.

Neither BCE nor any other agency has found a way of producing the number of jobs necessary for family bread winners, men or women, to sustain their families as they could when the coal industry employed them. British Coal Enterprise has operated in my area following the closures of Shilbottle and Whittle and closures in the Ashington and Blyth areas. The work that it does, which is not much compared with the work done by other local agencies and the Rural Development Commission, is only a small part of what is required. Nothing, short of the development of major new industries, can provide anything like the numbers of new jobs that are needed.

All that is not an argument against BCE investing in small companies and enterprises. Indeed, I have found that it is involved in care homes and in tourist and leisure-based projects. I must confess, however, that I cannot see BCE even beginning to solve the scale of the problems that we face. In other parts of the north-east such as Easington, Westow and Wearmouth, where male unemployment runs at between 25 and 30 per cent., even the attraction of major new industries—such as Nissan to Sunderland—has not solved the fundamental problems.

We are running as fast as we can just to stand still. A better image might be that of trying to go back the wrong way along one of those moving walkways at Heathrow. I have seen people trying to do that to retrieve forgotten briefcases. That is what trying to cope with the effects of major colliery closures feels like.

I agree with other hon. Members who have spoken of giving as much support as we can to British Coal Enterprise. I support the new clause and should like to see it incorporated in the Bill. The Minister must realise, however, that BCE represents only a tiny part of what needs to be done, both to ensure that some pits reopen and that new industries can be brought to these areas. It is my view—and, I hope, the Minister's—that Ellington must reopen.

However, a succesful reopening at Ellington will not put 1,000 or 1,100 men back to work, because it will not open on that scale. A failure to reopen Ellington will threaten not just the jobs that have already gone, but those in the linked industry of the aluminium smelter in the port of Blyth as well. There is a tremendous amount at stake —far more than British Coal Enterprise can solve or offset. I support whatever efforts can be made to use the British Coal Enterprise as a means of encouraging at least some new jobs in our areas.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: I hope that the Minister will recall that on Second Reading on 18 January I talked about the work of British Coal Enterprise. I said then, and it is still true today, that the Bill is silent on the future of BCE. The new clause will, we hope, put that to rights.

It is a great pity, because the work of BCE is not finished by a long chalk. It is arguable that its help for the coalfield districts is needed even more now than in the past, with the mass pit closure programme on which the Government have embarked. In the past, there has been some wariness of BCE—we heard about that in a couple of the contributions to the debate. Those hon. Members' experience of BCE has been negative; mine has not always been as negative. I have questioned the figures that have been put out on job creation, but I believe that they have had more to do with the Government's ego than anything else. The sad fact is that there have been mass pit closures and there is urgent need for regeneration—BCE has a role to play in that.

BCE has an area base in my constituency located on the site of the ex-Carcroft workshops. I know from personal contact and involvement that Bob Iceton and his team have played, and continue to play, an invaluable role in assisting to place redundant miners in employment and provide help for others on training courses. Contrary to some of the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), training courses have been useful to many people.

BCE has helped with the provision of work space for new small businesses and of small loans at favourable interest rates. It insists on a strict business plan before it allows its funding—public funding—to be used. It is hoped that that will prevent new small businesses from collapsing in a short time. Those wanting to set up new businesses must have a strict business plan to obtain the loans. I know that some people do not find that policy helpful at the time, but it is the right policy in the long term. I hope that such work can continue long after privatisation.

BCE plays a part in a much wider field by being involved with the local training and enterprise council, the local authority in my region and the Rural Development Commission and others in attracting new development and regeneration into my region. It is imperative that its activities are not wound up or reduced. Privatisation should not provide an excuse to discontinue an extra source of funding for the coalfield districts. The Minister should give a firm and long-term commitment to BCE, not pull the helpful rug from under the feet of devastated coalfield regions. The Government could and should support new clause 5.

Mr. Rowlands: Like those of other hon. Members who have spoken, the communities in my constituency depend on at least one of the lifelines for coal communities. They are suffering and trying to pick up the pieces after pit closures. In the case of the Merthyr and Taff valleys, in the past five years, all four remaining pits have been closed.

I thought that I would be the Member of Parliament who represented the last four working pits in south Wales. I had Merthyr Vale, one of the best steam coal pits in south Wales, and deep navigation Treharris, Trelewis and Taff Merthyr were breaking production records. It became a sick joke. Miners knew that, if they broke production records, the pit would be threatened with closure soon afterwards.

10.45 pm

Four pits have closed in five years, and, contrary to the myths perpetrated by two successive Secretaries of State for Wales, Messrs Walker and Hunt, the valleys initiative did not respond to the challenge of those pit closures. That

is clearly demonstrated by the statistics and figures emerging from the 1991 census and the census of employment.

In a proud industrial borough with the great heritage that the name Merthyr Tydfil represents, there are only 8,000 men in full-time work—only 8,000 men in a community of the size and character of Merthyr Tydfil. In 1981, 13,000 men were in employment, and in the 1950s and 1960s there were 21,000 men employed. Today's figures are of 1930s proportions; that is the nature and character of the consequences of the pit closures and the collapse of the alternative post-war manufacturing base as those companies have also contracted and closed.

We are now a community in desperate need at all levels, in all possible ways. In addition to the fact that a mere 8,000 men are in work in a borough of our size, 40 per cent. of men of working age—those aged between 16 and 64—are economically inactive. Those, too, are figures and percentages of 1930s proportions.

Of course, society is different. The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) mentioned the redundancy money and occupational pension schemes that have built up as a result of regular employment since the war. The only period in the history of our community when there was full-time work has cushioned the worst effects of the collapse of the coal industry and jobs for men in my area.

The second reason why we need such a clause and a refinanced and reinvigorated British Coal enterprise is the other context in which Government policies are working—the supposed lifelines for coalfield communities suffering from closures.

First, we had RECHAR—our great hope from Europe. If it were not so serious and sad, the story of RECHAR 1 would be a farce of Whitehall proportions. The scheme was launched in 1991 by the Commission. Then Ministers spent two years wrangling with commissioners while communities such as Merthyr Vale, Aberfan, Treharris and deep navigation Treharris waited in hope for development.

In December 1993, two years later, a £25,000 grant was made into our community 15 days before the RECHAR 1 programme closed. That was one of the alternative lifelines—it is no wonder we seek to place a statutory duty to incorporate a refinanced and reinvigorated British Coal Enterprise into the Bill.

I now turn to the coal aid package. I do not know how things have worked out in England.

Mr. John Evans: A joke.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend says that it is a joke. I cannot comment on the English scene.

In Wales, we are having great difficulty identifying coal aid package money. I understand, although I am sure my hon. Friends will disabuse me, that in England at least the package was separately put aside and was part and parcel of a specific initiative, so that at least one could ensure that the money was delivered into the coalfield communities. In our case, it is rolled up into general Welsh Office expenditure, and it has been almost impossible to identify what is new money, what is additional money and what is extra support.

Like RECHAR 1, the coal aid package of 1992 did not give one additional penny to British Coal Enterprise activities in my constituency. The Minister has given a long list of expenditures supposedly included in the coal aid package. Even if we accept that, however, the fact remains that the Welsh Office has cut the mainstream urban development and regeneration programmes in my area. There has been a 25 per cent. cut in Cynon Valley, next to my constituency, which was affected by the pit closures; a 12 per cent. cut in the Merthyr borough programme; a 7 per cent. cut in Rhymney; and an average cut of 17 per cent. in the mainstream urban programmes. It is no wonder that communities like mine, which have been affected by pit closures, feel cynical, disappointed and let down by the so-called lifelines.

For a variety of reasons, a pit in Merthyr Vale and Aberfan that was closed in 1989 is now a cleared rubble site in the heart of the village. There is an identical site at Treharris—enormous, in proportion to the size of the village—as a result of the closure of the deep navigation pit; nothing is happening there. Last year, a pit closed at Taff Merthyr, and the buildings still stand on the site. We do not want it to be cleared: we hope that a revitalised and regenerated British Coal Enterprise will refurbish the control room at Trelewis drift, which—with all its equipment and potential—might offer new workshop and skill-training opportunities.

Our communities need immediate help. I do not deny that money has been spent in Merthyr borough, and a great deal of land reclamation work is going on: we have one of the largest schemes. I am not saying that it is all doom and gloom, but I am saying that the instruments and techniques used in handling the immediate, large-scale and significant problems caused by the closure of four pits in five years have fallen far short of need, demand and expectation.

I strongly support the idea of a rejuvenated, revitalised, refinanced British Coal Enterprise. I, too, feel disappointed; my expectations of BCE have been somewhat dashed. Nevertheless, it has performed an invaluable task in providing job counselling and training schemes. We want it to have a higher profile in the communities of Merthyr Vale, Aberfan, Treharris and, now, Bedlinog—throughout my constituency. A statutory commitment of the kind we seek in the new clause would help to regenerate and give hope to the communities that I represent.

Ms Walley: I shall be brief; time is short, and I know that many hon. Members wish to speak.

Friends of mine say that British Coal Enterprise has not done as much as it could have, and I think that it could have done more to rejuvenate areas such as mine.

I will tell the Minister something in the context of the many pit closures. When I was at primary school, we heard about the north Staffordshire coalfield in geography lessons. Wherever I went outside school—shopping, for instance—I could see the coalfield, where my relatives worked: it was there, and it was functioning. Many slag heaps resulted from its operations, and there has been a great deal of land reclamation in our area.

The derelict land grant provided money to help with the reclamation of former coal-mining sites. Following the latest spate of pit closures, a huge number of people have been put on the dole. I believe that we should deal with that situation in the same way.

It is crucial that the men who worked in the pits in north Staffordshire now have the opportunity to retrain, acquire new skills and set up new businesses. If British Coal Enterprise does not succeed and does not have a part to play, and if it is not properly funded by Government, we shall be dealing with far more waste and dereliction than

we have done previously. It is crucial that BCE should have a future. My hon. Friends have said exactly the same thing. We need to have a vision of the jobs that must be created in line with sustainable development. BCE, along with everyone else, has a part to play in that, and I hope that the Minister will take on board the many points that have been raised, especially those relating to north Staffordshire and the former north Staffordshire coalfield.

Mr. Skinner: I hope that the Minister is not going to say that he expects British Coal Enterprise to introduce another package of measures, because you can bet your bottom dollar that when Ministers start talking about introducing a package of measures it means that they are short of words. In the past two years, every Minister has told us about packages of measures, level playing fields and God knows what else.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and I met a representative of BCE about seven or eight years ago. We were worried about the fact that the previous Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, had told us at Question Time that BCE had created 18,000 job opportunities. We got a fellow from BCE down to talk to a group of east midlands Members of Parliament and asked him where the actual jobs were, never mind the job opportunities. We asked whether they were in my hon. Friend's constituency because none had been found there, and there were none in Bolsover.

Having listened to seven or eight Labour Members, the man said that as a matter of fact most of the jobs had been created in Yorkshire. Up piped Allen McKay, whom I had dragged in as a bit of an outsider, and said that he was from Yorkshire. The man said that he had thought that he was talking to east midlands Labour Members, but we had brought in Allen McKay just in case, so the man declared that no jobs had been created in Yorkshire either. We were then told that most of them had been created in Scotland, but we had not been smart enough to have someone from Scotland with us. That is the background. It was about seven or eight years ago, and my hon. Friend can verify exactly what happened.

At any given pit, 700 or 800 people are working in a hole in the ground. To find new work for that number of people means finding 20 or more acres of industrial land because the warehouses on industrial development estates need a great deal of land.

BCE has been a charade. It was set up after the strike to give the impression that the Government were concerned about all the new jobs that would be necessary as a result of the coal review. It has been a confidence trick from beginning to end. The people whom we met had posh designer suits. They were using money from BCE. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw remembers this, but I recall him remarking that they wore Italian shoes and worked in offices where the carpets were thicker than those in the House of Commons. That is where a lot of the money went—let us talk straight. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) wants a word.

Mr. Etherington: Is my hon. Friend aware that research carried out by Frank Ennis at Durham university revealed that it was not uncommon for six different agencies to claim that they had created the same job? In other words, if the statistics said that five or six jobs had been created, the true figure was one.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We asked the fellow from BCE whether he was aware that the development agencies were also claiming credit for the jobs that BCE claimed to have created. Local councils were also claiming them, but the net result was that the people at BCE had done nothing but look after themselves. BCE had very good figures—there are many such jobs knocking around.

We all know that the mining areas are facing a calamity. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) referred to the significant figure of just 8,000 people in his constituency who work, although it is an average-sized constituency and a large borough in Wales. My hon. Friend referred to some of the villages in his area where the pits have been shut one after another—five or six in some 12 to 18 months. The same is true in Yorkshire and in Derbyshire, where there are no pits left open apart from one which is now combined with a Yorkshire pit.

11 pm

There are large areas in every coalfield community where more than 50 per cent. of males are unemployed. Not too many women work either. They have to work in some of the textile factories in Mansfield and parts of Nottinghamshire. That is the picture, and British Coal Enterprise Ltd. cannot resolve it. A massive public works programme is needed if we are to save the social fabric of communities in which crime on the scale in the cities was unknown. We never experienced it. Only a few years ago, people still used to leave their doors open at night. Countless people on every street used to walk into one another's houses, but now the social fabric is breaking down in those rural areas and it is alarming every one of us. In our surgeries and at other times, we hear of crimes that we would never have associated with pit villages. The Government are totally uncaring and have decided to put the boot in. It is all about revenge. The net result is that the social fabric is breaking down.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred to Ellington and 1,100 people who are affected there. That pit may be saved under some sort of arrangement, but I doubt it. Without jobs for 1,100 people in that small community, most of whom live in a radius of about 10 miles, the place is ready to explode. Every one of us talks about it, but some of us even bite our tongues because we do not want to say everything about all the implications. That is how dangerous it is. Action had to be taken in the 1930s in America and we are yearning for the same sort of plan. That is one of the reasons why the Tory Government cannot survive. They have gone too far down this road and can only come up with tin-pot privatisation. What does that mean set against a background of social decay? Countless young men and women are without jobs. Many young men who used to go on the Coal Board training schemes—thousands at a time in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and south Wales—now go straight on to the dole. If they do not take places on other training schemes, their money is stopped and they begin to drift to London and elsewhere. That is the picture of the modern pit village, which 10 years ago none of us would have believed could have happened.

Admittedly, there were pit closures before, but most of us were transferred to other pits. Even if some people were made redundant, it did not have the same impact in every pit village. I was speaking to some people in Langwith in

my constituency, where people know everybody who lives in the village, and I asked them what they reckoned was the rate of unemployment. In some of the areas, more than 60 per cent. of the people are without a job and have no hope of finding a job. How can BCE resolve that problem? It is only tinkering.

Instead of talking about BCE, the Government ought to be telling every local authority that there is to be a massive house-building programme. Work will begin to be created, but even that will not resolve the whole problem. A new infrastructure must be built throughout the country, especially in areas where there is massive unemployment. The country is yearning for that. Unemployment in the coalfields has occurred on a scale that none of us could have visualised.

The amendment may suit the purpose of raising the general issues, and my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) was right to introduce it based on that realism, but we all know that the problem goes beyond British Coal Enterprise Ltd. and beyond all those little agencies that have been set up. We are now facing the need for a total transformation, to create work, and to establish shorter working hours and shorter working years for everybody so that the kids who are leaving school will have jobs.

Whatever can the teachers try to do? How can they deal with young kids with brothers and sisters who have never had a job over four or five years? Do they say, "If you pass your exams you can better yourselves?" How can teachers provide the motivation? That is the background to what is happening in the pit villages, and it can be mirrored in other towns and cities where the industrial base has been smashed by this lousy, rotten Government. That is the problem that we face, and the chances are that it will be a Labour Government who will have to start cleaning up the mess.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will recall that in the 1960s he and I were part of a structure of local government and we campaigned because we were worried about the economic situation in our areas. We were worried even then, and now the picture is one of deindustrialisation and social devastation, with all the dangers that my hon. Friend has, quite properly, identified.

Unlike what has happened in my hon. Friend's constituency, in my area a few jobs have been created by British Coal Enterprise. They are welcome, but they are only small in number, and we need more. As my hon. Friends have already said, BCE alone cannot solve the problem.

When I became a Member of the House in 1970, I had 12 collieries in my constituency, and the National Coal Board was short of skilled workers. There were then 16,000 more steel workers in my constituency and in the constituency of Rotherham than there are now. We have broken world records regularly since then, yet that industry, too, is in peril.

I recently examined the detailed figures from a good school in my constituency that I know well, and only four of its young people had obtained jobs. That fact was not regarded as sufficiently dramatic to command even a word or two of attention in most of the local media. I met a group of 15-year-olds from that area just before Christmas—the Minister should meet ordinary 15 and 16-year-olds who will not get many GCSEs, will not get a job, and see no prospect of work. British Coal Enterprise is helpful; every job that we can get is needed because it might help to stem the social problems that we have identified.

Allow me to make one partisan point. Last week the Conservative candidate for the Rotherham by-election was selected, and his message to enliven local political debate was that Rotherham should stop feeling sorry for itself and vote Conservative for employment. [*Laughter.*] We have seen how much employment has resulted from 15 years of Conservative rule. We have seen the death of hope, the removal of light from young people's eyes and the devastation of decent communities where people valued work and family values mattered. If the Government were really concerned about basic values, they would do something to restore some prospect of economic fortune to areas such as mine.

The leader of British Coal Enterprise is Philip Andrew. I know him fairly well, and I respect him. If someone has to lead that organisation, he is as good as anyone. I am not too happy about some members of his board, but I shall leave that subject for another debate. I hope that Mr. Andrew will be given the resources to enable BCE to make the contribution that we need. If we do not get such contributions from it and from the other agencies and organisations that may help, the prospects for our important parts of England—and of Scotland and Wales, too—are bleak indeed.

Mr. Redmond: I shall explain how Government policies need to be altered to make any difference to the unemployment figures in my area. There is ample evidence that what I shall say is true for other areas, too.

Some years ago Independent Television used to give out a list of job gains and losses. It was always manufacturing jobs that disappeared, and the gains were always in the retail trade—jobs in shops, and so on. That is valid in the sense that we are trying to create small industries where there used to be one large industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) mentioned Carcroft. That was an old stamping ground of mine for a number of years. There were about 500 employees on that site, but there is nowhere near that number now. I pay credit to Philip Andrew, who is one of the few shining lights on the coal board, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). There is a right set of dumplings on the coal board. I must ask who appointed them. When we look at who has been appointed, we find one dumpling after another.

It is a tragedy that jobs need to be created, yet Rossington pit, which employed about 1,000 men in the good old days, has reduced to 500 men, and Budge, which is to take out a licence, talks about 200 or 250 jobs in the future. That is not the case now; there are about only 80 members on the site. It is all well and good to talk about tomorrow, but what needs to take place today will create an affluent tomorrow.

Obviously, we desperately need investment. British Coal Enterprise will not have the cash to make that investment unless the Government go into it in a big way. Regrettably, the Treasury will stop the Government from doing that. I ask the Minister to say a little about RECHAR because it is connected to British Coal Enterprise. Unless the Treasury gives some sign that RECHAR money is additional money and not Treasury money, obviously we will not create manufacturing jobs.

I hope that the Minister will accept our modest amendment so that we can start to create the jobs that will remain in being for a long time. One of the problems is that the Minister will not do that unless he acts positively towards manufacturing. Regrettably, since 1979, Governments have not acted positively towards the country's manufacturing base.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): The coalfield communities need an agency, perhaps one like British Coal Enterprise but certainly one that is properly and adequately funded and which recognises the scale of the problems that the coalfield communities face.

New clause 5 seeks to address the problem, albeit in a limited way; the problem is enormous for any hon. Member who represents a coalfield constituency. All too recently, I was selected to fight the Warwickshire, North seat. At that time, there were four pits in the constituency, including Birch Coppice pit, which has closed, Baddesley pit, which has closed, and Keresley pit, which closed in 1991 with the loss of 1,300 jobs. Although there is a proposal from the private sector to reopen the pit, the expectation is that the reopened private pit may create only 130 jobs, instead of 1,300. Daw Mill pit in my constituency is still open, although it recently lost half its work force in redundancies. The impact of that on the pit villages throughout north Warwickshire has been enormous.

I can remember going into Keresley village in November 1991 after the pit closed. The feeling in the village, particularly among young people, was one of utter hopelessness. What were they to do without jobs? Pit villages have not just been victims of the Government's policies which have resulted in pit closures; in many ways, they have been victims of a series of other policies that have been made worse by the failure, through British Coal Enterprise or otherwise, to provide employment.

11.15 pm

The villages have also suffered from the fact that they have private absentee landlords, who have often bought up large numbers of former British Coal houses. They charge large rents and do not do repairs. Many people who lost their jobs in Keresley were subsequently subjected to rent increases and could not get their repairs done.

In other villages, such as the former site of the Birch Coppice pit, there are now applications for opencast. We shall come to that subject tomorrow, and I will hope to catch your eye then, Madam Deputy Speaker. In coalfield areas, opencast is seen as a great job destroyer. Many miners feel that they lost their jobs because opencast development was allowed on too large a scale, and was often allowed in areas where pits had closed.

As has been stated, there was the false hope that RECHAR money would come. There was appalling prevarication by Treasury Ministers who were negotiating a deal with the European Community that would have allowed the money to flow in in good time to enable us to cope with some of the problems in the coalfield communities.

The new clause is needed at least to give some semblance of hope to the many miners who lost their jobs when the pits closed, many of whom are still unemployed. In Keresley, 25 per cent. of the work force lost their jobs on one day and many are still unemployed.

Recently, I spoke to a company director from Leeds who thought that British Coal Enterprise could get access to grants that would enable him to set up a company in Atherstone in my constituency. He had enormous difficulties in securing resources, co-operation and help from various Government agencies. I must exclude from that the Department of Trade and Industry, which provided him with a certain amount of help and encouragement. British Coal Enterprise provided difficulties in terms of bureaucracy and getting the grants and assistance that were available to create jobs.

The new clause is perhaps a small start—a small hope that can be given back to many of the villages that have for too long been devastated by the closure of pits. It is a plea in a sense to help make British Coal Enterprise work, and perhaps to give some of my constituents the opportunity to work, which they very much want.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I had not intended to speak in the debate. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take into account what has been said by Opposition Members. I especially remember a number of speeches that have been made in the House; one that struck a note with me was made by John Nott when he was moving the Loyal Address many years ago. He said that the real poor of the 20th century were those without hope and those words were true.

There are an awful lot of people without hope in our coalfields. In my constituency, my hon. Friend the Minister knows that the Littleton colliery closed without much warning last year. That devastated a local community, and many people there are now bereft of hope.

It is all very well talking about British Coal Enterprise —and obviously one wishes it well—but providing a little training or the opportunity for a temporary job or trying to solve the problem on the spur of the moment is not the proper answer. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made a powerful and eloquent speech and I agreed with much of what he said. My hon. Friend the Minister has to accept that British Coal Enterprise—well-motivated as it is and although it is run by a man whose credentials are beyond reproach—must be given the tools to do the job properly. If we are to provide hope in the coalfields and give real jobs to those who have been deprived of them, commitment and investment are needed.

I took an all-party deputation to see my hon. Friend the Minister about Littleton colliery a few weeks ago and my hon. Friend responded in a constructive manner last week. I am grateful for much of what he said, but it was not enough. I hope that when he responds to this brief debate, he will tell us that there is a true appreciation of the devastation that has been caused in many communities and families by the closures that have taken place over the past couple of years. Those closures came about at a speed that no one anticipated; many of them, though not all, might have been inevitable in the long term—a period of 10 or 15 years. I hope that when my hon. Friend responds to the debate he will tell us that the Government appreciate what has been done to communities and individuals in the coalfields of Great Britain in the past few years.

Mr. Eggar: I am acutely conscious of the difficulties that many in the coalfield communities face as a result not only of the closure of the coal mines but of the general restructuring of the whole basis of business and industry in those areas. Most Opposition Members recognise that coal has been only part of the general employment structure. *[Interruption.]* Indeed, the hon. Member for St. Helens,

[Mr. Eggar]

North (Mr. Evans), who in his customary courteous way is shouting from a sedentary position, drew attention to the fact that there were other forms of employment in his constituency.

Mr. John Evans: I am sorry to interrupt the Minister, but I was pointing out that his term "restructuring" sounded like a new term for redundancy.

Mr. Eggar: I hope that that made the hon. Gentleman feel better.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) was careful in the way in which he moved the new clause. As the speeches from Opposition Members followed one upon another, I fully understood the difficulties that he had and the differing views on the Benches behind him. It is fair to say that, with one or two exceptions, Opposition Members recognise that British Coal Enterprise has made a significant contribution to the regeneration of the coalfield areas. It has done so, of course, with varying degrees of success. Schemes that have worked in one part of the country have not necessarily worked in another, but it is widely accepted that an initiative that started back in the mid-1980s has gone a long way to achieving its original objectives. The fact that the official Opposition feel able to move the new clause is a vindication of the work that BCE has done. I join in the tribute that Opposition Members have paid to the work of Mr. Andrew.

As for the substance of the new clause, we envisage that BCE should be retained in its current form—in other words funded as at present. It is fair to say that BCE does not argue that it is short of funds. It is fully funded for its programme of work at least into the near future. We intend that BCE should be retained for the present and for the immediate post-privatisation period.

Of course, we need to consider very carefully what will happen to BCE beyond that period. We have asked British Coal for its thoughts about BCE's future and we have recently received its views. I do not want to reach any conclusions before we have had a chance to consider all the options—and the new clause restricts the available options. But I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and all hon. Members who have spoken that when we come to make up our minds about the matter I will take careful account of the words that have been spoken in the Chamber tonight.

Mr. O'Neill: In tonight's debate, representatives of virtually every area of the United Kingdom coalfields have had the opportunity to express their contempt for this Government's feeble efforts in trying to repair the damage that colliery closures have wreaked upon those communities. The Minister's response was as we expected it to be. We will not press the new clause to a vote. Even if we got what we wanted, we do not think that it would make the kind of difference to our communities that is needed. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 2

DUTIES OF THE AUTHORITY WITH RESPECT TO LICENSING

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move amendment No. 52, in page 2, line 25, leave out 'Great Britain' and insert 'England, Scotland and Wales'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 51, in page 2, line 27, at end insert

'and to make arrangements to co-ordinate the separate management for the coal industry in England, Scotland and Wales'.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The amendments are intended to explore one issue: whether the Government have a commitment to ensuring that a mechanism is in place to guarantee a future, no matter how small, for the coal industry in Scotland and Wales, as well as in England. The way in which the Government are proposing to privatise the coal industry—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There are too many private conversations going on. It is very discourteous to the Member who has the Floor.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Government are proposing to privatise the coal industry by passing everything to a Coal Authority, which will then license operation, but with five sales in five parts of the country. As the Minister will know, in that context the remaining British Coal pit in Wales is obviously grouped with pits in England, and there is only one remaining Scottish pit, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) will speak in a moment.

The amendments seek simply to put on record the fact that if the interests of Scotland and Wales are to be looked after equally, there needs to be not only a recognition that there are three countries with three economies and three interests in the future of the coal industry, but a recognition that the management and administration of decisions also needs to reflect local communities in the three countries.

It is bad enough that people in Wales and Scotland are seeing the coal industry run down partly, if not preponderantly, by policies and decisions of a Government based in Westminster. It will be even worse if they see the new structure come into operation, with no opportunity for Scotland or Wales to influence it at all.

I hope that at the end of this short debate the Minister will be able to tell us that there will be a recognition of the desirability and viability of keeping underground mining going—not opencast mining—in Scotland and Wales. There has been little sign in the past two years of the Government's commitment to keep the coal industry going, as has been evidenced in nearly every debate.

I hope that the Minister will say that the Government are prepared to consider the structures of the management of the authority and the industry in the future, to ensure that the case for Wales and the case for Scotland are made and made clearly, and that areas of some of the greatest unemployment in the country and the greatest traditional dependency on the coal industry are not neglected and carved up almost by accident or by default.

11.30 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I do not wish to detain the House too long. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It is nice to say something popular. I do not wish to detain the House, not least when Members such as the hon. Members for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) and for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) are present; they have first-hand constituency knowledge of the Scottish coalfield —far greater than mine.

I recall that when the hon. Member for Midlothian was still a senior National Union of Mineworkers official in Scotland and I visited him in his office, the Scottish coalfield boasted a considerable number of collieries. The only one that remains open and within the responsibility of British Coal is Longannet. That shows how the Scottish coalfield has shrunk in a relatively short period, when many people were urging us to have regard for environmental considerations. One of the qualities of Scottish coal has been its low sulphur content, so it was a product with an environmental selling point, yet that important factor did not seem to weigh with the powers that be who made the decisions.

Therefore, I endorse the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The purpose of the amendment is to try to find out whether the Government envisage a continuation of the coal industry, not only in England, but in Scotland and in Wales. As the Bill stands, it would be possible for the authority to determine that there was an economically viable coal mining industry in one small part of England only, and that that sufficed for the whole of Great Britain.

Yet even the pits that remain in Scotland and Wales are an important source of employment in the communities that they serve. In addition to the British Coal pits, there is the Monktonhall pit in Scotland and, subject to correction from the hon. Member for Midlothian, I think that it would still be possible for one of the Scottish pits to be rescued if proper investment were put into it. We should be reassured to know that they have not been totally written off. The fact that British Coal recently won an order for the supply of coal to the Kilchenzie and Longannet power stations is something of a filler, but that, of its nature, is a contract of short term or limited term duration.

When the Government privatised the steel industry, they did not provide for a Scottish dimension, as a result of which the Scottish steel industry suffered grievously in later years. We wish to know whether, following the privatisation of coal, the Government will continue their commitment to the coal industry, however small it is compared with its size in its greater days.

Mr. McLoughlin: Amendment No. 52 would require the authority—I think that is important to remember that it will be the authority—to make separate arrangements for managing the industry in England, Scotland and Wales. The amendment misunderstands the role of the authority. It does not have the responsibility for managing the coal industry. The Government's objective is to facilitate the development of the largest economic industry in the longer term. Privatisation will stimulate commercial enterprise, release management talents and initiate an industry free from political and financial interference, which have had major distorting effects.

We are looking to the licensees to develop a viable industry that is economically capable of standing on its own feet and can compete with other energy resources.

If the thrust of the amendment is that Scotland, Wales and England should have an opportunity to develop their own coal mining industries, I agree with it. My right hon. Friend announced in September that British Coal would be offered for sale in five regional packages based on Scotland, Wales, the north-east and the central coalfield, which will be offered in two separate parts. There will, therefore, be every opportunity to develop separate regional businesses in Scotland, Wales and different parts of England, if that is how the industry can best develop.

The private sector will determine how, and on what regional basis, the industry is to be managed. That is how it should be, so I hope that the House will reject the amendment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The House has shown that it wants to proceed quickly through the rest of today's business. I have heard what the Minister has said about his commitment to the industry in Wales and Scotland.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): If the hon. Gentleman believes that, he believes anything.

Mr. Hughes: I remain to be convinced, but I shall take the Minister at his word tonight. Together with my hon. Friends from Wales and Scotland, I shall seek to pursue this debate and get some guarantees from him. It is no good just leaving matters to the marketplace without a commitment to the coal industry in Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Hanson: Before the hon. Gentleman finishes his point, will he assure me, as I represent the only pit left in north Wales, that before the Coal Authority is established that pit has a viable future? We are discussing the establishment of the Coal Authority. Before it is established, opportunities to close pits still exist.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman rightly speaks for Point of Ayr, which still wants a future. Other pits in south Wales believe that they should have a future, such as Betwys and Taff Merthyr.

The Minister has said that the Government want a coal industry in Wales. Before the Bill completes its passage through Parliament, I shall be happy if hon. Friends who represent relevant constituencies in Scotland and Wales put more pressure on the Government so that the commitments sought in the amendment are secured. It is not good enough to say that we can allow the pits to die, then set up the authority. It will be too late. We shall test the Minister, but, for tonight, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 3

DUTIES OF THE AUTHORITY WITH RESPECT TO PROPERTY

Mr. Alexander: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 3, line 35, after 'disposal', insert

', except where the land or property is capable of beneficial use in accordance with the local development plan in which cases the land or property shall be transferred to governmental development agencies.'.

This point is important but simple, so I can be brief. Until British Coal is dissolved and the Coal Authority comes into being, it is required to dispose of surplus land

[Mr. Alexander]

on "the best terms". That phrase is not defined in the Bill, but it would be reasonable to assume that it means on the best financial return.

Such a criterion is reasonable in many instances, but gives rise to concern when it is applied to the sale of land and sites that have clear potential for development and job creation for the benefit of local communities. That would be the case when their location is favourable for development. It is therefore important that the establishment of alternative uses is carried out as quickly as possible in areas where coal mining activity has been run down.

Economic revival must be the principal aim of Government development agencies—the Welsh Development Agency is a perfect example—but it is not within the remit of British Coal or the new Coal Authority as presently constituted. Transfer of developable sites to those bodies would ensure their most efficient and effective return to beneficial use and avoid perpetuating the failures of the current disposal mechanisms. To leave the Bill referring simply to "the best terms" would, I believe, perpetuate that unfortunate situation. Sites can lie derelict for many years while British Coal wrangles and argues with developers and planners in its attempt to maximise financial return. We have an example of this in my county of Nottinghamshire. I refer to the Babbington colliery—a prime site which is next to a motorway junction and has been a derelict eyesore for the past eight years.

My amendment would avoid such a situation, and I commend it to the House and to the Minister.

Mr. Tipping: We should always remember that, after the Church of England, British Coal is the biggest property owner in this country. We must ensure that the property is put to good use. Coalfield communities want new investment, new jobs and a new future. The way to provide those things is to concentrate on infrastructure, infrastructure and infrastructure. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that British Coal's property can be developed for the creation of new jobs. And new jobs are badly needed if coalfield communities in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere are to be given a fair chance and a fair start.

The hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) talked, quite rightly, about the Babbington colliery, which is a prime site close to a motorway. It could be used for the creation of many hundreds of jobs, yet it has stood empty for eight years because British Coal and its partners wish to take whatever profit they can out of it.

The amendment is about cutting the red tape and ensuring that the large property owner, British Coal, gives back to coalfield communities some of the many benefits that it derived from them over many years. We want new investment, new jobs and a new future for coalfield communities—things which can be secured through the amendment.

Mrs. Peacock: I reiterate what my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) has said. Of course we recognise that British Coal is required to dispose of land on the best possible terms, but that may not always mean the best possible money in the short term. I emphasise that it should mean what is best in the longer term for communities that will rely, for jobs, on the land when it has been disposed of. Short-term cash is not always best. I hope that the Minister will bear that in mind as the Bill proceeds.

Mr. O'Neill: This debate comes hard on the heels of the debate on British Coal Enterprise. We know the nature of the problems with which we are confronted. We realise that one of the major obstacles to industrial development, apart from the absence of financial assistance, is the non-availability of property and sites when and where they are needed. As has been said already, British Coal is one of the biggest landowners in the United Kingdom. The disposal of its assets is one of the prizes that those who seek to take it over will wish to seize. We believe that these assets should be made available to public agencies so that they may be put to use as quickly as possible.

Yesterday's men at Hobart house have failed in their property dealings. If structural improvements of the kind that we want are to be secured, an amendment of this nature must provide a means of creating jobs on new sites as quickly as possible. As the amendment enjoys all-party support and has local government backing, it is one of the best ways of achieving what is needed. I therefore urge Conservative Members to join my hon. Friends in the Lobby at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Ashton: Subsidence has not yet been mentioned. The land around a mine may look perfect for development, but the first thing any developer will want to know will always be: has there been any subsidence in the area, no matter how long ago? If there has been any, that is often enough to put an interested developer off for good. Subsidence—not planning—blight ensues.

11.45 pm

If land has to stand empty for years because developers fear subsidence, it is crazy to leave it alone. It is much better if the council can turn it into a playing field or park, perhaps landscaping a canal or a disused railway line for leisure pursuits. A local need can thus be met even if the Coal Authority cannot sell the land.

Mr. Eggar: The amendment would require the Coal Authority to transfer land and property to general governmental development agencies when the land and property in question are capable of beneficial use in accordance with the local development plan.

The amendment would have some curious effects, however. For instance, if the land has been farmed for several years but is owned by British Coal, it would make no sense to force its disposal to governmental agencies. The amendment is thus seriously flawed.

The Bill is structured to ensure that there is a duty on the Coal Authority to dispose of such of its land and property as is not required, broadly speaking, for coal mining. That new duty will make it much more difficult, if not impossible, to hoard land—a tendency of the past, including in the north-east, which has come in for criticism. Under the Bill, there can be no question of hoarding land. The clear intention is that land and property should be released for beneficial use.

The authority has the power to develop land. It can do so together with the local authority, or with English Estates, or with a private sector operator. There is a great deal of flexibility, and the authority has the power to enter into any form of partnership that seems right. Planning permission—I hope that this will reassure my hon. Friend

—would be needed. Such permission is not readily granted if it does not fit in with the local authority's local development plan. The local authority would therefore have an influence on the use of the land, through the planning process.

In view of these assurances, I trust that my hon. Friend will feel able to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Alexander: My hon. Friend has given me four separate assurances to meet the concerns that my amendment raised. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it your pleasure that the amendment be withdrawn?

Hon. Members: No.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 266, Noes 300.

Division No. 177] **[11.49 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rayrisford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Further consideration adjourned.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Bill to be further considered this day.

Film Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

12.2 am

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I welcome the oportunity to speak. This is a timely debate—not least in view of the Oscar awards ceremony earlier today, but also in the context of the British film industry itself. I hope tonight to take some of the spotlight away from that ceremony in Hollywood, and to shine it on our own film industry—an industry which is failing to live up to its rich tradition and great potential. That was mentioned by Britain's one Oscar winner, Nick Park, the animator who so deserved his success.

There is currently great interest in the regeneration of our film industry. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister and our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage share that interest, and are committed to a positive outlook and the realisation of the industry's full potential.

My hon. Friend will know of the wider interest—throughout the industry—in its regeneration; that was marked last week by the launch of the motion picture, arts, commerce and technology initiative, supported by 300 leading figures throughout the film industry, including many directors and artists of the calibre of Kenneth Branagh, Michael Caine and Sir Anthony Hopkins. The initiative deserves to be considered in detail, and one of my purposes in raising this issue tonight is to invite my hon. Friend the Minister to give it the necessary consideration in order to ascertain what needs to be done to restore the British film industry to its place among the best in the world.

In talking of the best in the world, one thinks of Mr. Steven Spielberg, whose success at the Oscar ceremony was so richly deserved and which will have given so much pleasure to so many different people for many different reasons.

Among those who derive pleasure from his success are many people in my constituency of Hertsmere, which has a very strong connection with Steven Spielberg through the studios at Elstree and Borehamwood, where he has made many pictures in the past and which he holds in high regard. He has said that he would like to make films there again, and everyone in Elstree would be pleased to welcome him back but, sadly, as Steven Spielberg is sweeping all before him at the Oscars, Elstree studios faces an uncertain future and is struggling to survive.

In a sense, the fate of the Elstree studios symbolises the decline of British film making. In its own way, it has been at the forefront of film making since the beginning of the century. In the early years of this century, Elstree earned a reputation as Britain's own Hollywood. The first talking picture made in this country was made there by Alfred Hitchcock. Elstree went on to produce a stream of famous British films such as "The Dambusters" and "Moby Dick".

It later came to be a centre for American film production and, in the previous decade, was the production site for many Hollywood blockbusters, including films of the calibre and importance of "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?", "Star Wars" and the Indiana Jones trilogy. It is sad to report that, from those heady times and that level of activity, Elstree studios has declined.

In 1988, Elstree was purchased by Brent Walker. In 1990, the company obtained planning permission for redevelopment of the studio site, which was to include the sale of part of the site for retail purposes. That has subsequently taken place, but on condition that the remainder of the site be used for purposes related to film and television production for 25 years. That agreement also incorporated a performance bond, in the sum of £10 million, and an acceptance by Brent Walker that it would carry out a phased development of the retail aspect alongside redevelopment of the film studios.

The agreement was entered into with Hertsmere borough council, but, unfortunately, although the retail development has come to pass, the development of the film studios has not. In July last year, Brent Walker issued eviction notices to the remaining tenants of the studios, who had been left in a serious plight. In September, the closure of the studios was announced. With all-party support, Hertsmere borough council has responded by launching legal action.

I do not propose to go into the merits of that action, but there is great determination in my constituency to save the studios. That determination extends to Hertsmere borough council, where there is all-party support for saving the studios, and to Borehamwood town council, which is very proud of its film-making heritage. There is also wide public support in the constituency under the "Save our Studios" campaign. The campaign is supported throughout the British film industry, and has attracted the support of many of its leading figures.

The point of my raising the subject of Elstree studios is that, whatever its future in film making and television production, it is linked to the overall health of the British film industry. In the same way in which the decline of Elstree perhaps mirrors the decline of the British film industry, I hope that its regeneration could be matched by a regeneration of our film industry.

From any viewpoint, we must accept that British film making is not living up to its full potential. Investment has declined. In comparison with our European neighbours, we are investing less and producing fewer films. In France, investment in films is increasing, whereas in Britain it is decreasing.

What is more, it seems that we are losing some of the big commercial productions and that, more and more, those British films which are produced are relatively low-budget—many of which could be described more as artistic than commercial. That is not to decry them. Of course, some low-budget films are very good. However, for a successful and healthy film industry, we must produce big-budget British films and also, importantly, we must attract to Britain producers from overseas, especially from America, to use our film infrastructure.

The decline has taken place notwithstanding the great potential, to which I call the attention of the House. There are some outstanding advantages to the potential development of the British film industry. We have a richness of artistic and technical talent. Many of those talented people are having to seek work overseas, including not only directors and artists, but technicians.

Production companies have gone overseas wholesale and found work in Hollywood, yet we have that richness of heritage in Britain. We also have the great advantage of being the only English-speaking member of the European Union. We have a growing cinema market. Cinema admissions have almost doubled since the beginning of the 1980s, and in the past year we saw a further healthy

[Mr. James Clappison]

increase, to 112 million admissions. Over the past decade, we have seen the explosion of the home video market and all the implications that that has for film making. We also have access to the European market and its huge potential for audio-visual productions.

Britain has those huge advantages, and it is up to us as a nation to realise the full potential of our industry. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister are keenly aware of the need to develop that potential. In 1990, there was the famous meeting between Baroness Thatcher and representatives of the film industry, which was followed in 1992 by some help towards the film industry's budget.

Since then, my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend have sought to take a positive attitude from any angle towards the film industry. The Department of National Heritage has been widely welcomed throughout the film industry as a positive step forward in itself.

My right hon. Friend has also piloted the National Lottery etc. Bill through the House, which will provide assistance to the film industry through the proceeds of the national lottery, and is also to be welcomed.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): That has not yet been decided.

Mr. Clappison: It will be filtered through the Arts Council. I think that clause 24 of that Bill obliges the Arts Council to direct some money from the lottery to the film industry. The hon. Member for Bradford, South has commented on that.

That money is welcome, but when the Bill went through the House, it was accepted that it was not a substitution for core funding. I ask hon. Members to take a much more radical approach. My right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend are presently engaged in consultations with the film industry, which it has welcomed. The consultations have been extensive, and have considered many points of view.

However, I invite my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend, in the course of those consultations, to consider carefully the initiative put forward in the past week and the strong arguments in its support. There is a powerful and compelling case to consider the fiscal environment for film making, and to compare and contrast it with that of many other countries in the need to encourage investment in film production. Surely there must be a case for encouraging investment by those who benefit from film production. I include in that definition distributors and exhibitors of films, the video film industry, and possibly some branches of the television industry.

I also invite the Minister to examine the case for reconsidering the tax treatment of visiting artists—the withholding tax, which has been described by many people in the industry as a factor which influences the location of productions. I hope that my hon. Friend will also consider the way in which expenses are written off. I know that the Government have considered that subject in the past, but I invite them to do so again, and to consider an initiative.

Today, in view of its famous past, Elstree studios, in my constituency, is in some ways rather a sad place. A great deal of hope and commitment are still attached to the place, and local people regard it fondly. In a way, it stands as a reminder of what failure can mean, and what it has meant in the recent past. But the studios are also a symbol of hope. I hope that they can have a future as part of a reviving British film industry, and be involved in both film and television productions.

Those may not be on the scale of some of the glories of the past, but the fact that there can be a future for Elstree has been confirmed by studies carried out by Hertsmere council. I hope that my hon. Friend will keep well in mind the need to revive not only Elstree but the film industry throughout the country, which has the potential to be a most important industry and to do an enormous amount of good.

Mr. Cryer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me. This is his Adjournment debate, and I congratulate him on having secured it. I entirely agree with most, although not all, of what he has said, and I share his hope that Elstree can become a revived film studio, at a time when the British studios that are still operating have their space fully booked and are doing well. It would be helpful if Elstree could share in that resurgence of the British film industry.

Mr. Clappison: It may not come as a surprise to the hon. Gentleman to hear that increasing use has been part of the debate on the future of the studios. That point has certainly been made.

In conclusion, I invite the Minister to adopt a radical approach, to build on the positive outlook that I believe the Government already have towards the film industry, and to be prepared to take the radical steps needed to revive that important industry.

12.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) on his good fortune in having secured the debate on this important industry, and on his cogent and persuasive speech—delivered without notes, which is always impressive.

The film industry in this country has a long and illustrious tradition and attracts many able and talented people—people who are talented both artistically and commercially. My hon. Friend has referred to the impressive role played by Elstree studios in the long career of the British film industry. His constituents could have no more persistent or hard-working Member of Parliament on the issue; he has raised the subject many times with me in letters, as well as on the Floor of the House.

The Government have received representations inviting us to prevent the closure or change of use of Elstree studios. Although we recognise that Elstree has made an enormous contribution to British film production in the past, the future use of the studios is a matter for the commercial judgment of the owners, subject to any necessary planning consents.

It is not for Government to intervene in the commercial decisions of companies, and we have no plans to do so. Nor is it the role of Government to decide whether particular studios or other businesses should remain in operation. Rather, it is the role of Government to establish an overall framework within which the industry can thrive, and to offer limited financial support to encourage the development of an appropriate infrastructure for the industry.

It is for members of the film industry to provide the ideas, creative talents and entrepreneurial skills needed to make the industry flourish. In short, the Government believe that the film industry, like other industries, will prosper only if it can stand on its own feet without relying on subsidy.

It may be helpful if I describe briefly the various support measures that the Government provide to the industry at present. In the first place, we think that it is right to support training in the industry by contributing £1.85 million annually to the national film and television school. That is less than 50 per cent. of the school's total budget, the remainder being met by the industry. Over time, we expect the industry to take on an increasing proportion of the school's running costs.

Graduates of the school are prepared for careers in the film and television industries. Training courses cover a large range of disciplines, including production, direction, animation and camera work. Graduates of the school have regularly been awarded prestigious industry awards. Government support for the school is intended to ensure that British talent continues to be in demand wherever excellence is required.

Film, of course, is a cultural, as well as a commercial, activity, and we make a substantial grant—£15 million this year rising to £17 million in 1994-95—to the British Film Institute. The institute is responsible for encouraging the understanding and development of moving-image culture in all its forms, covering film, television and video. Among its many functions, it operates a world-class library, the Museum of the Moving Image and the national film and television archive; and it is responsible for the screening at the national film theatre of many films to which the public would otherwise have little or no access.

Looking to the future, a new source of funding for the non-commercial aspects of film will be, as my hon. Friend recognises, the national lottery. Part of the share of lottery proceeds earmarked for the arts will be available for film, but the projects supported must be primarily of benefit to the public, not for private gain.

While the Government have recognised the need to support the cultural aspects of film, we are also aware of the need to encourage particular aspects of the industry. In that context, I draw the attention of my hon. Friend to the achievements of British Screen Finance Ltd., the private sector company which the Government have funded since 1986 with an annual grant of £2 million.

In December 1992, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage announced that funding will continue until at least March 1996. British Screen Finance operates three support schemes by loaning money on a commercial basis. Those schemes provide support for low to medium budget productions, short films and script development. Many of those films reflect the British culture and way of life.

An important part of British Screen Finance's remit is to enable new talent to enter the industry, encouraging the development of fresh entrepreneurial and creative talent which would otherwise find it difficult to make a start in film production. Since 1986, British Screen Finance has invested in 85 feature films, most of which would not have been made without Government support.

British Screen Finance is also responsible for administering the European co-production fund. The fund was set up in 1991 with Government support of £5 million over three years, with the objective of promoting collaboration between producers in the United Kingdom and other European countries.

The fund has supported 11 co-productions to date: seven made with other European Union countries, and four with non-member states. Again, many of them would not have been made without Government support. During 1993, the fund was the subject of an independent evaluation review. Following that review, we announced last December that funding will continue for a further three years.

Continuing with the European theme, I remind the House that, in April 1993, the Government arranged the United Kingdom's accession to "Eurimages", a Council of Europe initiative aimed at developing the European audiovisual industry. "Eurimages" provides financial support for feature-length fiction films, creative documentaries and distribution.

The scheme is proving to be very successful, with approval having already been given to 11 productions involving British participation. The Government also provide financial support for the secretariat of Audio-Visual Eureka, a body with a membership of 33 European countries, which provides help in a variety of ways to audiovisual industry professionals who seek to operate on a European level. An important task of the body has been to establish a European audiovisual observatory, with the purpose of collecting, disseminating and standardising European audiovisual data for the industry. Again, the Government are contributing towards its running costs.

In addition, the Government are contributing £28 million to the five-year MEDIA programme established in 1991. This European Union programme runs 19 projects mainly targeted at developing opportunities for small businesses, offering support for a range of activities relating to the development, marketing and distribution of film, television and video products, and including cinema exhibition, training and new technologies.

I turn now to the world stage. The Government recognise the need to make the United Kingdom an attractive place for foreign film makers. That is why the British Film Commission was set up in 1991, with Government funding of £3.5 million over four years. The objective of the commission is to promote the United Kingdom as a location for the filming of feature firms, television programmes and commercials.

In carrying out that activity, the British Film Commission promotes British personnel and facilities in the film industry and helps to stimulate the development of the technical support structure. In 1992, the film industry earned £182 million from overseas companies which came to the UK to make films. This year, we are already aware of at least four United States films that will be made here.

We should not ignore the export earnings of British films which are screened overseas. Last year, the export earnings of the British film industry were considerable, and £189 million was earned through royalties from the overseas exhibition of British films in foreign cinemas and on foreign television.

It is because of both the cultural and the economic importance of the film industry that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently been reviewing the state of the industry. There is much good news. Last year, there were 67 UK-produced films, with £214 million of investment—a significant increase on the previous year.

[Mr. Iain Sproat]

Foreign producers continue to invest in the United Kingdom, benefiting from the superb talent and facilities which are available.

The number of cinema screens in the UK increased by almost 400 between 1989 and 1992, with the number of admissions more than doubling over the past decade. Films continue to be one of the most popular forms of entertainment available on television and video. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that there are encouraging signs for the film industry.

However, the Government are not complacent about the British film industry, and, well before the launch of the industry's campaign "Impact"—which my hon. Friend mentioned—we were aware that many members of the industry were concerned at the levels of investment. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State held a round of consultations with all sectors of the film industry to listen to the views of the people who work in the industry.

My right hon. Friend has listened closely and sympathetically to all the proposals put before him during his meetings, and to all the representations that have been made subsequently. He is currently considering what might be done to increase the level of private investment in British film production, and he will make an announcement on his conclusions in due course.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will join me in wishing the British film industry every success in the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Wednesday 23 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

European Funding

1. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Highlands and Islands Enterprise to discuss objective 1 funding.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for the highlands discussed objective 1 arrangements with Highlands and Islands Enterprise when he met the board in Stornoway last September. Representatives of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, along with other organisations, have frequent contact with Scottish Office officials to discuss objective 1 funding.

Mrs. Michie: Is the Secretary of State aware of the considerable concern and suspicion that objective 1 funding will be used for projects and programmes already earmarked to be undertaken by the Government and local authorities? What assurances can he give Argyll and Bute and the whole Highlands and Islands Enterprise area, and what evidence will he provide to show strict adherence to the principle of additionality?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to assure the hon. Lady that there will be strict adherence to the principle of additionality. The basis for making that clear was established with the European Commission. It is for the partnership management committee to decide project priorities, but I assure the hon. Lady that the £240 million over six years that we won under objective 1 status will be most useful to the highlands and islands.

Homelessness

2. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet Shelter (Scotland) to discuss current levels of homelessness in Scotland.

3. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has held recently with Shelter (Scotland) relating to homelessness in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I was very pleased to launch on 25 February the Shelter (Scotland) housing law service, for which the Scottish Office is providing grant aid of £95,000 in 1994-95 to assist homeless people, among others.

Mr. McAllion: Shelter has warned that the Government's proposals to remove the right of the homeless in England and Wales to permanent housing will mean a return to the "Cathy Come Home" era of appalling neglect of the homeless. Will the Minister give a clear and definite commitment that in his forthcoming consultation document on Scottish homelessness, there will be no reduction in the rights of the homeless but a positive agenda for tackling the root cause of homelessness in Scotland—the dramatic decline under this Government of quality, secure and affordable housing for rent in the public sector?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There will be wide-ranging consultation, and we expect the paper to pose questions on all the main points relating to homelessness legislation. At this stage, I do not rule anything out or anything in, but we give top priority to homelessness. It is a key strategic priority and we have an extensive drive to bring empty housing in Scotland back into use.

Mr. Dunnachie: My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) referred to Shelter (Scotland), but I draw the Minister's attention to the other side of the problem—the homeless who live rough, about whom this Government have forgotten. The Government do nothing for them. Every year in winter, we read newspaper reports about homeless people who have been frozen to the ground and have to be scraped off to be buried. That is a sign of the Government's commitment to the unfortunate people of Scotland who have only cardboard homes and papier-mâché dreams.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We made it clear that statutory responsibility lies with district authorities, and the hon. Gentleman should make strong representations to his own district council. The number of people living rough is quite different from the number applying for housing as homeless or who are homeless. Only a relatively small number—well below 1,000—live rough, but nobody should live rough; everybody should have a house, to which they are entitled. It is the duty of a local authority to make that provision. In Scotland, £426 million is being provided to local authorities through the housing revenue grant allocation.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government have a housing record of which they can be proud, having built 20,000 housing units every year since 1979? Is not it outrageous that local authorities in Scotland—particularly those that are socialist-controlled—have thousands of empty housing units? Should not they be urged to rectify that ridiculous anomaly?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Since 1979, no fewer than 257,000 new houses have been built; a proportion of those have been in the public sector. Local authorities have built no fewer than 30,000 houses. We have given guidance to local authorities urging them strongly to bring their empty houses back into use. There is a wide variation between different authorities in Scotland. Some of them undoubtedly can do a great deal more.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Does the Minister recognise that many elderly people are now under-occupying their four and five-apartment homes and that homelessness could be helped if the Government embarked on a system

of building sheltered housing for the elderly, with wardens and security so that they are not worried? That would help the homeless problem in many ways, one of them being that young couples could use the four or five-apartment homes which are under-occupied at the moment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I strongly support the building of more sheltered housing in Scotland by local authorities, housing associations or the private sector. I agree that they have a major role to play. But this year Scottish Homes will be expected to do much more and it will have a lead tenancy arrangement under which empty private property is leased to housing associations for letting to homeless families. The hon. Gentleman's points are valid.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister realise that, since 1979, there has been a loss of 273,000 houses available for rent and that his record compares unfavourably with that of Hermann Goering, who was responsible for a considerably smaller reduction in houses available for rent?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Lady is referring to the nearly 300,000 houses that have been bought by sitting tenants. Of course, if those tenants had not bought them, they would have continued to live in those particular houses. I have already said that 257,000 houses have been built since 1979, and a great many more will be built in the future.

Economy

4. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Lang: My ministerial colleagues and I have frequent contacts with the STUC on a range of matters concerning the Scottish economy. We look forward to a continuing exchange of views.

Mr. Clarke: Has the Secretary of State drawn up an emergency plan to alleviate the situation when the tax increases hit the Scottish economy?

Mr. Lang: I confidently anticipate that the recovery in the economy that is now strongly evident will continue, based on low inflation, competitive exchange rates and low interest rates. All forecasters are contemplating expansion this year—including the estimates from the CBI and chambers of commerce. I do not think that the situation that the hon. Gentleman anticipates will arise.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reason why the Scottish economy today is much better than it was in the 1978-79 winter of discontent, and why the Scotch whisky industry is exporting at massive levels is that, as a result of trade union legislation passed by the Government, Scotland's unit labour costs have made us the most competitive country in the European Union?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He might like to know that our manufactured exports last year reached a record level and achieved a growth of 12.6 per cent. during the year.

Mr. Donohoe: The Secretary of State will no doubt have been well briefed on the report just issued by the Select Committee on Transport in connection with bilateral agreements and in particular the way in which they affect air freight. Does the Scottish Office intend to make any representations to improve the business of Prestwick airport?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Government responds to Select Committee reports in the conventional way. I welcome the commitment of the private sector to help Prestwick airport grow. The importance that the Government attach to infrastructural projects of all kinds is evidenced by the allocation of resources under the Scottish Office spending programme.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Has my right hon. Friend had time to read Monday's report, which predicts that up to 5 billion barrels of oil are still to be discovered and exploited off the west coast of Shetland? Does he agree that, with the expertise that we have in Aberdeen and throughout Scotland, that presents a tremendous opportunity for the entire Scottish economy?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The sympathetic tax regime and licensing system that the Government have applied to the offshore industry have stood us in good stead for many years now, and I expect that they will continue to do so as those exciting new projects are developed.

Mr. George Robertson: Does the Secretary of State accept that as the Government move from deceit to defeat, their broken tax promises will do immense damage to the Scottish economy? Does he accept that the price of their economic failure will be paid by Scottish families, who will have to pay an extra £10 a week in new taxes after April, and probably a further £8 a week as the price of butchering Scottish councils? Will the Government ever be trusted on tax again?

Mr. Lang: If the Labour party understood anything, it would realise that it is occasionally necessary to have temporary increases in taxation in order to maintain confidence in the continuing recovery of the economy—a recovery which will continue the trend of rising employment and falling unemployment in Scotland. Scotland now has the lowest unemployment of all the countries in the United Kingdom—almost two points below the European average. I have confidence that that recovery will be sustained and that in 1997 Scotland will say no to the Labour party.

Mr. Gallie: May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the 4.3 per cent. reduction in Scotland's jobless over the past 12 months? Is he aware that, in my constituency, in the Ayr travel-to-work area, the figure is 8 per cent? Will he say what he can do to sustain such progress, given the current difficult world situation?

Mr. Lang: I assure my hon. Friend that we shall stick to the policies that have delivered that success—policies that have increased employment in Scotland over the past decade by 183,000 jobs, with self-employment now at its highest ever recorded level.

Highlands and Islands

5. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next hopes to visit the highlands and islands to discuss the economic situation.

Mr. Lang: I hope to visit the highlands and islands again soon, and no doubt while I am there I shall discuss their successful economy. The highlands and islands are well placed to participate in the economic growth that it is Government policy to sustain.

Mr. Macdonald: The Secretary of State will know that the salmon farming industry in the highlands has been under severe pressure over the past year because of Norwegian dumping. What are the Government doing to prod the Commission into launching an anti-dumping investigation on the basis of the Ernst and Young report handed to the Commission by the industry last week?

Mr. Lang: We have had continuing contacts with the industry about that matter, and we have emphasised to its representatives that they must pursue the matter with the Commission. We have encouraged them to do that, and have given them some assistance in that direction. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for fisheries visited Norway recently to meet the Norwegian Fisheries Minister, and my officials have engineered a meeting between Scottish and Norwegian salmon growers. In those and in other ways, we are keen to help with the problem, which I recognise is a difficult one.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that one of the most important industries in the highlands is the Scotch whisky industry, whose exports are growing, so Scotch whisky can be mixed with privatised water in countries other than Scotland? When my right hon. Friend speaks to the Highlands and Islands development board will he ask it what estimate it would make of the impact on unemployment in the highlands of a national minimum wage and the adoption of the social chapter?

Mr. Lang: I assure my hon. Friend that the mixture of whisky and water that he mentioned is something which I look forward to seeing for some considerable time to come. The sensitivity with which successive Chancellors of the Exchequer have recently treated the issue of whisky taxation has contributed in no small part to the improved export figures, as has the progress made in persuading countries round the world to readdress the issue of their taxation of whisky.

Mr. Wray: Does the Secretary of State agree with the House that water is an important commodity to the economy in the highlands and islands? Given that the overwhelming majority of the people of Strathclyde—97 per cent.—voted against the prospect in a referendum, will the right hon. Gentleman now abandon his plans for the privatisation of water, for setting up boards and for franchising of any kind?

Mr. Lang: We do not have plans to privatise water and therefore we cannot abandon them. However, I am confident that the plans that we have for public water authorities will lead to the most efficient and the cheapest source of water and sewerage services under the new local authority structure.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Secretary of State aware that, at the end of the month, when the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay is closed, 1,500 jobs will be lost to the north of Scotland as a result of the misguided policies of the Government? Is he aware that that has led to the ending of apprenticeships at the site and to a draining of scientific skills, which must be the basis of the future of the economy of the north and that, notwithstanding the excellent work that has been done by development agencies, those skills are in short supply? What plans does he have to use the site at Dounreay as a focus for skilled development of advanced industries?

Mr. Lang: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that there would be no point in the Government sustaining employment or activities for which they could not see a recognised purpose and that, therefore, the decision about Dounreay was right. Nevertheless, substantial resources have been injected into the area to help the local economy to diversify and they are already beginning to yield considerable success.

Queensferry Road Bridge

6. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of producing the document "Setting Forth"; and what costs have been incurred since its publication in connection with the proposal to build a second road bridge at Queensferry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The "Setting Forth" consultation document and the Government's response cost £54,000 to produce. Feasibility studies have since been conducted into proposals for a new bridge and link roads as part of the "Setting Forth" package, which have cost about £3.5 million.

Mr. Darling: As so much public money has been squandered, will the Minister hold a full public inquiry so that the need for that bridge, the rail-based alternative and the environmental impact of the bridge may be examined? Does he accept that, just as 97 per cent. of people said no to water privatisation, 97 per cent. of people who live in his constituency, in my constituency and in Scotland would say no to that act of monumental stupidity?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I do not accept that there is any point in prejudging an issue before the full facts are known. Reports on the feasibility studies will be with me in the next few weeks and thereafter will be made available publicly. The hon. Gentleman used the expression "squandered". I shall make it quite clear that the cost to date is less than 1 per cent. of the total potential investment under "Setting Forth". The Government's response document estimated costs of £382 million for proposals for a new bridge and roads, with rail improvements costing £9 million. Almost 50 per cent. of the package of proposals relates to projects other than the bridge—park-and-ride, a possible railway stop near the airport, new railway stops and countless other measures. The matter needs to be considered objectively as a whole, which it shall be as soon as the feasibility reports are available.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: When the Secretary of State for the Environment is telling us that we must place less reliance on the motor car, why is the Scottish Office persisting in this ludicrous project? Is not the proper way in which to approach the difficulty of access to Lothian from Fife to make a massive investment in public transport, especially the rail network?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. and learned Gentleman should be aware that already some 70 per cent.

of transport is accounted for by public transport across the Forth and that is the potential market. Obviously, we must get the balance right between public and private transport. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) asked about a local public inquiry. If the Secretary of State were minded to proceed, the normal statutory processes would obviously be involved, which would almost certainly result in a public inquiry.

Game Fish Stocks

7. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies are being carried out on behalf of his Department to assess the effect on game fish stocks in Scotland of predation by fish-eating birds.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): The Scottish Office undertakes long-term research into salmon stocks and has commissioned work on the diet of fish-eating birds to help assess the effects of predation.

Mr. Kynoch: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. He will he aware of the importance to the economy of my constituency of salmon fishing on the River Dee and the River North Esk. Is he aware that there is significant concern about the low level of salmon stocks in the rivers, which is believed to be due partly to drift-netting in the north-east of England and also to predation by fish-eating birds such as goosander? Will he accelerate the phasing out of north-east drift-netters and, if investigations show that goosander are a problem, will he increase the level of culling of those birds?

Sir Hector Monro: I absolutely accept what my hon. Friend says about the importance of north-east rivers to tourism and rod fishing. We are careful about issuing licences and do so only after discussions with Scottish National Heritage. Where it is justified, licences will be issued. I am aware of the continuing contention surrounding the north-east drift-nets and I am glad that phasing out has begun; 13 per cent. occurred in the first year, which is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that there is a plentiful supply of game fish in Loch Bradan reservoir which provides fresh water to my constituents, 97 per cent. of whom voted against the Government's water proposals? In view of that, how can the Government in all honesty still press ahead with the unwanted, unnecessary and unworkable proposals?

Sir Hector Monro: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman rates his vote on a par with his salmon. I note that the Labour party is committing suicide in 1997 by asking us to vote no.

Road Safety

8. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new initiatives he has for improving safety on Scottish trunk roads.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office is taking a number of new initiatives in the fields of engineering, education and enforcement, which are designed to improve safety on trunk and other roads in Scotland. These include measures to reduce vehicle speeds to bring down the number and severity of accidents.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware that, rather than taking holidays in some grotty, overpriced, lager-lout-infested continental resort, I prefer to spend my holidays hill walking in Scotland? Is he aware that, to get to the hills and mountains, one must drive along many miles of dual carriageways and motorways, many of which do not have crash barriers along the central reservation—including the A74, along a number of miles of which there were no crash barriers until recently? What progress has been made in that important safety area?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the matter. We made a deliberate policy decision to install safety barriers between dual carriageways and motorways. That is being done through a rolling programme not only for new motorways but for all existing ones. I am encouraged that my hon. Friend spends his holidays in Scotland, as do many of my colleagues on the Conservative Benches. Although he may not be attracted to lager, the water of life—by which I mean whisky—is good when taken in moderation.

Dr. Godman: Does the Minister agree that as regards prevention and deterrence, the finest and most effective safety measure to be taken on our roads is the substantial presence of police patrol cars? Why are there so few of them on our roads? Why is the Scottish Office refusing to give the assistance that is needed to put more cars and more police officers on our roads?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Some time ago, there was an additional allocation for more police vehicles in Scotland and, of course, capital allocations for the police have been increased. As well as cars, we are installing speed detection cameras. They have had a valuable deterrent effect in slowing down motorists who otherwise would be checked and brought to book.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I ask my hon. Friend—as I frequently have, although not in the House—to improve signposting in Scotland? Nothing is more dangerous than a person who does not know where he is going? *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition. In a letter from the Department, I was told that a person who is distracted by signposts is more likely to be unsafe than someone who is not so distracted. I thought that someone who did not know where he was going was more likely to be a danger than someone who did know where he was going. I have frequently asked my hon. Friend to make signposts available, for instance, on the Stirling road; a choice of Edinburgh or Glasgow is given, but the signposts do not tell people where the Kincardine Bridge is.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are putting in place more route action plans. It is important to have uniform signs and marking, as well as skid-resistant surfacing and safety fencing where appropriate. We will bear in mind my hon. and learned Friend's points. I am aware of his aesthetic objections to gantries, but they, too, serve a valuable purpose in giving information to motorists.

Mr. McFall: The Minister will know that, among other roads, the A82, A77 and A78 trunk roads have school buses travelling along them. Is not it beyond belief that the Government can find resources for national television and radio campaigns that encourage the use of seat belts in all minibuses and coaches, while they stonewall on calls to

legislate to make it mandatory for seat belts to be fitted in all minibuses and coaches? Sanctimonious appeals by the Government for the public to act responsibly are insufficient. Does the Minister agree that every school pupil is entitled to a seat on a bus to himself? Will the Government therefore amend the legislation to ensure that and to assist local authorities in their drive to get safety on school buses?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware of the deep-felt concern on that subject following the recent tragic accidents in Biggar and elsewhere. The matter is being urgently and actively considered, and I have met the Minister for Roads and Traffic at the Department of Transport. One of the problems is that of enforcement, as buses from other parts of Europe come here and the situation is governed by an EC regulation. I accept the urgency of the matter.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that while signposting and barriers are always helpful, the basic condition of the road is more important? Will he give an assurance that, in the near future, the A75 to Carlisle will be upgraded? Is not that vital both to the economies of south-west Scotland and of Northern Ireland and to the safety of those who travel on that road?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have spent over £100 million on such trunk roads. Of course that is an important route for Northern Ireland and we will continue to give priority where we can to it and to other trunk roads, particularly the M74.

Local Government Finance

9. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local government finance.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. Friend and I met representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 28 January, and plan to meet them again on 17 June as part of the normal consultation with the convention on local government finance matters.

Mr. Maxton: Does the Minister agree that the cavalier dismissals from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State of the amazing referendum result on the future of water in Scotland are insulting to the intelligence of the people of Strathclyde? Are not they particularly insulting to the 96 per cent. of the Minister's electorate who voted no in that referendum? Are not they also a complete negation of all democratic principles in Scotland? Will the Minister now take the opportunity to tell COSLA that he is withdrawing his proposals for water, or have we now reached the point where the views of the Scottish people do not mean a damn thing to the Government?

Mr. Stewart: The answers to the hon. Gentleman's questions are no, no, no and no.

In relation to local government finance, if Strathclyde can easily find £750,000 for a wholly misleading and meaningless exercise, it suggests that, if anything, my right hon. Friend's local government finance settlement verged towards the excessively generous in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great challenges for local government finance during the next few years will be how we adequately fund the updating of the water and sewerage systems throughout Scotland? That challenge can be met only if it is looked at objectively, sanely and in the light of where funds can be obtained from. The displaying of badges does nothing to help the debate, and it will certainly not help the Standing Committee when the Chairman is displaying his prejudice.

Mr. Stewart: Could I say in response to my hon. Friend's general point—

Madam Speaker: Order. I did not understand the last sentence of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I wonder whether he could make it clear because I am not sure whether what he said was acceptable.

Mr. Walker: By convention, in the Chamber, the Chairmen of Standing Committees do not speak or show their views on matters that are being discussed in a Committee. I believe that an error of judgment has been made today.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is right to refer to the need for new investment in water and sewerage services in Scotland.

Mr. George Robertson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I normally take points of order at the end of questions, but I have the impression that the hon. Gentleman who has just repeated his question did not repeat it in exactly the same terms. I believe that he said originally that the Chairman of a Standing Committee was prejudiced because he was wearing a badge. *[Interruption.]* Order. Let me deal with the matter. If that is the case, I require the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his remarks and to rephrase them.

Mr. Walker: I have no hesitation in obeying your instruction to withdraw remarks because I always accept the decisions of the Chair. I believe that an error of judgment has been made—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has a right to an opinion, provided that it is within the rules of the House.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I believe that an error of judgment has been made. I believe that I was in order to draw attention to it. If I did so wrongly, I apologise to you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. We shall now have the Minister to respond to the original question.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North was right to refer to the need for new investment in water and sewerage services in Scotland. We have proposed an effective partnership between the public and private sectors to ensure that.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Minister expect that when he and the Secretary of State next meet the president of COSLA, Councillor Gray will remind them of a letter that he received from the Prime Minister shortly before Christmas on water and sewerage services, which said that the proper way to proceed was one that would allow

Scottish opinion to be given expression through Members of Parliament? There can be no doubt that Scottish opinion is in favour of the removal of the Government's proposal for water and sewerage. The proper parliamentary response would be to remove the relevant clauses from the Bill and to make proposals that would allow for water and sewerage services to be in the hands of democratically accountable people. Will the Minister do that?

Mr. Stewart: The Bill to reform local government in Scotland and change the structure of the delivery of water and sewerage services was presented to the House and received a Second Reading by a majority of 41.

Mr. Salmond: Does the Minister agree with COSLA that the results of the Strathclyde water ballot demonstrate the democratic bankruptcy of this Westminster Parliament? Who will decide the future of Scotland's water? Will it be the 1 million or more Scots who reject the Minister's plans or the five English Tory Members of Parliament in a House of Commons Committee who have dictated each and every vote against the Scottish public interest?

Mr. Stewart: Given the reception that the hon. Gentleman's question received on the Labour Benches, it seems that, yet again, the united front against the Government has fallen apart. The Bill is in Committee. It is being considered line by line in great detail. It will come back to the House. The House will decide on the Bill and it will then go to another place. I must disagree with the hon. Gentleman fundamentally. This is the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.

Mr. George Robertson: I am not in the slightest surprised that the Secretary of State for Scotland has dodged the column on this issue today of all days and passed the buck to the junior Minister. After yesterday's historic 97 per cent. rejection of their water policy, the Government have to face the fact that they have decisively and humiliatingly lost the argument and that if they continue to lose arguments and to treat the people of Scotland and their views with contempt and arrogance, on 5 May they will get the punishment that they richly deserve. Surely even this Minister can now see that the message from the people of Scotland to the Government is loud and clear: scrap the plans for water and keep it under local democratic control.

Mr. Stewart: This is the first question I have answered during Question Time today—I thought for a moment that I might not be answering any. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has answered a considerable number of questions. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) knows perfectly well that I have never accepted the legitimacy of the so-called referendum in Strathclyde—not beforehand, not during and not afterwards. Of course, the hon. Gentleman is entitled to argue his case in the Standing Committee on those occasions when he attends its sittings.

Parliament Building

10. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about the future of the Scottish Parliament building, currently used by the Crown Office.

Mr. Lang: The old Royal high school was vacated by the Crown Office on 31 January and was then offered for sale to its former owners, Edinburgh district council, by its present owners, Property Holdings, that part of the Department of the Environment responsible for Government buildings. I understand that the council has decided to buy the building.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Secretary of State congratulate Edinburgh district council on having the foresight to buy back the building as a future home for the Scottish Parliament? In view of recent suggestions that, in the meantime, the building might be used as a courthouse for the trials of certain categories of international criminals, would not it be appropriate to place in the dock the Secretary of State and his henchmen on the Government Front Bench who are betraying the people of Scotland by conspiring to steal their water and refusing them a Scottish Parliament, which is their democratic right?

Mr. Lang: I hope that Edinburgh district council will have more foresight about the future use of the building than the hon. Gentleman. As far as I am concerned, the Government are answerable to the High Court of Parliament.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my right hon. Friend concede that Edinburgh is rapidly going down the same road as London, with hotel rooms costing a fortune? Does he think that, just as we did away with the last bastion of socialism—the GLC opposite—which is now being made into a hotel, which will help to lower the prices of hotel rooms—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We are a long way from across the River Thames. We are afloat on this one. I want to hear a question that relates to the original question.

Mr. Galloway: Given the almost unbelievably contemptuous—even by the Secretary of State's standards—way in which an exercise where 1.25 million Scots put pen to paper, paper to envelope, envelope to pillar box and pillar box to the Strathclyde region to demonstrate their views on the privatisation of Scottish water—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have chastised one hon. Member for not relating his question to the original question. I want a question that relates to what is on the Order Paper.

Mr. Galloway: Why cannot we have, not a so-called referendum, but a Government-organised referendum on the future of the Scottish Parliament building, the future of Scottish government and national self-determination for the Scottish people? Will the Government ever listen to Scottish voices?

Mr. Lang: Yet again, the hon. Gentleman comes along with another multi-option referendum in mind. The fact is that we have well-established democratic procedures which have been tried and tested over the years and are impervious to the kind of mob rule that the hon. Gentleman favours so much—and it is noticeable that the mechanisms of mob rule are the ones that he favours.

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

11. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effect of the provisions of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill on the standards of public life in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The introduction of single-tier councils will mean that local authorities in Scotland and those who serve on them are more accountable, more accessible and more responsive to their electorates.

Mr. Shaw: Is my hon. Friend aware that four companies controlled by Monklands district councillors have made losses of about £6 million over three years, resulting in Monklands council having one of the highest council taxes in Scotland? Is not he concerned that local government legislation does not allow for those council companies' accounts to be investigated properly? Will the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill be amended to ensure that such accounts are investigated properly? Will he consider the fact that Airdrie has had enough of Coatbridge and might want to go its separate way after local government reorganisation in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: On my hon. Friend's last point, I have agreed to meet a number of Opposition Members who represent constituencies in Lanarkshire to hear their views on council boundaries under the new system. As for his first point, as I understand the figures, he is correct to say that the Monklands-owned companies have lost about £6 million. That is a cause of general concern, which has been raised with us as a matter of principle, and we are considering the possibility of amending the Bill to change the monitoring of companies owned by councils.

Mr. McLeish: Would not the standards of public life in Scotland be greatly enhanced if the Government stopped treating the electors of Scotland with such arrogance and contempt? Is the Minister now willing to listen to the 1.2 million people in Strathclyde who said no to Tory proposals to butcher our water and sewerage industries and, of course, in the process inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Government? Or is the Minister willing simply to accept that the price of the Government's stupidity, authoritarianism and sheer bloody-mindedness will be the continuing destruction of public confidence in the democratic process, the continuing erosion of standards of public life and, more important for that lot across the Chamber on the Government Benches, the virtual annihilation of the Tories at the next regional and European elections?

Mr. Stewart: I hardly think that that question is worth an answer. It is an absolute disgrace that members of Labour's Front Bench should dress up like childish rabble. As I said to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), I have consistently stated that the so-called referendum was not legitimate. However, as the hon. Member also knows, we have amended the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill in Standing Committee in response to reasoned debate.

Mr. Riddick: Will the local government reforms put an end to the shocking behaviour of Labour-controlled Monklands council, which has issued special green job application forms to friends and relatives of Labour councillors and pink application forms to everyone else? Does my hon. Friend agree that the yellow card should be shown to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who has had nothing to say about the matter, but that the red card should be shown to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the Leader of the Opposition, who has refused to condemn the *scandalous behaviour of providing jobs for Labour boys*?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right to refer to the fact that many people are extremely puzzled by the Leader of the Opposition's continuing silence on those matters. On my hon. Friend's specific point about the different colour forms, my information is that, following considerable public criticism, that practice has now been abandoned by the council.

Mr. Hood: When the Minister gets to deal with tourism, in the Committee, will he step back from the Government's nonsensical decision to amalgamate Clyde Valley—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I cautioned the House twice last week about the fact that we do not discuss what is taking place in Standing Committee. That is for the Committee itself until it reports to the House.

Mr. Hood: Will the Government go back on the nonsensical decision that they have taken to amalgamate Clyde Valley tourist board with Glasgow tourist board? Is the Minister aware that that will destroy jobs and tourism in the Clyde valley? It is nonsense and the Government should withdraw from it.

Mr. Stewart: I do not agree with what the hon. Gentleman said. Obviously, the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) had to take a wide range of factors into account, and has done so. I understand that my hon. Friend has had a meeting with the hon. Gentleman, but I am sorry to say that there seems to be a continuing disagreement with his views. I do not believe for a moment that the new structure will have the adverse effect that the hon. Gentleman believes that it will.

VAT on Fuel

12. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what special measures he plans to monitor the effects of VAT on fuel on the elderly and the low-paid in a colder climate than the British average; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: A generous package of compensation measures is in place to assist vulnerable people with the costs of VAT on domestic fuel.

The Common Services Agency of the Scottish health service already gathers statistics on hospital admissions, including those relating to hypothermia and other ailments that may be linked to winter conditions.

Mr. Graham: The Minister knows well that in Scotland we need 40 per cent. more energy to heat houses than do people in the south. We have 2 million elderly and disabled people who are relying on being able to heat their homes, yet the Government create a loophole whereby the rich get warmer and the poor get colder. When will this mean-minded, cold-hearted, loopy-loo Government do

something to fight for the elderly and the disabled, to allow them to heat their homes so that they can live in comfort and not in cold, damp, wet houses?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is talking even more rubbish than he usually does. The measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will ensure that the introduction of VAT does not put the cost of fuel beyond the poorest in our society. The package that has been announced is worth about £2.5 billion over three years. It covers direct help from the DSS, cold weather payments and increased resources for the home energy efficiency scheme. Those are the facts.

Mr. Kynoch: My hon. Friend will be aware that the 50p and 70p package which has been announced is sufficient to pay a fuel bill of £325 or £455 respectively. Is he aware that figures that I have received from Scottish Hydro Electric plc show that the average electricity bill for a typical two-apartment home in the north of Scotland is about £300 per annum, which means that the package is sufficient to compensate? Should not the Opposition, instead of scaremongering, go out with the facts and try to reassure elderly people who are less fortunate than themselves?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right. He refers to electricity prices, which have fallen. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should listen to this. Electricity prices have decreased by about 8 per cent. in real terms since 1986. Tariffs in Scotland are among the lowest in the United Kingdom. That is partly a result of the success of the Government's privatisation policy.

Housing

13. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the amount of capital spending that would be required to cure public housing in Glasgow and Scotland of dampness and water and wind ingress.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The 1991 Scottish house condition survey showed the extent to which local authority and new town dwellings were affected by dampness. No information is available as regards wind ingress. Obviously, the degree of severity will vary and it is for individual landlords to estimate the cost of works involved in tackling dampness in their stock.

Mr. Davidson: Does the Minister agree that the action that is being taken by the Government to cure dampness is insufficient? Does he also agree that at least 97 per cent. of Scots believe that the Government are not doing enough in that regard? Is not it absurd that the Government are not prepared to help Scots to get rid of water that they do not want, but are insisting on getting rid of the water that they want, through their councils, to keep?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Glasgow's case, the resources to be spent on public sector housing in the coming year amount to £95.85 million. In addition, there is an allocation of more than £25 million for improvement grants and repair grants. Thus, the total is £121 million. I accept that not everything can be done overnight. However, that matter should be dealt with as a top priority, especially where there is severe dampness and condensation. I have no doubt that Glasgow district council has the resources and the ability to take this policy forward effectively.

Sir David Steel: Will the Minister try to speed up a reply to me on the question of communal blocks of housing in my constituency that suffer from water penetration? The fact that some of those have been sold to private individuals and that others are in the hands of local authorities has resulted in a legislative nightmare. The hon. Gentleman should be more expeditious in his offers of help.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will look into the right hon. Gentleman's particular point concerning communal blocks in his constituency. The non-housing revenue account and the improvement and repair grants can also be of assistance in the case of privately owned housing, and that factor needs also to be borne in mind.

Woodlands (Public Access)

14. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the powers currently available to the Forestry Commission to ensure woodland sold by it retains public access rights; and what plans he has to extend public access rights to such land.

Sir Hector Monro: Before offering a woodland for sale, the Forestry Commission notifies the relevant local authority and offers to enter into an access agreement with it to provide for continued public access after sale. Public rights of way are not, of course, affected by changes of ownership.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. He will know that the Forestry Commission has been effective in providing more and greater access to forests, particularly those in my constituency of South Dorset. Most of my constituents are very keen that, following the Government's current review of forestry, they should continue to have access. When does my hon. Friend expect to be able to come forward with the Government's plans to get over some of the problems arising from the denial of access when the Forestry Commission sells land?

Sir Hector Monro: I note what my hon. Friend says. I am glad that he has had such a satisfactory relationship with the commission in Dorset. As he knows, we received the forestry review group's report at the end of last month. That is important and we must go through it in great detail with all the Ministers involved. We hope to come to conclusions fairly soon. I assure my hon. Friend that access is a high priority, especially given that a sub-committee, having looked into the question, was not too impressed with what had been happening.

Mr. Galbraith: Is the Minister aware that in Scotland, there is widespread concern about access to the countryside and to the mountains, not just because of the privatisation of forests but because of clauses 52 and 53 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill? Will the hon. Gentleman try to ensure that those two clauses, which deal with aggravated trespass, do not apply to Scotland?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman knows that this question deals with the Forestry Commission and with

access to forests. The House will have noted his remarks, but I think that he is misinformed as to the likely results of the two clauses to which he has referred.

Exports (Woollen Goods)

15. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual export value of Scottish woollen scarves and mufflers for the past three years.

Mr. Stewart: Export values for the United Kingdom for scarves and other accessories of any knitted or crocheted material were £53.5 million in 1990, £53.4 million in 1991 and £65.2 million in 1992. Figures for the whole of 1993 are not yet available. I hope that this wraps up the information requested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the Scottish textile industry on its huge success over many years, against fierce competition? Is my hon. Friend aware that, since that lot opposite embraced the American-Anglo friendship, exports to America have increased? In view of that, will he give a particular hon. Member not the Grand Order of the Thistle but the "grand order of the muffler"?

Mr. Stewart: I hope that I can reassure my hon. Friend that the industry in Scotland is alert to all opportunities in the marketplace, both nationally and internationally. Indeed, there may well be an increased market among Labour Members who may wish to wear woolly scarves and hats made in Scotland when they visit their friends in Belgravia and elsewhere.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Is the Minister aware that, notwithstanding the figures for exports of mufflers and scarves, no mufflers and scarves in the colours of Clyde football club are available in Cumbernauld new town, where the club recently took up occupation of its new stadium? Is he aware that the new stadium is a great success, that it is part of a new complex for business in Scotland and that the people are enthusiastic about that, just as they are enthusiastic about bringing jobs to Cumbernauld?

Mr. Stewart: I am glad to reassure the hon. Gentleman that I entirely agree with him. Although I was not able to attend the opening of the new stadium, as he was, it is an excellent asset and advertisement for Cumbernauld new town.

Personal Pensions

3.30 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the crisis in personal pensions that now threatens the retirement incomes of more than 2 million people".

The problem is very clear and very simple, but the Government have attempted to conceal it behind complacency and inaction.

The problem affects people who have left the state earnings-related pension scheme, but whose incomes are below about £10,000 a year. Their contribution to their personal pensions is too low: after the pension companies have taken management fees and profits out of their savings, their pensions will be less than they were under SERPS.

The Government slipped out the figures that reveal the position just before Christmas. In January, 147 Labour Members signed a resolution highlighting the problem. Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte estimates that 2.4 million people—40 per cent. of all those who have personal pensions—are now affected in this way. Despite that continuing pressure, the Government have done and said nothing.

With every day that passes, the future retirement incomes of nearly 2.5 million people are being unnecessarily and scandalously reduced. The Government have had more than enough opportunities to make a statement or arrange a debate in the House; I hope that it will now be possible for the House to adjourn, so that we can debate the matter that the Government do not wish us to debate.

Madam Speaker: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said. I must state my decision without giving any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider the matter that he has raised appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Scottish Question Time, on Question 10, I endeavoured to come up with a helpful supplementary about using the planned Scottish parliament building in Edinburgh to create extra hotel rooms, as was done in London with the building used by the Greater London council. You cut me off in my prime, and did not allow me to explain the connection with Question 10. It was clear where my question was leading, as will be seen from *Hansard* tomorrow. I am particularly upset by the fact that, although you ruled the following supplementary out of order as well, you allowed the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) to continue.

Madam Speaker: I quite understand that the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) was working towards the relevant part of his supplementary, but perhaps I might advise him—and other hon. Members—to begin with the relevant part in future, rather than keeping me waiting in hope.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I raise this matter with you in your role as guardian of the rights of Back Bench Members.

Last Monday, I arranged through the office of the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department to visit Campsfield detention centre near Oxford tomorrow. I saw the Minister last night and thanked him for granting my request. He wished me well and assured me that I would find the detention centre very comfortable.

You, Madam Speaker, will understand my concern and mystification when, a few hours ago, I received a message from the Minister's office that his permission had been withdrawn and my visit was considered inappropriate. That was despite the fact that a senior immigration officer had readily agreed to accompany me and had agreed to my request that I should be allowed to view the centre and to speak to the management and to any detainees who wished to talk to me. You will know that some detainees are on hunger strike and others have been dispersed from Oxford to other prisons and detention centres.

As the Home Secretary has consistently refused to make a statement on this matter, and there is no other way—apart from visiting the centre—that hon. Members can ascertain the true facts, I should be grateful if you could bring any pressure to bear on the Home Office to facilitate such visits by hon. Members.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it related to the previous point of order?

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, Madam Speaker. You will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and I have repeatedly raised the issue of Campsfield detention centre and the hunger strike there. You will also recall that I have asked for a debate and for the Minister to receive letters and meet a delegation of hon. Members to discuss what is going on at Campsfield detention centre. You urged me to contact his office, which I have done.

I was astounded when, two hours ago, my office received a phone call followed by a fax from the Minister's office saying that he is not even prepared to meet a delegation of hon. Members to discuss what is going on in Campsfield detention centre, including the operation of the hunger strike and the advice given to the private security company—Group 4—which is in charge of the detention centre.

The only recourse for individual hon. Members who are deeply concerned about the issue is to raise it with you, Madam Speaker, and ask that the Home Secretary is brought to the House to make a statement, or that, by some means, those of us who wish to do so can give the matter a public airing so that what we believe is a growing scandal in the treatment of asylum seekers is heard, debated and discussed in the House and those poor people who fled oppression can gain some form of justice in Britain.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you confirm that if a Minister intimidated, or intended to intimidate, hon. Members in the carrying out of their duty, or in any way

prevented them from doing so, that could be construed as a breach of privilege? The actions of Ministers are not excluded from the ordinary remedies available to the House—the High Court of Parliament.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member has raised a hypothetical point, but the two hon. Members who attempted to raise with me what they call a point of order credit me with more influence than I have. I have no influence whatsoever on Ministers in allowing hon. Members to see various establishments. A point of order should concern a breach of our Standing Orders or procedures. However, there will be opportunities later this week when hon. Members may wish to press those on the Government Front Bench for a debate on this matter, and no doubt they will attempt to do so.

Withdrawal of Medical Treatment

3.38 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prescribe circumstances in which medical treatment and nutrition can be withdrawn and to secure the continued provision in such circumstances of palliative care; and for connected purposes.

The Bill concerns an extremely sensitive subject, relating as it does to the last great unmentionable—the end which confronts all mankind.

I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating those in another place who recently produced an outstanding report on the complex issue of medical ethics. There is a great deal of good sense in its recommendations, not least in its unanimous rejection of euthanasia, and I hope that it will point the way ahead for many years to come.

I seek to provide the House with an opportunity to reaffirm its opposition to the practice of euthanasia—the intentional killing of a patient by act or omission as part of his or her medical treatment. That practice is, and must remain, illegal. Most of the evidence received by the House of Lords Select Committee on Medical Ethics rejected the practice of euthanasia. The British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing, the National Hospice Council and, indeed, other health care organisations all gave evidence to that effect.

The Medical Ethics Select Committee recognised that the medical, legal and social arguments against euthanasia were particularly strong. Medically, it recognised that advances in palliative care had enabled the pain and distress of terminal illness to be relieved in the vast majority of cases. Legally, it recognised that the prohibition of intentional killing is the cornerstone of the law and social relationships and that that protection must not be diminished in any way. Socially, it recognised that, while there may be individual cases where some may consider euthanasia appropriate, the interests of the individual cannot be separated from those of society.

To legalise euthanasia would result in the vulnerable, the elderly, the lonely, the sick or the distressed feeling pressure—whether real or imagined—to request an early death.

In the face of those arguments, there is a minority who think that euthanasia should be legalised. The Voluntary Euthanasia Society continues mischievously to claim that 79 per cent. of people in this country are in favour of euthanasia, basing that claim on an opinion poll that it commissioned. However, an investigation by the Select Committee revealed that it asked the question:

"Would you like medical assistance to a peaceful death?"

Few would respond in the negative to such a loaded question.

Recently in a public debate, a leading member of the VES stated that many doctors in the United Kingdom are in favour of euthanasia. In reality, at its last conference, the BMA voted four to one against the legalisation of the practice.

We need to clarify the difficult issues involved in the withdrawal of medical treatment. Decisions about medical treatment and the end of life are more complicated now than they have been in the past. As a result of advances in medical technology, patients live longer and can survive conditions that in the past would have meant a swift end.

[Mr. Gary Waller]

While those advances are welcome, they sometimes make it necessary to consider whether initiating a course of treatment will benefit or be a burden to the patient.

The decision can be made more easily in some cases than in others. Where a patient is competent, the decision may be arrived at through discussion between the patient, the relatives and the health care team. I stress that the autonomy of the patient is crucial and if a patient does not want to persist with an aggressive form of treatment, that decision should be respected and treatment withheld or withdrawn. That is good medical practice. It has long been accepted that a doctor does not have to strive officiously to maintain life. The prolongation of life is not the exclusive aim of medical practice, and as the founder of the present-day hospice movement, Dame Cicely Saunders, put it:

"doctors are committed to giving appropriate care to their patients, not to every treatment that may be technically possible".

With regard to incompetent patients, or where a patient is confused or unconscious, decisions about treatment withdrawal can be much more complex, for it is difficult to know what such patients' wishes are in the current situation. Advance directives can be helpful in providing guidance about the treatment of such patients, but we should not forget that not all possible situations can be foreseen. No doctor in this country should ever have to face possible legal action because he or she did not, or could not, follow an advance directive to the letter. Such action has taken place in the United States.

If there is no indication of a patient's wishes, decisions must rest with the health care team and the family of the patient. They have to decide whether the treatment to be given is appropriate. That entails an analysis of whether the benefits of treatment will outweigh the burden of the medical procedures.

The House of Lords Select Committee addressed the issue in relation to the case of my constituent Tony Bland, who was tragically left in a vegetative state following the Hillsborough disaster. The Select Committee rightly stated in paragraph 257 of its report:

"it might well have been decided long before application was made to the court that treatment with antibiotics was inappropriate, given that recovery from the inevitable complications of infection could add nothing to his well-being as a person."

In short, it would have been perfectly ethical for Tony Bland to be allowed to die long before he did, had the health care professionals involved in his case been advised differently. I take this opportunity to pay my tribute to Tony Bland's parents and to all those people who cared for him towards the end of his life.

The House of Lords Select Committee was divided on one issue: the difficult one of nutrition and hydration. In my view, however, food and water are such vital necessities that their withdrawal from a patient who is not in a terminal state can be intended to have only one outcome—killing that patient. They should only be withdrawn, therefore, from a patient who is approaching death and where their administration would be burdensome. I stress that the report of the Select Committee pointed out that the appropriate handling of a case at an earlier stage would mean that the sort of dilemma that the courts considered last year need never arise.

Thirdly, I endorse the Select Committee's call for the provision of greater resources for palliative care, of the type provided by the hospice movement to the terminally ill. With almost 200 centres for palliative care in the United Kingdom and with provision for the dissemination of care in hospitals and in the community, so much has been achieved in recent years. In my constituency, the Sue Ryder Manorlands hospice and Ardenlea, which is run by the Marie Curie Memorial Foundation, are two of many whose dedicated work is so highly regarded by Members of Parliament.

Additionally, the Select Committee suggested that research into pain relief and symptom control should be more fully supported. I understand that the Government will soon reply to its report and I hope that there will be a positive response to that and to other valuable suggestions.

The demand for palliative care is such that it should be made more widely available. It need not disturb us if, as a secondary effect of such care, the life of the patient may be shortened. That is the so-called principle of double effect, which was supported and upheld by the Select Committee. If the doctor intends to relieve pain and the treatment given is appropriate to that end, the possible double effect should not be an obstacle to such treatment.

I hope that all those people who are interested in such issues will note and heed the warnings from developments overseas. The *British Medical Journal* reported last month that the Dutch Attorney-General had ruled that a psychiatrist who helped a physically fit, but depressed 50-year-old woman to commit suicide should not be prosecuted. There is also overwhelming evidence that involuntary euthanasia has become widespread. Such cases show that Holland presents a model of how a slippery slope may become ever steeper.

By supporting the Bill, the House will echo the great majority of the medical profession who oppose euthanasia. The House will support them in the difficult decisions that they must often take not to persist with medical treatment that would be of no benefit to their terminally ill patients. It will also give renewed confidence to the hospices and palliative care teams who see euthanasia as a negation, in every way, of the ethos that underpins their commitment and inspires their work. Our message today should be clear and it must be unmistakable: with the right sort of care, life can be lived to the full to the very end.

3.47 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I wish to oppose the ten-minute Bill motion of the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller). I have great regard for the hon. Gentleman, but the way in which the Bill has been introduced is ill-conceived.

I support the concept of euthanasia, not because I am oblivious to the significance of human life, but because, if the hon. Member for Keighley were successful and got the Bill on the statute book, it would further restrict the right of an individual to choose. Everyone has the right to maximum dignity in life and indeed, in death. Through his Bill, the hon. Gentleman seeks to endorse the main themes of the Select Committee on Medical Ethics in another place, as he said. By opposing euthanasia in its report, that Committee attacked the rights of those people who wish to leave this life with dignity.

Seneca wrote:

"If I can choose between a death of torture and one that is simple and easy, why should I not select the latter? As I choose the ship in which I sail and the house which I inhabit, so will I

choose the death by which I leave life."
Historians will no doubt recall that Seneca was forced to commit suicide.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Absolutely.

Mr. Banks: I knew that there would be at least one historian in the House who would remember that.

Those who support euthanasia stress the voluntary nature of the act. It is not compulsory. Nothing in this life is simple and the same is true in death. I accept that multiple moral considerations are involved; doctors and close relatives can find themselves facing terrible dilemmas. However, the right of an individual to choose must arch across those difficulties.

The hon. Member for Keighley mentioned the withdrawal of medical treatment. The medical profession makes considerable use of what may be described as passive euthanasia. A doctor can exercise many decisions —such as not resuscitating a patient after a heart attack, not administering antibiotics to treat pneumonia or other infections mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, and not inserting artificial feeding tubes through the nose or direct into the stomach. All are examples of passive euthanasia, and they are extensively discussed by the medical profession—if only because advances in medical science allow doctors to prolong the dying process.

Compassionate doctors are often caught between the suffering of their patients and their duty, as they see it, to prolong life. If a doctor does not treat a life-threatening condition in an already sick patient, the doctor makes the choice on the patient's behalf. I see that as a form of medical paternalism—the idea that doctor always knows best. The British Medical Association clearly states that the power to decide rests with patients. A report in the *British Medical Journal* in December 1991 deplored the lack of guidelines for non-resuscitation orders in hospitals. Regrettably, in far too many cases the wishes of the patient are never even sought, never mind taken into consideration.

Under British law, competent adults have the right to refuse any or all medical treatment. That right is often invoked by people who want to die with dignity, at a time of their own choosing.

The hon. Member for Keighley spoke of a patient becoming incompetent or unconscious of what is happening, or being unable to communicate clearly. In such a situation, doctors cannot know a patient's wishes. Would they welcome a non-treatment decision or the intrusive and sometimes violent treatment necessary to sustain life?

The hon. Gentleman touched on, but moved quickly away from, the usefulness of advance directives—or living wills, as they are known. Right hon. and hon. Members will no doubt be delighted to know that it is not my intention to pop my clogs just yet, but my wife and I have signed living wills because we believe them to be important. The individual merely states on the advance directive the sort of life-prolonging treatment that he or she does not want if they suffer in future from an incurable disease causing unbearable suffering.

A directive also provides for the event of a brain-damaging accident requiring life support systems to maintain a vegetative patient, and the option to have one's life terminated. A directive does not ask a doctor to do anything illegal, such as actively terminate life, but only requests that artificial, aggressive or extraordinary means —all medical terms—are not used to prolong the dying process.

In 1992, the BMA gave full support to advance directives, stating that patients' wishes must not be overridden and that doctors must not impose their own views of beneficial treatment on others.

The legal status of an advance directive has never been tested in a British court, although statements made in the Court of Appeal and by Law Lords in the Tony Bland case indicated that an advance directive is binding. The hon. Member for Keighley said that Tony Bland could have been allowed to die earlier if the correct advice had been given, but that was not the situation. Tony Bland's parents were forced to go through the whole process of the law to do, as caring parents, what was in their son's best interests. Despite the obstacles that they met, their noble stand was supported by the majority of the people of this country. If Tony Bland had signed an advance directive, his parents would have been spared all that grief and heartbreak.

In the United States of America, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark and some Australian states, living wills are fully recognised. Also, a number of countries recognise durable powers of attorney in health matters—something that this country should recognise.

The hon. Gentleman placed great emphasis on the ability of palliative hospice care in keeping patients free from pain. We all acknowledge that hospices do wonderful work, but it is not true that palliative care removes all pain and distress in all patients. I know that is so because my father died of cancer. I do not see a contradiction between offering palliative hospice care and making voluntary euthanasia an option. They should both be included in the range of options available at the end of life. Apart from the unfortunate minority who cannot be kept comfortable, many people simply do not want the slow way of dying that hospices offer.

I have great feeling and warmth for the hon. Member for Keighley, but because I believe that euthanasia is a right —the right to live one's life in dignity and to leave one's life in dignity, I must oppose his motion.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No.19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business), and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Gary Waller, Mrs. Marion Roe, Mr. Gerald Kaufman, Dame Angela Rumbold, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Ms Liz Lynne, Mr. Patrick Nicholls, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mrs. Ann Winterton, Rev. Martin Smyth and Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours

WITHDRAWAL OF MEDICAL TREATMENT

Mr. Gary Waller accordingly presented a Bill to prescribe circumstances in which medical treatment and nutrition can be withdrawn and to secure the continued provision in such circumstances of palliative care; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 May, and to be printed. [Bill 79.]

Orders of the Day

Coal Industry Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

Clause 9

EXPLOITATION RIGHTS: OIL AND GAS

Amendment made: No. 30, in page 8, line 40, leave out from 'it' to end of line 44 and insert

'at the time of its being brought from the strata to the surface or, as the case may be, of its treatment in the strata; or'.—[*Mr. Eggar.*]

Clause 10

PROTECTION FOR CERTAIN INTERESTS IN COAL AND COAL MINES

Amendments made: No. 45, in page 9, line 37, after 'acquired' insert '—(a)'.

No. 46, in page 9, line 38, at end insert

'; or

(b) under section 1 or 2 of the Prescription and Limitation (Scotland) Act 1973 (prescriptive possession on *ex facie* valid deed).'.

No. 47, in page 10, line 1, after 'above' insert

', in their application to England and Wales,'.

No. 48, in page 10, line 5, at end insert—

'( ) Subsection (3) above, in its application to Scotland, shall not restrict the acquisition, as mentioned in that subsection—

(a) of any such servitude as adversely affects any coal or coal mine to which this section applies; or

(b) of any other right so affecting (but not adverse to the title in) such coal or coal mine.'.—[*Mr. Eggar.*]

Clause 11

RESTRUCTURING OF THE CORPORATION'S FUNCTIONS

3.58 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 11, line 49, at end add—

'(10) The Secretary of State shall direct the Corporation to ensure that no coal mine shall cease production until the Coal Authority is established and able to invite applications for licences for these mines under section 26 of this Act.

(11) The Secretary of State shall not perform the functions of the Coal Authority under subsection (10) above.

(12) Where it is agreed that coal production is no longer possible, the Corporation may carry out its duty under subsection (10) above by operating on a care and maintenance basis only.'.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take amendment No. 8, in clause 66, page 63, line 37, at end insert—

'(aa) section 11(10) to (12).'

Mr. Cook: The purpose of amendment No. 1 is simple: to ensure that there are no more closures before privatisation and that we have a truce in the closure programme, which has already given rise to too many casualties and too many human victims. It asks that there should be no more casualties in the few remaining months for which Ministers of the Crown remain responsible for an industry that is still in the public sector.

As well as being a simple amendment, it is charitable, because it takes Ministers at their word. It accepts the lavish promises that have been made that privatisation will be good for the coal industry and that pits will prosper under privatisation. *[Interruption.]* I see that on this point I carry the Minister with me. If he is so confident that pits will prosper under privatisation, what, then, is his problem in keeping open until that moment at least those that remain?

That will be a lot easier for him to do than it was at the time of Second Reading, because there are now fewer pits than there were when we discussed the Bill on Second Reading. Twenty-two were open then; there are now 17. What, therefore, will stop him saying that those 17 pits can remain in operation until privatisation? I hope that he is not planning another round of closures, which would prevent him from accepting this amendment.

I mention that because I notice that it was reported in the *Financial Times* last week that another two or three pits will close next month after the review meetings that have been convened to consider the collieries that are open. The report even names the five pits on the short list for closure: Bilsthorpe in Nottingham; Tower and Point of Ayr in Wales, which would mean that there will be no colliery left operating in Wales; Prince of Wales and Kiveton in Yorkshire. Those pits are at the heart of the amendment. Their fate will be decided next month at those review meetings. If the amendment is agreed to, those pits will go forward to take their chance after privatisation. If it is voted down, they may well be closed.

Those pits demonstrate the extent to which we are now closing pits that are financially viable and make economic sense. Point of Ayr is now producing coal at £1.14 per gigajoule. When the Government carried out the coal review they instructed Boyds to review pits that might be closed, and Boyds set targets in terms of cost per gigajoule for every pit for 1995. The figure currently achieved by Point of Ayr is below the figure that Boyds set it for 1995. Already, over a year in advance, it is below the target figure. Bilsthorpe is below the target figure, too, and Kiveton is not only below it but well below. Kiveton colliery is now producing coal at £1.38 per gigajoule, well below the target of £1.53 by 1995 set by Boyds.

Some of the most efficient pits in Europe, producing the cheapest fuel in Britain, which will give consumers the cheapest electricity, are at risk of closure. In a rational world, it should not be necessary for us to come to the House of Commons to move amendments to keep those pits open—but we are not talking about a rational decision. We can see that by considering the pits that have been closed since Second Reading.

Five pits have closed since the House started proceedings on the Bill in January. One of them, Manton, produces coal at £1 per gigajoule—cheaper than most imports and cheaper than the coal produced by most pits in this country. When Boyds carried out the review for the coal White Paper it reckoned that Manton was the eighth most profitable pit in Britain, with a potential profit margin of 20 per cent. We have just closed one of the most efficient pits in the coal industry. How can the Minister possibly defend that?

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): My hon. Friend mentioned Manton in my constituency, and everything that he said is true. Is there not also a cloak over the proceedings when people close a pit by saying that it will be amalgamated with another pit, or by two-thirds closing it by cutting three faces down to one, as happened at

Harworth, in my constituency? That means that men who go for redundancy get £10,000 less because there is no actual pit closure, although some of the faces have closed. The whole process is filled with deception.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend touches on a clear case of deception—a proposal for the merger of pits. Such proposals are transparently proposals for a closure of one of the two merged pits. I suspect that the only reason that British Coal is operating by merger rather than by closure is that with "mergers" it does not need to offer the pit concerned for market testing, for private sector operators to come forward to take it over. That is a device to ensure not only that pits close but that they stay closed.

I was asking how the Minister could defend those actions. The reality, as he knows, is that he cannot defend them. I suspect that he will not even try. I know that he cannot because I have here the minutes of the British Coal privatisation project co-ordination group meeting on 14 February, at which the Minister had four representatives. The meeting took place the week after Manton was closed, and a Mr. Peter Jones, a merchant banker, was minuted as having repeated concerns:

"that cost projections"—

for privatisation—

"would re-open debate about the reasons for closure of particular collieries".

In other words, if the cost projections on privatisation were revealed, they would expose the fact that the pits that have been closed were just as cheap as those being kept for privatisation—in the case of Manton, probably even cheaper. I must say that, if a merchant banker cannot make the figures fit his case, they must be pretty robust figures. If Ministers are prepared to close pits when the case is so good that they dare not reveal the figures, it underlines the case for the House to pass the amendment to ensure that Ministers do not close any more.

I am told that those cost projections to which Mr. Jones refers arise from another Boyds' study. Boyds is currently making cost projections of the cost of pits under privatisation. Perhaps the Minister could confirm that; perhaps he could deny it. He would unwise to seek to deny it, because I have one of those cost projections with me. It is the first cost projection for Longannet and is dated 2 March.

That cost projection of the likely cost of coal in the pits after privatisation goes to the heart of our debate on the Bill. What is fascinating about Boyds' conclusion about the cost projections after privatisation is that it shows that the cost of coal will go up, not down. The Minister need not look so surprised. The paper has been already circulated to the DTI coal privatisation unit. He will have some difficulty denying that that paper exists and some difficulty

The Minister will be aware of the assumptions on which the calculation is based, which are revealing. I see that the paper was addressed to Nicola Kirkup. I do not know whether we have a Nicola Kirkup in the House, but I am sure that she can brief hon. Members on what she has read in that document. The assumptions show that, after privatisation, redundancy payments are expected to tumble to £5,000 per head—about a quarter of the present level under British Coal. That is relevant, because another assumption in the document is that 150 workers at Longannet will be sacked on privatisation of that pit.

Despite those savings and costs, the reduced redundancy payments and the reduced number of staff, the total operating costs rise because of the increase in pension contributions for a new pension scheme and the increased insurance premiums which are necessary from a private owner. Boyds concludes:

"Overall operating cash costs actually increase under private ownership from £1.32 per gigajoule to £1.34 per gigajoule."

That is occurring at a pit which, over the past decade of public ownership, has dramatically reduced those costs. For the first time in 10 years, it is faced with an increase in its operating costs because of privatisation. How can Ministers possibly continue to defend the privatisation proposal when they have been told that it will put up the price of coal?

There is another problem for the Ministers—how can they sell the pits? Boyds concludes its assessment with the following observation:

"This cost assessment will be a major disincentive to buyers, who will point out cost increases despite aggressive improvements in performance."

The question that Ministers must answer is, how can they square their wish to privatise coal with the fact that, plainly, they will have difficulty selling that idea to the market? In a sane House of Commons, they would find it impossible to sell those figures to hon. Members. I suspect that when they answer they will not try. The Ministers know that any figures are irrelevant to the Bill.

Privatisation has nothing to do with whether it pushes up the price of coal or cuts off access to our coal reserves. There was no economic case for the closure programme. That programme shuts down access to fuel which provides us with the cheapest electricity. There was no financial case for privatisation. The Government will never get much money for the pits and will receive even less when the word gets out that it will be more expensive to operate the pits. There is no social case for privatisation. As my hon. Friends forcefully expressed yesterday, no private coal company can boast the safety record of British Coal. Why put that safety record at risk with privatisation? The reason is that the Bill is not motivated by finance or by economics or by social argument, but by the vindictive prejudice of the Government against the coal industry.

That is what the Bill is about. That is why I suspect that the Minister will refuse to accept the amendment and give even a temporary reprieve to the coal industry. That is why the Bill will be remembered as the low tide of privatisation. It is a measure which we always knew was strategically inept and politically vindictive, and we now know—thanks to Boyds—that it is also financially bankrupt.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I shall be brief. There are three enormities about the Bill: the enormity of the cost to the public purse, the enormity of the challenge to the communities that are affected and the enormity of the Government's idiocy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, the Government have produced a Bill which is bred from dogma and out of malice. With breeding of that sort, what sort of colt will be produced?

The national interest is not being served. We will generate dependency within a relatively short time. The Government have connived with Hobart house to have a small number of profitable pits which will not be able to meet Britain's requirements for coal within a short time. Given the Government's responsibilities to the nation as well as to mining areas, the least they could do is ensure that a sufficient number of collieries remain to meet

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Britain's needs, which may well become acute if the Government's calculations are wrong and the price of gas rises faster than they feared.

Indeed, as we reach the late 1990s, the Government will be extremely fearful in case the world gas price rises. I know that the Minister does not pay any attention to us. The Under-Secretary of State for Technology and the Minister for Energy are sitting there chatting while they care not at all about the national interest.

A short while ago, I was in Germany meeting a German local authority in the Ruhr coalfield. When I talked to the miners there, they grumbled a little because they got only three years' notice of a colliery being closed. Some of us had less than three weeks. Some of us have seen profitable collieries such as Silverwood in my constituency doomed soon after the brilliant men of Hobart house approved millions of pounds of expenditure, which simply stopped before Christmas and before the coal face that was being developed could begin to turn coal.

We have had enough stupidity, we have had enough dogma and we have had enough malice. It is time that the Government reconsidered the matter and accepted the amendment—in the national interest.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Miners in Nottinghamshire and throughout the country will see the amendment as a touchstone of the Government's commitment to the coal industry in Nottinghamshire. If the Government accept the amendment, at least it will give Nottinghamshire miners some hope. They need it, because they believe that the promises made to them first by Lady Thatcher's Government and then by this Government only last March have been betrayed. They believe that the Government have turned their back on them and simply walked away.

If the amendment is carried, mines could stay open a little longer. People in Nottinghamshire want that commitment. They remember that, on Second Reading, Ollerton and Manton were still open; both are closed now. The way in which those pits were closed was despicable. British Coal, backed by the Government, filled the miners' mouths with gold. It behaved in an ignorant and arrogant way; it showed no sense and no sensibility; and it showed contempt for the miners and their families. It put an extra £10,000 in redundancy money on the table and told the miners at Ollerton and Manton to take the money by Friday, or they would lose it.

I was interested to see that, when the pit ponies came out of Ellington colliery only a few weeks ago, British Coal said that they would be looked after for the rest of their lives. Would it not be fine if miners who are thrown out of employment in Nottinghamshire daily received that sort of assurance from the Government?

As well as filling miners' mouths with gold, they have now filled the pit shafts at Ollerton and Manton, and there is no prospect of those collieries reopening. Those profitable pits have closed, and the jobs have gone for ever. Perhaps the Minister will come clean this afternoon and confirm that further closures are imminent. Perhaps he will say that British Coal has already decided which pits are to close before 30 April. Perhaps he will say whether he has been consulted on that point.

I am told, and I know it to be the case, that decisions have been made about a further round of closures, and that all we are waiting for is ministerial consent.

4.15 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I suspect that my hon. Friend believes, as I do, that there is something behind this in terms of the board of British Coal. To my knowledge, only one member of the board has said that he is neither involved nor interested in management buy-outs.

I feel that the management will try to get involved in the little group of collieries which will be left after privatisation. They will have a virtual monopoly in providing coal to the electrical generating industry, for instance. If that is the case, it is an example of absolute corruption.

Mr. Tipping: It is clear that there has been collusion between the Government and their supporters to define the market for coal. The level of that market will be 30 million tonnes, and it is clear that the British Coal managers have moved the number of collieries down to a level which will produce that amount. The pits currently in operation are producing 30 million tonnes of coal.

It is also clear that managers, senior managers and maybe board members within British Coal are looking at the prospects for a buy-out. It is no wonder that men who have worked in and given everything to the industry view those managers with suspicion and hostility. They know that those managers are backed by the Government, and that there is a master plan at Hobart house and at the Department of Trade and Industry for pits that are to be closed during the next few weeks.

It would be surprising—or perhaps not—if those announcements were made while Parliament was in recess for Easter. It would not be the first time that that has happened. Christmas holidays have been disasters for miners and for their families, and Easter holidays for many of them look dim and hostile.

The Government ought to come clean, and say whether they know which pits are to close before 30 April, when the present redundancy scheme ends. I suspect that there will be more bribery and corruption. Money will be put on the table to miners and they will be told to take or leave the extra £10,000, or they will have lost not just their jobs, but the extra money.

That is a fine way to treat miners at Bilsthorpe colliery, where there was a disaster last year. That disaster put the colliery's production back, but the miners worked hard and are now achieving their targets. They are on the rack. They believe that they have done everything that has been asked of them, and more. They want a clear commitment about whether they will survive the next round of closures.

The Government ought to show some faith with the miners. They ought to say clearly today that there are to be no more closures, or, if closures are conceived, that they be left in the distance until the new Coal Authority is in place.

The Government owe the mining industry. The miners in Nottinghamshire and throughout the country have done everything that has been been asked of them and more. They have increased productivity by 150 per cent. in recent years, and are producing coal at half the cost of coal from Germany. People all over Europe believe that we are crazy to close our mining industry.

Even at this late stage, the Government should show some compassion and sense, and accept the amendment. It

is a small amendment, and a small step forward. It is at least a touchstone of faith for the miners of Nottinghamshire and throughout the country, who feel that they have been betrayed.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): My hon. Friends and I entirely support the amendment. As the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) knows, we have added our names to it to show that.

The amendment makes two key points. The first is that, in any event and whatever the long-term plan might be, there is no excuse for not undertaking care and maintenance, even if mining is to stop, or for not holding the position pending the Coal Authority coming into operation and people bidding for licences and coming along to say that they are willing to take over a pit. It would be unacceptable to allow pits that are operating today to be lost between now and the end of the life of British Coal and the creation of the Coal Authority.

The second point is that we do not trust the Government. The point has been made on behalf of the industry over and over again. The industry does not trust the Government to look after its interests. It has already been made clear in speeches from these Benches that the industry does not trust British Coal to look after its interests, because it believes that British Coal is thinking about something else. It believes that British Coal is thinking about its own interests and the future interests of the people who work for British Coal, following the enactment of the legislation. That is a classic conflict of interest.

The amendment seeks to protect the industry and the current workers against the conflict of interest in the management of British Coal. Certain examples suggest how right we are to be suspicious.

It is not accidental that pits which stopped operation last year are being reopened by British Coal this year. In the past few weeks, British Coal has announced that it will put £9 million into restarting production at Maltby. Maltby happens to be near Rotherham. I do not think that it is coincidental that the announcement has been made in the past few weeks, given that a by-election is coming up in Rotherham.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): The Conservatives will not win it.

Mr. Hughes: Of course the Government will not win. Not only will they not win, but they will be lucky to save their deposit. I did not mean that there was any great political benefit in reopening Maltby.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): The Liberal Democrats might even beat them.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Member says that we too may beat the Conservatives. Indeed, we have good prospects of beating them in Rotherham and in all the other Labour-held seats where by-elections are to be held. So there will be no political gain for the Government.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): That undermines the hon. Member's argument that this is done for political gain.

Mr. Hughes: No, it does not. The Government are standing by while British Coal plays games with the industry in the very shortest of short terms. It is self-evident that some of the pits that are currently closed have been the subject of interest from operators and are potentially perfectly viable. We know that people can make a go of those pits.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friends will have heard my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and me make relevant comments about the matter. British Coal intends to de-mothball Maltby but close Silverwood in my constituency. It will transfer men from Silverwood to Maltby, having got rid of most of the Maltby men first.

Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the one thing that Hobart house should have been worried about was to keep Maltby going immediately after completing £190 million of capital investment? The price that British Coal would have had to pay for taking Maltby into the core group it wants to set up might well have been rather higher than it wished to pay.

Mr. Hughes: I agree. That touches on exactly the debate that we had last night, on mine water. Many unspecified liabilities have not yet been sorted out. As we have seen many times, the Government are forcing through the rush to sell off not the family silver or the Government's silver, but the nation's black silver, because they know that that is the only way in which they will be able to persuade buyers to make bids for some of the pits without knowing what the potential liability will be. That action is highly irresponsible, because it does not give any protection either to the people who are working in the pits at present or to the public at large.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): At the beginning of his speech, did the hon. Gentleman say that, of the closures which are deemed necessary, if a closure does take place that colliery should be kept on a care and maintenance basis until such time as privatisation has taken place in full?

Mr. Hughes: I simply repeated the points of view that are formally expressed in this amendment. It makes two points very clearly—the Minister must have been briefed on how to respond to them.

First, the third paragraph of the amendment says that, where coal production is no longer possible, the corporation should operate on a care and maintenance basis. Secondly, it says that the Secretary of State should direct the corporation to ensure that no production in any of the pits ceases until the new authority is up and running. It is a twin argument, and we argue in this way because we do not trust management to make decisions about the pits operating currently which are not compromised by the interests of the current managers.

The risk is that pits will be closed, with a subsequent loss of jobs. We know about the potential unemployment, and we know how that will damage communities. We have rehearsed those arguments, and the Minister knows about the devastation that pit closures cause in communities where the mine is often the only major employer.

In almost every case, the consequence of decisions to close pits means either that pits will never reopen—which means the loss indefinitely of what could be a perfectly good pit—or that pits will be closed, with the risk that licences will be taken out by people who have not addressed or picked up full responsibility for health and safety, environmental liabilities and other matters dealt with by other amendments on Report.

[Mr. Hughes]

The United Kingdom has some of the best coal in Europe, if not the world. The nation cannot afford to allow British Coal to make further announcements after the Bill has gone through the Parliament, and say, "Right, now that we know we are not going to run into political flak, we are basically free to make unaccountable decisions without having to justify them."

Seventeen is a small number of pits. If British Coal were determined not only to try to secure sales to the electricity generating industry, but to do what Mr. Neil Clarke said in a press release a couple of weeks ago and maximise sales in all other areas of life where there is a prospective market for coal, there is absolutely no reason why the amount of coal currently being produced from 17 pits cannot be sustained until this legislation passes through both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Returning to the question of care and maintenance, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and I have had meetings with British Coal about Ellington colliery, and we still cannot get clarification about care and maintenance. By definition, that suggests keeping up the roof in the mine, making regulations work properly in the mine, and making sure water is contained within the mine—the safety aspects.

But I want clarification about the maintenance and care of production machinery. If the mine is to operate and produce coal, the production machinery must be maintained. It is my experience in the industry that there is a problem in a mine after three weeks' holiday, never mind after three months' closure.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman speaks from great experience in the industry, and I bow to that experience. Even people like me, who have only been down pits, as opposed to those who work in them, understand very clearly that, once the coal mining operation is stopped, there is a huge capital cost, even if it is possible to get the pit working again.

I know for a fact that the right hon. Member and the hon. Gentleman were led to believe that the Ellington pit would survive, and then, about one month ago, learned, with two days' notice, that it was going to close. I think my recollection is correct—the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed may correct me. The decision changed in a very short time.

There was no long lead time or any indication that Ellington was going to be closed. It was said to be secure, as were many of the pits which have closed since Second Reading. In October last year, we were told by the President of the Board of Trade that these were guaranteed core pits, but they have been closed.

The political reality is that we have two options left: we can protect the industry, rundown though it is and producing minimal amounts of coal with maximum efficiency and productivity but with the best possible performance indicators, or we effectively sign up to a minimalist coal industry with 13, 14 or 15 pits, which is what the Rothschild report promised us.

4.30 pm

This issue does not affect only the mining communities, although it may affect them principally. Let the House and the Government be in no doubt that the fact that there is no demonstration of 100,000 people on the streets of Westminster today does not mean that all the communities of Britain—from places as different as Cheltenham and Chelsea, which are unlikely supporters of the coal industry but which were forced to oppose the Government, and urban areas such as mine, which has not had a pit within 60 miles of it since there were pits in the Kent coalfield—do not feel just as strongly as the mining communities. The country is telling the Government that they have one last chance to exercise some authority.

It was the Government's idea to sell the coal industry, and it is they who are forcing the pace. If they wanted to do so, the Government could freeze the position to ensure that we have a coal industry able to compete in the international markets in future.

If the Minister says that he is sorry, but that the Government are going to leave it to Neil Clarke and British Coal, he will be allowing a conflict of interest to determine the national interest. That is entirely irresponsible and unhelpful to all those who have worked for decades and generations to earn our coal industry its reputation as one of the greatest in the world. Yes, the Government can sell the Tory party silver, but not the remainder of the nation's silver.

I hope that the Minister will accept that the amendment is not merely a token gesture on behalf of Opposition Members but a reflection of the opinions of people outside. We cannot afford to run down our coal industry any further. It is no good the Government saying that they are washing their hands of it and it is going into the private sector—it is not in the private sector today. It is still a national responsibility, and the Government must accept that responsibility and the duty to protect the coal industry to the utmost for the future.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): The amendment reflects the great lack of confidence in British Coal felt by many of those who work down the mines. I believe that the whole of the work force lack confidence in what British Coal is going to do. They are incensed that viable mines could be closed in the next few weeks. The lessons that we learned last year provide us with good examples in that some of the mines that were closed because British Coal said that they were not viable are now coaling again. They are open again only because they are in the private sector, but they have markets for their coal. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will think about that.

It is fairly obvious to those of us who have perhaps studied the industry only in the past 18 months that, although British Coal said repeatedly that it had only two customers, the rest of the United Kingdom knew that there were far more than two customers, in this country and even beyond, who were willing to buy British coal.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) referred to the speed with which the pits have been closed. He should perhaps compare it with what happened a few months ago, when he and I were talking about constituency boundaries being changed.

It is marvellous that, when the jobs of Members of Parliament are at stake, we hold an inquiry lasting several months. Everyone is allowed to state his views, which go before an independent assessor. This all takes several months, another solution is suggested and hon. Members can use a Queen's counsel to make their case. That is quite

right; I am not condemning the process, because such changes are important and should be handled properly. However, when it comes to miners' jobs, it is a finger-snapping exercise.

When an industry, factory, firm or shop is in trouble, a liquidator or receiver is called in. The first thing he does is try to keep the business going. He asks people who have not received their money or whose debts have not been paid, "Will you hold off? Will you not make the factory or the industry or the shop bankrupt? Please don't demand your money just now. Let's try to keep it going as a going concern and try to find a buyer." That has happened in the case of football clubs that are in terrible trouble, big stores that are involved in a merger or amalgamated, supermarkets that have joined up, or big companies such as Rover and BMW.

Surely it is the Conservative attitude that a business should be kept alive until a buyer is found, as any business man in the country would say. That has happened time and again with engineering companies, and with practically everything in the commercial market, but not with pits.

For some reason, there is underhand deception. A few months ago, the Government promised, as they did with regard to my constituency, that certain coal mines were core pits which would be there virtually for ever—places such as Manton, Welbeck and Harworth. They promised that, even if the number of pits got down to single figures, those pits would still operate. The men were assured of that. Suddenly, one night, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood said, usually in the recess, when we cannot raise the matter in Parliament, the rug is pulled away from under them.

If ever a body of men have been deceived by the Government, it has to be the miners, with their promise of productivity. For years they were told, "Increase production; increase your productivity; turn out more; work faster; work harder; adopt all the new methods; adopt every piece of modern machinery; work shifts; work overtime and get the prices down." What was the result? The sack. Yet they wonder why, in all the years when I was a lad on the shop floor, miners used to say to me, "Go slow, lad; there is a whole day tomorrow not started on. You'll be working yourself out of a job."

Shop stewards advocated restrictive practices, about which the Conservatives screamed blue murder every time that the trade unions dug in their heels and said, "We're protecting our jobs." The people who shouted the loudest said, "You're destroying British industry." After the miners' strike, what happened? The miners did everything the Government told them to do—work harder, accept new practices, not stand in the way of modern investment and machinery. They did everything.

The Minister knows, because he is an ex-miner. That is the tragedy—an ex-miner shutting down his own industry. He ought to consider asking for another job. He understands what has happened. The reward of those miners has been the sack, in an underhand, indecent way. To prevent the miners from striking, to prevent them from protesting, to prevent them from saying, "Hold on a bit; there's a buyer for the pit," they were told, "If you sign the docket by next Friday, you will get £10,000 extra redundancy pay." Who could resist a bribe such as that?

Some of those miners think that they are getting something. They are getting nothing. I will tell the Minister what redundancy pay is. It is advance unemployment benefit; advance social security; advance supplementary benefit—call it what you like. That lump sum of 25,000 quid, or whatever, means that ex-miners cannot qualify for rent rebate, or for anything else that unemployed people get, until they have dwindled down and dwindled down their redundancy pay.

They have taken their benefits in advance and saved the Government a great many of the pay-outs that they would have had to make on income support and other benefits. They know it. Accountants have carefully worked out the costs of 10 years' unemployment with redundancy pay, compared with 10 years' weekly benefit.

There are people in my constituency who took redundancy, unwillingly—they were perhaps 48 or 50 years old—after the miners' strike. They thought that, as they had £90 a week—which was not inflation-proof—they would be able to exist for the rest of their life. Now they find that they cannot, because things wear out. Their car has worn out, and it is gone. The television is worn out. They are trying to make do with the clothes they wore 10 years ago. They tried to exist by scratching and scraping.

When interest rates fall, all Conservative Members cheer, but lower interest rates mean a smaller return on money in the bank, so redundancy compensation becomes worth less and less. Many people are now living in a state of deep poverty, having followed the advice of the Tory Government. Is it any wonder that the general election results in Nottinghamshire amounted to such a landslide?

After the miners' strike, the Conservative party promised the Union of Democratic Miners everything. My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood won his seat from a UDM supporter, and two more seats in Nottingham came to Labour. In fact, my party secured the biggest swing to have been seen in very many years. People know how they have been betrayed.

My constituency has three big power stations. There is no doubt that the steam they produce results in acid rain over Europe. After all, they are 30-odd years old. But they could be modernised. Thousands of people could be provided with work at High Marnham, Cottam and West Burton, and, even with continued coal burning, the acid rain could be stopped.

That course would be much cheaper than the provision of gas-fired power stations, the payment of unemployment and other benefits and the decimation of areas. However, the Government's hatred of the mining industry is such that they refuse to take such action. They would sooner introduce gas-fired power stations employing 35 people and using the resources of the North sea for the sake of their own dogma. How often have they criticised us for dogma? They used to accuse us of being doctrinaire, of never being prepared to bend. In respect of this matter, their hatred of mining areas, and of working-class people in particular, is clear.

Ministers are still engaging in deception. They repeatedly denied that they intended to close two of the three faces in Harworth. Two weeks later, 300 people were made redundant. A hard-hitting, high-powered, high-production, low-cost pit has been swallowed despite the Government's promises.

We have heard that Manton produces coal at just over £1 a gigajoule. It is probably second or third in the league table of the eight or nine pits in the midlands, on practically every ground—productivity, cost of production, and so on. With the snap of a finger, it was announced that it was to

[Mr. Joseph Ashton]

be not closed but merged with Welbeck, which is seven miles away. Now that it has been merged, everything is shut.

Despite the padlocks and the blocking of the top, this is described as a merger. How can it be described as a merger? The mine with which it has been merged is in the Mansfield travel-to-work area, which is a development area, whereas my area has only assisted area status. But juggling the statistics makes the figures look better. And that is all that miners are—statistics. They are statistics in a table set out by people who have the cheek to try to tell us what is best for the industry.

There is no reason why the amendment should not be accepted. It simply says that final closure should not take place until the British Coal Authority has been set up. What is wrong with that? No other industry going through major upheaval—mergers, takeover bids, amalgamations—would dream of shutting down a branch in these circumstances. If Marks and Spencer decided to build a bigger store at Meadowhall in Sheffield, one would expect some discussion or consultation. In fact, Marks and Spencer has not behaved as badly as the pit owners.

But no one else would act like British Coal. Anyone else would talk. Let the Government accept the amendment, and let British Coal talk to the men for a change, instead of being told by the Government exactly what to do.

4.45 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I have listened to Ministers' attempts to argue the case for the privatisation of coal, but I have heard no logic or common sense and no economic grounds. I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) that, even with a scrubbing brush, one could not get Ministers to come clean. To close pits is, in effect, to sterilise areas. The amendment seeks to ensure that there will at least be a moratorium until such time as privatisation takes place—in other words, a pit will be a working pit or a pit in mothballs. British Coal does not come clean in relation to the future of the industry. It has not done so in the past, and I cannot see it doing so in the future.

Yorkshire has lost approximately 47,000 jobs, excluding those not in but associated with the industry. It is important that the taxpayer be given some consideration. After all, it is he who has to meet this enormous cost. At the Rossington pit, British Coal attempted to remove machinery to make the operation non-viable for any future purchaser.

In 1993 approximately 18.5 million tonnes of coal was imported into Britain. The Minister for Energy has refused to tell us who imports this coal, saying that it is a confidential matter. British Coal imports the coal; why the hell does not the Minister come clean? In terms of the balance of trade, what is happening is costing the country £687 million.

Neil Clarke was appointed chairman of British Coal to look after the industry. I have yet to see Neil Clarke do a day's work to earn his salary. It is the easiest thing in the world to stand back, do nothing and watch an industry collapse. But the Minister seems to be quite content with the situation. According to this week's "Westminster Brief", Neil Clarke intends to pursue every possible tonne of coal. Is that a reference to the 18.5 million tonnes of coal being imported? I am at a loss to understand how Budge and Edwards can take over pits and proceed to make profits. If Budge and Edwards can do it, why cannot Neil Clarke—this captain of industry whom the Government appointed and who has created so much misery throughout the coalfields of the country?

It is regrettable that the Minister is prepared to proceed and, possibly, connive with the chairman of British Coal. They are using collusion and secrecy to con Conservative Members into supporting pit closures. They take the heat out of the situation in the hope that, in three months' time, other issues will occupy people's minds. I hope that, at this late stage, the Minister will support our reasonable amendment, which is an attempt to inject some sanity into the action that is being taken against the coal mining industry.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): We find ourselves in a pitiful position. We are asking for a moratorium—a reasonable moratorium, based on common sense. I keep using that phrase, because when we debate the coal industry logic goes out of the window.

One of the Government's arguments is, "We are depending on British Coal officials." That is like the police asking for guidance from the mafia: it is nonsense. Those officials have got incompetence down to a fine art. They are hatchet men, determined to carry out the Government's wishes. The Government say that they are depending on them. Depending on them to do what? I could give example after example of the incompetence that they have shown over many years.

We are becoming a bit cynical. There have been closures in several areas, and various proposals have been advanced. We have seen a number of slogans: "We are streamlining the industry" was a good one, which hon. Members may remember. Headlines above so-called articles refer to "concentrating our assets", "concentrating on the main coalfields, not the peripheral ones", "transferring miners to a long-term future", and "an amalgamation of production units." The "peripheral" coalfields were in Scotland, Kent, the north-east and north-west, Durham, Northumberland and Wales. In those areas, the shock is over; despair and cynicism have set in.

The Government have promised to help. They have promised alternative employment, and they have promised RECHAR money. We have had some of that money, but some was not brought in because it was "additionality money". The Government were supposed to match the European Community pound for pound. The Irish Government seem to be very good in that respect, as are other EC Governments, but our Government are not. Money that could be spent on environmental and other coalfield improvements is going begging because the Government are not putting their money where their mouth is.

The Government speak of retaining assets. Retaining them for what? That is what is causing the cynicism. We had a boom and bust situation. I do not only blame the current Government; over the years, I have frequently lobbied other Governments of all persuasions who had fallen for this Coal Board nonsense of running down the industry while other countries expand theirs.

Assets should not be sold at the last minute because people are feathering their nests. Those people have a vested interest in the outcome of privatisation, and many of them are currently in charge of British Coal. I do not think

it helps to remove plant and machinery in which investment—capital or otherwise—has been made. These are the finest collieries in Europe; indeed, they are the finest production units in the world. Yet, for some reason, deep mines are being destroyed. I think that those people's motivation is reluctance to allow a large industry to compete with the coal industry that they expect to inherit and run in the future.

I issue a plea on behalf of those in coalfield communities. We in Scotland have a mothballed colliery, Francis; we do not want it to be closed, and we do not want any of the other mines—Longannet, for instance—to be cut or otherwise affected.

I speak with some emotion, because people in my area, and in other mining communities, are at a low ebb as they try to work out what is happening to their industry. I plead with the Government to try to retain at least our existing assets, even at this eleventh hour before privatisation.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Ellington colliery, in my constituency, is experiencing precisely the circumstances to which the amendment refers. It provides something of an object lesson.

First, we must ask, "Why the timing?" Just when Ellington was being actively considered for purchase, or licensing, by a number of outside interests—and British Coal had suggested a basis on which it would continue to operate for many years—we were suddenly confronted with a closure announcement. What possible justification or explanation can there be for that timing? Such action is completely alien to what would be done in the case of any other industry with an asset in which outside purchasers were interested: the aim, surely, would be to promote that asset, rather than destroying it and rendering it unusable in the future.

While that was going on, men were being told to go on to contract, because that would help to keep the pit lean and fit while safeguarding their jobs. In the end, it meant that they received less redundancy money than they would have received if they had remained in British Coal's work force. No concession is being made to those men now; they are being treated as if they had walked into the manager's office and said, "I have a bright idea: I want to be put on to contract." None of them had done that. They were all asked to go on to contract, for reasons connected with the future of the pit or their own jobs.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Grimethorpe colliery has closed; the Minister assured us that it had to close, because it could not make a profit. Grimethorpe supplied industrial coal. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the industries that it supplied are now supplied with foreign coal, which is much more expensive? Those industries are complaining; meanwhile, Grimethorpe is being turned into a depot to mix Polish and South American coal. Is that not a good example of the nonsense that the right hon. Gentleman describes?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman has given another example of the unfathomable decisions made by British Coal in recent months. Here was a pit with a market for at least a significant part of its product, which went directly into a power station—providing power for a smelter—and also into the national grid. It was in an exceptional position, which made it more readily marketable than other pits as part of the privatisation process.

What happens now? Coaling stops, the pit is put on to a care and maintenance basis and, of course, it deteriorates. As the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) pointed out earlier—having worked in the pit for many years—in such circumstances a pit is bound to deteriorate, even if some active care and maintenance is in progress. While it deteriorates, potential licensees or buyers are presented not with a working pit to examine but with a deteriorating pit.

There is a further element of mystery. The day before the closure of the pit, a very expensive coal-cutting machine was put down it. There it was, in place, as though coaling was to continue. Wholly mystifying decisions have been made, leading to all sorts of rumours and suspicions among the work force. It is suspected that what is actually being planned is an internal management buy-sut, contradicting all the possibilities of outside firms coming in to take over. On top of everything else, there is now wild rumour and speculation based largely on facts that seem capable of no other interpretation. Why on earth was the machine put there?

In response to requests from a number of us, the Minister anoounced that equipment must not be taken away from pits—that, of course, must include the machine to which I have referred—unless there is an overwhelming safety reason for doing so. We expect that to be abided by strictly, but it adds to the air of puzzlement. What is going on? Here is an asset which, even when viewed on the Government's own privatisation terms, is potentially usable; from the community's point of view, it is an asset that can be worked in the future and in which there is genuine commercial interest, but one whose future is impaired by an apparently needless cessation of coaling which has left it open to deterioration and uncertainty about its future. That does not make sense.

I welcome the opportunity provided by the amendment to remind the House of the facts.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Two Liberal Members have taken part in the debate. We had one or two yesterday, but it was mostly the same one. It is just worth putting on record that although we welcome Johnny-come-latelies, we are talking about privatising what remains of the coal industry.

Before the last election in 1992, I remember going up and down the coalfields reminding people that in its manifesto, the Liberal party was in favour of privatisation. As a matter of fact, the Liberals have been in favour of most privatisation. When they go up those long, winding drives with pampas grass in the garden, they are in favour of privatisation, but when they go to Tower Hamlets and other places they talk another language—that is, when they are not talking racist language. It is worth noting that they have changed their tune.

5 pm

Although you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are now beginning to shuffle uneasily in the Chair, it is worth noting that we welcome Liberal Members—not that we are about to engage in any coalitions or pacts when Labour takes control. I hope that they do not think that they are jumping on some clever bandwagon. However, we welcome them in the Lobby. It is a pity they did not think about it in 1992. After those great demonstrations in Hyde park in October 1992, that would have been a nice little gesture by the Liberal party, and the man who leads them, Captain

Mainwaring, instead of joining the Tories and saving the Prime Minister's skin in November, just weeks after those great demonstrations. We would have had this Government out, we would not have been debating privatisation, and Ellington colliery, which the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) represents, would not be in the dilemma it is.

It is always worth putting on record how we reached the present position. It is a sad story, and the Liberal Democrats have played a significant role in assisting this lousy Government in placing the Bill before the House of Commons.

Mr. Beith: Where does the hon. Gentleman get his enthusiasm for British Coal, which shuts pits and fails to sell coal? That is why Ellington colliery is in the position it is now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman has swung his bat. We must now get down to the amendment.

Mr. Skinner: It is significant and important to talk about how we reached the position that gave the Tory Government the power to introduce the Bill.

As for British Coal, I do not sing its song at all. In July 1992, before the announcement of the pit closure programme, my colleagues and I went to meet British Coal at Hobart house and I challenged Neil Clarke, who has seen two thirds of the pits disappear under his leadership. Why is not he getting two thirds less salary? What is he doing with the same money? Two thirds of his domain has gone.

I hold no torch for British Coal and never have done. The management of British Coal—with the odd exception—are engaged in a conspiracy with the Government to line their own pockets. I have said several times in the House that they plan to run a few pits so that they will have little or no competition from outside to provide the captive market of 30 million tonnes to the power stations.

I hold no brief for British Coal; as far as I am concerned, it stinks, just like the Government. *[Interruption.]* I know that we are dealing with amendment No. 1. I know what it is all about and I do not need my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesborough (Mr. Bell) to tell me. The amendment asks the Government to instruct the Coal Authority not to shut any pits at this time. It is just a temporary amendment. We all understand that is what amendments are. I do not need any seminar or teaching.

We cannot talk about stopping pit closures, in however short a period, without considering the main problem. Yes, it is about saving time; I am not against that. It is and always has been the lawyers' technique—if they do not have a case, they buy a bit of time as something might turn up.

That is what we have to do with amendments. Most are either wrecking amendments or buying a bit of valuable time. I am not against it, but I do it against the background of knowing that there are more important matters to consider after we have bought some time. We have to base whatever we say or do on a set of principles.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Memberfor Livingston (Mr. Cook) raised the question of Boyds. Boyds was the Government's adviser. They used to quote Boyds at length. The President of the Board of Trade used to tell us what Boyds had said. Now Boyds tells us that, after privatisation, the price of coal per gigajoule will be higher than it is under the public sector and will cost about £40 a tonne more. That is important and is worth repeating in the House.

We also have to consider another problem when we are talking about saving a few pits. The amendment is about saving a few pits for a short period. If we have 170 pits, as we did at the end of the strike, and 10 per cent. of them are going through some bad geological problems, there are 160 stronger pits to carry the 10 weak pits, or in some cases it could be as many as 20 weak pits. There is a problem when we are down to 17 pits. How will a smaller number of pits manage to save the two or three that are going through a bad phase?

Selby coalfield, with the help of new technology and retreat mining has been able to produce coal at great productivity levels. Let us suppose that it went through a bad phase. Where are the strong pits to carry it through for a year or two? That is how we dig coal; it is an extractive industry. It is not like turning the electricity on in a factory.

The Government talk about getting the number of pits down to 17, 15 or 10 pits. Under privatisation, as soon as a pit runs into trouble, it will shut because there will be no others to bail it out. That is what happened in the previous privatisation and it is something which the Government have never considered. Once you run into trouble and you are not in the public sector, there is nobody to carry the weak pits that are experiencing difficulties at any given time.

Mr. Redmond: Will my hon. Friend care to comment on this point, as he has been around the industry just as long as I have? The National Coal Board, as it was then, had an ABC hit list. Bentley pit was due to close, but was carried on the strength of the other Doncaster pits. It was one of the last pits in the area to shut down.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He has been in the industry for a long time and he knows that, when pits have gone through a bad period geologically, they have always known that the other pits in the area can support them, at least for a while, but that no longer applies. So, more and more, the relatively small number of pits that remains will shut.

Mr. Ashton: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is exactly when the Government have done for the farmers? People with bad land or hill farmers, many of them in the Minister's constituency, get subsidies. They have had massive increases last year, in some cases quite rightly. The whole industry is balanced; it has the quota system and the milk marketing board. Why can the Government not do the same for the pits?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is very perceptive. In an extractive industry that battles against mother nature every day, we cannot always be sure what will happen next. That is why the farmers get subsidies. I only wish that some of the subsidies went to the agricultural workers who have been offered 1.5 per cent.—below the rate of inflation.

Why can the coal industry not have set-aside schemes? We have all talked about saving pits and mothballing pits. If we could have set-aside schemes for the agriculture industry—which have gone up from £100 an acre to £128 an acre in the past few weeks—why can we not have them for the pits? Once the pits are privatised, the chances of

doing that are nil. That is why these are very sad days, as everybody connected to the industry knows and others have said.

What sticks in my gullet is the fact the Government are importing German coal and shutting British pits. German coal is coming into Britain at £110 a tonne, yet the Government have shut down all the anthracite pits in Wales.

There is talk about the wonderful common market. It never bought a cobble of our coal. It ships coal into Rotterdam and launders it there, but it never takes any of our coal. We are still able to produce coal at about £38 a tonne, which compares well with the German price. Germany's steam coal is twice as dear as ours. We read that the Government are now calling on British taxpayers to provide £60 million so that the Spanish coal industry can expand. Their coal will cost twice as much per tonne as British coal.

The Government have a lot to answer for. They will hit the deck at the next election—I hope that it will be a Canadian-style whitewash. We should make no mistake —the coalfields may not cover the whole of Britain, but people out there who live miles from a coalfield understand the vindictiveness involved in shutting pits. As some of my hon. Friends have said, the amendment asks the Government only for a little extra time for some collieries.

We shall finish up with miners chucked out of work in Nottingham. We have a few remaining pits in Yorkshire, but there are none in Derbyshire, except for one in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) which has been amalgamated with a pit in Yorkshire. We will allow the French to send electricity here and chuck miners on the dole—equivalent to about 6 million tonnes of coal. We pay £9,000 year to keep a miner out of work. Yes, it is a tragedy.

My hon. Friends must face the argument. We have said that we will go through the Lobby to vote on this amendment and others, as we have done consistently in the past couple of days to save the industry. If we are prepared to go through the Lobby and vote against privatisation, it follows logically that we have a duty to tell the people now that when Labour gets back into power, it will take the coal industry back into public ownership. It is no use running away from that argument—it has to be faced. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw knows, that argument cannot be won during the last four weeks of a general election campaign because the Tory tabloids and Tory money will rout us. We have got to start winning the philosophical battle now.

Taking back into public ownership the coal, rail and water industries is an important consideration. We are discussing a handful of pits. We know that we could reopen a few if we got back into power and took them back into the public sector. We are not naive, or innocents abroad. We know that the 700,000 miners that used to work in the mines when I first went down the pit cannot return to that work, but there are pits that could be saved, like the one mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and others in every coalfield. That is the only way that we can save concessionary coal and miners' pensions, which the Government want to get their sticky fingers on. If we are to achieve those things, we must start commanding the agenda now.

I am happy to take part in my hon. Friends' campaign, but while the amendment is important, we are dealing with a much bigger issue—the demise of the coal industry, which has been destroyed by the President of the Board of Trade, who has got the gall to parade himself as a future Prime Minister. He has not got a cat in hell's chance.

Mr. Hanson: I very much welcome the debate. The argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is compelling and summarises our concerns and why the debate is so important. I hope that he will forgive me if I say that, for me and my constituents, the debate is about buying time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) mentioned, there is a shortlist for potential further closures in the run-up to privatisation. The Point of Ayr colliery in my constituency, which my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston mentioned, is on that hit list.

For me and my constituents, the debate is about the survival of the coal industry in north Wales and, for my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), it is about the survival of the coal industry in Wales.

5.15 pm

When I came here to represent north Wales, I never thought that I would have to speak up for the remnants of the coal industry in Wales, but that is the position now. Come April, I will have been in the House only two years. In that time, 33 pits have closed nationally. The Point of Ayr pit in my constituency was included in the original list of 31. I remain surprised that it is still on the list. That pit is still open solely because of the work force's commitment, the quality of the product and the investment that they have put in. The amendment proposes that that pit will stay open until privatisation and until the Coal Authority is established.

Early-day motion 923, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley, deals with Tower colliery. Point of Ayr and Tower collieries are the only remaining pits in Wales. The licences for those pits, which are on offer in the Bill, make up one fifth of the licences available for pits. What if the pits do not exist by the time that the Bill is enacted? One fifth of the licences will disappear. It still has to be debated in another place—I fervently hope that it us rejected there.

During the past two years, I have made many speeches about the the Point of Ayr colliery—most of my time in the Chamber has been spent arguing about that colliery and the future of coal mines. When I was selected about seven years ago to fight for the seat that I now have the honour to represent, about 700 people worked at that pit. When I was elected, about 460 people worked there and today about 180 work there. What a lack of faith in the quality and commitment of the work force would have been shown if, after doing everything that was asked of them and after jumping 30 fences in the grand national, they fall at the last fence, because the Government kick away the powers that would enable that pit to be maintained.

If the pit is on British Coal's hit list and if it closes in a contracting market, with privatisation around the corner, I doubt—I hope that the Minister will respond to this point —whether the private sector would want to invest in it. It is not that it does not produce quality products or employ high-quality staff, but once privatisation has happened, companies will concentrate on the licences that are on offer.

The debate is about the future of the five pits mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston, one of which is Point of Ayr. If the Government do not accept the

amendment and do not provide assurances for the constituency and work force at Point of Ayr and allow the pit to close, they will be throwing away a high-quality product.

Let us consider productivity. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston mentioned the Boyds report. In 1987, miners at the Point of Ayr pit produced 3.1 tonnes per man shift; in 1991, they produced 4.5 tonnes; last year, they produced 8.9 tonnes per shift. Now they produce 14.7 tonnes per man shift with a work force that has been reduced by half. Despite that, the work force has made massive increases in productivity.

The cost of coal, as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, is down to about £1.15 per gigajoule and the aim is to to get it down to £1 per gigajoule, which is well below the Boyds report target for Point of Ayr and other collieries.

Point of Ayr has made vast improvements in mining techniques. The Minister is aware of the continuous mining system that has been introduced into that colliery, of the advances that have taken place in roof bolting and of the £3 million worth of investment to achieve that productivity. The men have learned; they have worked, contributed, developed and improved productivity, and are producing more coal than ever before. Today, however, they are on a shortlist for potential closure a short time before the measure to enable privatisation is passed in another place. What kind of reward is that? The market is there—80 per cent. of Point of Ayr coal goes to the Fiddler's Ferry power station down the road. Although that power station has recently reduced its capacity by about 30 per cent., the coal produced still has a local market.

The colliery has an excellent work force and working conditions and high productivity, and can achieve and do the business. If the amendment is not accepted, the message will go to British Coal, in respect of Point of Ayr and Tower collieries, "Yes, if you want to close two, three, four, or five, we do not mind. We are trying to reduce the number of pits that can be handed over to a small number of private operators, to knock out competition and reduce the volume of coal produced for the market." That is being done at a time when the pit in my constituency has 15 years' coal supply remaining.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover mentioned farm subsidies. Travelling to London by train on Monday, I read a report in *The Times* of a farmer who is receiving £26,000 this year for not planting thousands of acres on his farm. Next year, he will receive £42,000 for letting his land go to grass. The farmer in question was photographed wearing a red hunting jacket and breeches, and his horse was feeding from the ground—which did not endear him to me.

That apart, is it right that, while set-aside is paid to farmers not to produce a product, a potentially productive pit that is revolutionising mining techniques, improving productivity, and shows the way forward for many other pits in respect of costs and productivity will be closed? If the amendment is not passed, we will be saying to British Coal, "We don't mind. We will let the market decide. If you want to close the pit, close it." That does not seem logical.

The Bill provides for licensing in Wales and for the retention of a Welsh coalfield. If the amendment is not accepted, will the Minister assure the House and my constituents that, after the Bill leaves another place, a Welsh coalfield will still exist to offer to potential licensees —as was the aspiration in Committee? Many of my hon. Friends support the amendment, but my prime concern is securing the employment and productivity of the pit in my constituency. If the amendment is defeated, I will be a happier man if the Minister will at least confirm that my aspirations in Committee of a licensing round for Wales will be realised when the Bill completes its progress through both Houses.

My hon. Friend's early-day motion also refers to the 30 April redundancy deadline. From talking to miners in my constituency, I know that in addition to the uncertainty caused by privatisation, the possible rejection of amendment No. 1 and doubt about who will win contracts and how coal will be produced, there is the uncertainty of the 30 April redundancy arrangement. If the amendment fails, my constituents will face a dilemma that I would not wish on any hon. Member—they must look forward either to a potential future in a privatised industry or to accepting redundancy payments. They do not know whether they have a future in a privatised industry.

The Minister could accept the amendment today, but if, as I suspect, he rejects it, he could at least give assurances to miners in my constituency and others that there will be a future for them after privatisation. That will go a long way to meeting the amendment's objectives.

In Committee, my hon. Friends and I opposed privatisation, for a host of reasons. The Government majority that is not currently evident in the Chamber will doubtless ensure that further amendments are made before Third Reading and that the Bill will go to another place. I object to privatisation on principle and as a matter of practicality in respect of my constituents. However, if the industry cannot be publicly owned, my constituents want to work in a privatised industry.

Now that my constituents have reached this stage, they should be given time to compete in the privatised market. They should be allowed the opportunity to be offered employment under one of the new licences. If the Government accept the amendment, my constituents will be able to pass through the 30 April barrier with some hope for the future, knowing that there is a possibility of further work and productivity. They can produce quality coal cheaply, contribute and work, and they have shown their commitment.

If the Minister rejects the amendment, he will put the five pits mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston at the mercy of British Coal—and to date, that mercy has brought the closure of 33 pits in my 20 months as a Member of Parliament. I urge the Minister to give my constituents the hope for the future that they deserve.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The amendment is essential if Britain is to have a sustainable coal industry. Reference was made to the way in which the industry has been run down but unless one studies the figures, one cannot appreciate the scale. In 1984, the country had 170 collieries employing 172,000 men. Ten years later, it has just 17 collieries. In one decade, the Government closed 153 collieries and made redundant 160,000 workers.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) said, the Government are working to an agenda. In 1990, Britain still had 73 collieries employing 65,500 men. That same year, the Government commissioned the Rothschild report and privatised the electricity supply industry. The architects of that privatisation, now Lord

Parkinson and Lord Wakeham, worked the market in such a way as to rig it against the coal industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and others stressed that the Government have a historical dislike of the mining industry and have been committed to running it down since 1974. They saw their opportunity with electricity privatisation.

The Rothschild report set an agenda of between 10 and 14 active collieries. Figures showing the run-down of the industry since 1990 prove that the Government have been working to the Rothschild agenda. In 1992, the country had 50 collieries employing 50,000 men. By 1994, it had 17 collieries employing 14,000 men. It is now reported that another four collieries are likely to be closed within a month, leaving just 13.

It has already been said that miners have increased productivity enormously. When we look at the figures again, we can see just what a great effort they have put into ensuring that their industry is one of high productivity and viability, and an addition to the energy market. In 1984, we were talking in terms of just over 2.4 tonnes per man shift; today, the average is almost 8.5 overall—an enormous increase in productivity.

When Boyds examined the industry during the Government's review, it was being spoken of in terms of an industry that could be sustained into the future if it could reach the productivity levels that are now being achieved. Boyds also referred to the cost per gigajoule and suggested that, if it could be brought down to around £1.30, a great slice of the industry would survive. Prices in the industry are now far below what he envisaged.

For example, Bentley colliery, which closed on 4 December 1993, was producing coal at below £1 per gigajoule. Between September and its closure, it was producing coal at 88p per gigajoule. That price is competitive with world market prices and the price of coal produced in deep coal mines anywhere in the world, yet it closed on 4 December.

5.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred to Manton colliery and the fact that it was producing coal at less than £1 per gigajoule and was only recently closed. Quite clearly, the Government have launched their attack to ensure that the industry is pruned to a size where it will be profitable for a quick rip-off. It is madness to close the coal mining industry in that way and stop its contributions to the energy economy.

Reference has been made to gas prices. Other countries, such as Holland, are looking to change their energy economy and are moving away from gas to coal because they believe that, in the short to medium term, gas prices are likely to increase. When one bears in mind the Zhironovsky factor, considering that Europe takes some 21 per cent. of its gas from the Soviet Union, any cutoff of gas from the Soviet Union into Europe would have an enormous impact on the price of gas. That impact would immediately result in Britain having to turn away from an energy market that is moving towards gas to look to its coal resources, but those resources will have been sterilised. We would have to spend enormous amounts of money to reopen the collieries.

The amendment would ensure that, if some of the few collieries that are left are closed, they will be maintained on a care and maintenance basis so that they can be reopened and put up for sale when the industry is privatised. That is essential. Has the Minister inquired whether funding is available from the European Community to do that, as finance might well be possible to mothball collieries?

Some of my hon. Friends have referred to the common agricultural policy and set-aside. We should be talking about setting aside collieries to protect them for the future and about ensuring that we have a resource that can be used in the energy market. The amendment is enormously important if we are to have a sustainable industry for the future. I hope that the Minister can tell us that he is prepared to take it on board and accept it.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have had a wide-ranging debate, in which many hon. Members who were part of the Standing Committee that examined the Bill took part. The House will recall that, when the White Paper was published in March of last year, the Government welcomed British Coal's commitment to offer to the private sector any pits that it no longer wished to operate. Since then, British Coal has advertised a total of some 28 pits, announced the licensing of Clipstone and Rossington to R J B Mining and made a conditional agreement to licence both Trentham and Coventry to Coal Investments. In addition, British Coal is continuing negotiations on a further two tenders and is still evaluating tenders for four pits.

I remind the House of the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) on 9 February, in which he made it clear that

> "The Government are committed to ensuring that any closing pits are made available to the private sector . . . British Coal has indicated that the corporation is unlikely to offer any further closing pits for lease/licence. It is the Government's intention, therefore, to offer such pits in parallel to the privatisation regional packages. Such pits would meanwhile be kept on care and maintenance basis."—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. *315-16.*]

That meets the point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

Mr. Clapham: Is the Minister aware that, when Neil Clarke, the chairman of British Coal, appeared before the Trade and Industry Select Committee, he said that, of the 30-odd collieries that had been closed—some are still open, although not working as operating mines—only six would be likely to be granted licences?

Mr. McLoughlin: I have stated quite clearly the Government's position on any pits that close and on the regional packages if any future closures were to take place. I should have thought that hon. Members would have welcomed and endorsed the Government's policy of giving the private sector the opportunity to operate those pits even if it is some time after the event.

In opening the debate, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) told us that he believed that this privatisation was the low tide of the Government's privatisation policy. Quite frankly, he has believed that about every privatisation that the Government have introduced. He has not agreed with a single privatisation. When he winds up later, perhaps he will tell us whether he supports what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) called on him to do—renationalising the industry—and whether that is a commitment that he is prepared to enter into. If so, how he would carry it forward?

Mr. Robin Cook: I am happy to respond to the Minister, because I have always said, whenever asked, that

[Mr. Robin Cook]

I would be astonished if our plans to rescue the coal industry after the next election did not involve public ownership. My right hon. and learned Friend the leader of the Labour party has always made it perfectly plain that, where we believe that the management of a pit is not meeting our energy strategy, and where the safety of the work force at that pit is at risk, we will not hesitate to revoke the licence of that pit.

The one qualification that we make is that that step back into public ownership should have the support of the work force. That means that the people who are contemplating taking over these licences should bear in mind that we have a clear commitment to restore public ownership of the coal industry and will have clear regard to whether the work force has confidence in them.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman has now said. The hon. Member for Bolsover also went on to mention a few other industries, but I will not push the hon. Gentleman on that point, because that is slightly wider than what we are discussing at the moment.

It is interesting that a number of Labour Members have spoken of their contempt for British Coal. It is highly unlikely that any of the miners will seek necessarily to go back into the nationalised industry that is being proposed. Indeed, the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) was perhaps more honest than most of his colleagues when he explained to us that he did not necessarily blame the Government and that he had constantly complained about a number of aspects of British Coal under a number of Governments—for example, the way that it had narrowed its horizons on the available markets.

We had interesting discussions in Committee about that. When the hon. Member for Livingston goes on about the low tide of privatisation, it is perhaps worth treating those words with some contempt as, so far as he is concerned, there has never been a high tide.

Mr. Tipping: The Minister has just been talking about British Coal and its management. Earlier, he gave a commitment that the Government would make available for licence any pit that closed. How can that be the case in Ollerton, where the mine shafts are being filled in at the moment? It is a complete reneging on that promise.

Mr. McLoughlin: I would simply say what I said earlier. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the response given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy. The Government stand by that commitment.

A number of questions were raised about the future size of the industry. In the run-up to privatisation, that must depend on British Coal's success in continuing to reduce costs and to supply competitive products that meet customers' needs. The White Paper offered opportunities not guarantees, and the Government are doing all that we reasonably can, consistent with the economic realities and the legal constraints, to increase the opportunities for British Coal. We took up the central recommendation of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on a subsidy for coal and we have made four offers, subject to European Union clearance.

Mr. Clapham: The Minister says that the Government took up the Select Committee's central recommendation, but the central recommendation was about extending the market franchise. Had that been done, a market for 17 million tonnes of coal would have been created. The Government were certainly not prepared to accept that; they threw out all the main recommendations of the Select Committee's report.

Mr. McLoughlin: I do not think that anyone has argued that in the past. As I said, one of the central recommendations was to offer a subsidy and that is exactly what the Government did, in connection with the additional sales of deep-mined coal for electricity generation.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey, for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) and for Midlothian, asked about conflict of interests and the possible position of British Coal management in any future sale of British Coal. I should like to put clearly on the record the fact that British Coal has internal guidelines requiring any manager preparing for a management buy-out proposal for any part of the business to declare an interest to the chairman. I understand that the chairman has received no such declaration of interest in respect of British Coal's mining operations.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan) *rose—*

Mr. McLoughlin: May I finish my point? Then I shall give way.

British Coal has detailed internal guidelines to avoid any potential conflict of interest. Any employee who may in due course become involved in the preparation of a bid will be required to notify an interest so that proper monitoring arrangements and control can be established. Any bid by managers or other employees will be considered on its merits against bids from other potential purchasers. The Government will of course be the vendor in that case.

Mr. O'Neill: The Minister spoke initially about managers, and then mentioned other employees. Does he draw a distinction between the two? Are they to be treated the same? Can we take it that the people at Hobart house will be subject to exactly the same conditions? The balance of the Minister's comments suggested that some distinction would be drawn between the two types of British Coal employee. Will he clarify that question?

Mr. McLoughlin: What I said was fairly clear, but if it needs further clarification I shall gladly supply that later. The internal guidelines require any manager working on management buy-out proposals for any part of the business to declare an interest to the chairman, and I understand that no such declaration has hitherto been made.

Mr. Eric Clarke *rose—*

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose—*

Mr. McLoughlin: I give way to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister accept that that is a wholly unsatisfactory condition? Even if we believed that nobody in British Coal was interested in a buy-out, and nobody had yet come forward to say that he was, none the less if somebody eventually came forward surely it would be impossible for such a person to be working up a bid to win a tender and at the same time managing the best prospects for the whole disposal to the best bidder. Those two positions cannot be compatible. Cannot the Minister

see that? Cannot he say at the Dispatch Box that no conflict of interests will be permitted and that if someone registers an interest in a buy-out he must cease to have a role in a company that may be seeking to dispose of the pits to somebody else?

5.45 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: I have made it clear that, when there is a conflict of interests, it must be drawn to the attention of the chairman. There are strict internal guidelines to cover that point. This is well-trodden territory, and no conflict of interests will be allowed.

Mr. Eric Clarke: The Minister mentioned me and I am of course interested in the same subject. I have no axe to grind against management—that is, against a manager of a colliery—but I have an axe to grind against the most senior management. What happens if the people at the very top do not declare a conflict of interests, yet become involved in a takeover bid? What is the logic? If they are not doing what we say they are doing, why? There is no logic in that.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am slightly puzzled about what the hon. Gentleman is asking. Where people have an interest, they will be required to declare it. If they do not, the various contacts with which they are involved will become subject to further consideration.

The hon. Member for Bolsover gave us his usual history lesson. I am glad that he spoke after the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), because yesterday he told us that the whole problem was caused by the position of the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers in the 1984-85 strike. The hon. Member for Wentworth speaks on behalf of NACODS, so he might not exactly agree with that conclusion. The hon. Member for Bolsover went over his usual ground today. I am sure that he must find some comfort in his Front-Bench spokesman's commitment to renationalisation.

Mr. Skinner: It is a big improvement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman is never usually in the vanguard or the leadership of his party, but perhaps there is a chance for him yet.

Mr. Skinner: I want renationalisation without compensation.

Mr. McLoughlin: That is an internal matter. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will make his case with vigour. I do not ask the hon. Member for Livingston to comment; he may be a little less forthcoming than the hon. Member for Bolsover.

We cannot accept the amendment. I have made it abundantly clear that any mines closed will be offered to the private sector. That offers the best way forward for the British coal industry.

Mr. Robin Cook: Hon. Members who have attended the whole debate will have observed that the one question to which the Minister did not respond was the one that I asked at the start of the debate, about whether he had received the Boyds report showing that privatisation will put up the price of coal.

Mr. Skinner: He has got it.

Mr. Cook: On that matter, as on others, I am inclined to agree with my hon. Friend. It is a pretty sure bet that if that document did not exist we would have been told that it did not. If it existed, but proved that the price of coal after privatisation would fall rather than rise, we would have been told that from the Dispatch Box. Instead, there has been an eloquent silence on the subject of the Boyds paper. From that I can conclude only that the report from which I quoted exists, and that it concludes that for the first pit on which cost projections have been made, privatisation would put up the price of coal rather than bringing it down.

If I am wrong in that conclusion I shall be happy to give way to the Minister now, so that he can put the record straight. I suspect that those little notes that we saw being passed through the Chamber confirmed to the Minister the fact that privatisation will reverse the trend of the past 10 years of public ownership and put up, rather than bring down, costs.

The Minister argued about conflict of interests if British Coal were preparing a bid to buy the pits that it is selling. The only reason that we are in that position at all is that the Government have failed to arouse any interest from the major players in private mining, such as Hanson, which they had hoped to interest in privatisation. They talked about Hanson on the day on which the Bill was proposed for publication, only for Hanson immediately to announce that it had no interest. So the Government are prepared to put up with any amount of conflict of interest in British Coal so long as a bid is produced, because they are desperate for anybody at all to come forward and make an offer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) talked about the importance of the critical mass—the number of pits in operation—so that one can sustain pits that are not producing cash flow because they are undergoing development. In order to sell pits, the Government are willing to break the coal industry up into five different packets. They have only 17 pits, yet they are prepared to divide them into five packets. How on earth will they then achieve the critical mass that my hon. Friend described, so as to enable some pits to take other pits through periods in which they have no cash flow because they are not producing coal?

The Minister told the House that any pit currently in operation would be offered to the private sector in parallel to privatisation, although not necessarily as part of privatisation. If that is the Minister's conclusion, why cannot he accept the amendment to keep those pits operating in the meantime? Why operate them only on a care and maintenance basis, which results in having to pay the cost of the care and maintenance without receiving the benefit of the output? One cannot employ a work force on care and maintenance. If production is closed, it may be possible to keep the pit under care and maintenance, but the work force will be dismissed, the team will be broken up, the people in it will receive redundancy payments and they will be put on the dole.

The final point that hon. Members should weigh up when considering how to vote in the Division that is about to occur was made repeatedly from the Opposition Benches, especially by my hon. Friends the Members for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and for Delyn (Mr. Hanson). There has been a betrayal of the mining work force who, over the past decade, have achieved dramatic increases in productivity in their industry—for example, at Point of Ayr, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn referred, where the work force have increased productivity fivefold over the past eight years. That dramatic

[Mr. Cook]

achievement deserves better from the House than the betrayal of closing their pit. For that reason, we shall vote to keep that pit and the 16 others open.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 266, Noes 297.

Division No. 178] **[5.50 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'll)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Schedule 2

Restructuring schemes

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 76, line 30, at end insert—

'(3A) Any term of an employment contract or non-contractual condition of employment, including any entitlement to concessionary fuel, which is transferred under a restructuring scheme or modification agreement shall not be altered or withdrawn without the agreement of the employee or his trade union.

(3B) An employee may only have terminated by notice an employment contract transferred by a restructuring scheme or

[Mr. Martin O'Neill]

modification agreement if the employer gives no less than 12 months notice after reasonable consultation with the employee's trade union.

(3C) Paragraphs 3A and 3B above shall continue to apply when the employer changes as a result of a transfer of undertakings.'.

A number of the debates that we have already had on the Bill have related to matters such as redundancies, and we have touched on certain areas of the organisation of the coal industry. We now come to an area which is of more than passing concern to the 17,000 miners who remain in the industry.

A number of beneficiaries—the current employees of British Coal—are in receipt of concessionary coal. As hon. Members are aware, concessionary coal is perceived by the work force to be not a concession but a right. It is perceived by them as an extra payment for the work they do. It has considerable significance in terms of their houses, and certainly it sustained the market for domestic coal in the past.

I understand that there are 4 million to 5 million domestic coal consumers in the United Kingdom. A large number of them live in mining communities. A large number of them are beneficiaries under schemes whereby retired miners and their dependents receive an allocation of coal every year. It has been estimated that the payment of coal is worth about £850 per annum; in real terms, it is more than £1,000 per annum for every household.

In the case of miners who have retired—if they die, their spouses receive the benefits—it is an important payment. Those who are unable to use the coal for one reason or another receive a smaller amount of cash in lieu; nevertheless, it is of some importance to them. We have been told—in Standing Committee, we discussed the matter at some length—that those benefits will not be affected by the change of ownership.

For those currently employed by British Coal, the concessionary coal provisions are in some doubt. Although the amendment focuses on concessionary coal, we are in fact examining the whole range of industrial relations provisions in the coal industry, which are the product of the attempts that were first identified as important in the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946.

That Act says that British Coal has a duty to enter into consultations with organisations which represent a substantial proportion of its employees to establish and maintain joint machinery for conciliation, with provision for arbitration. The Act also made provision for consultation on safety matters and general industrial matters.

It is our belief that, over the years, there has been undue focus on the significance of the national coal strikes during the 40 or so years of public ownership of the coal industry. Although there have been three important strikes, tremendous strides have been made in the creation of a system of industrial relations within the coal industry. When the Donovan commission reported in the 1960s, it looked in large measure to the coal industry for models for conciliation and arbitration systems.

The Opposition wish to ensure that the positive achievements in the coal industry of unions and management in establishing that system should be sustained. We have identified concessionary coal as one of the beneficial aspects for individual workers. We would like to think that due provision would be made when the transfer is made and when the restructuring takes place for the continuation of trade union activities within the coal industry beyond the minimalist approach normally provided by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

The amendment asks that contractual and non-contractual conditions of employment be transferred, and that they will not be withdrawn without the agreement of the employee or of his trade union. The amendment goes on to say:

"An employee may only have terminated by notice an employment contract transferred by a restructuring scheme or modification agreement if the employer gives no less than 12 months notice after reasonable consultation with the employee's trade union."

That point is significant, because an arrangement already exists whereby the terms and conditions of existing British Coal managers cannot be adjusted without 12 months' notice. If it is good enough for managers under public ownership, it should be an essential and basic condition for private coal employees at any rank under the new arrangements. We therefore want that enshrined within the legislation, because, as I have said, in a number of instances, undue attention has been paid to problems in the coal industry which have found expression in long and bitter national strikes.

Outside those industrial disputes, there has been a tremendous achievement of agreement, understanding and ultimately conciliation, in which difficult and fractious disputes have been avoided by the skill of the management and the unions in finding a way through the minefield. In many respects, the difficulties have been avoided because of the structures which have been in place.

If the Bill achieves a majority in the House and elsewhere, we want to ensure that arrangements can be set in place when the new owners take over. They would go a considerable way to improve industrial relations in the new set-up, and would protect the terms and conditions of the individuals who would continue to be employed by the new owners.

The Opposition also feel that the amendment would leave the new or potential owners in no doubt about what their responsibilities ought to be in respect of the provision of good industrial relations. We recognise that there will always be a process of negotiation on wages and general conditions, but we also want to underpin our commitment that, if retired miners have a right to concessionary coal, it ought to be a right also for miners who continue in employment.

It is important that that is placed in the legislation, and that the potential licensees are under no illusions about their responsibilities to the work force. It is realistic to assume that, in a climate of industrial relations rather different from that which prevailed in 1946 and 1979, certain things ought nevertheless to be laid down and made specific.

We feel that the provisions and conditions of employment for the mineworkers should continue for at least the first 12 months of the period of new ownership. Those terms and conditions should be enshrined in the legislation for the benefit of the industry. They would provide the work force with minimal guarantees about the continuation of their present terms and conditions.

The amendment would benefit the industry and industrial relations. I have no hesitation in commending it

to the House, and I hope that hon. Members of all parties who look for good industrial relations and a healthy relationship between management and unions will be prepared to back it.

6.15 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Before the general election, the miners parliamentary group met the then Secretary of State for Energy, who is now the noble Lord Wakeham. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) will listen, as I am sure that he is very interested.

The group and the Secretary of State discussed the threats of privatisation and the intentions of the Government, because we have all known for a considerable time what the Government's real intentions were with regard to the mining industry. The then Secretary of State referred to things which he saw as historical liabilities. Part of those liabilities were pensions, and another part was concessionary fuel.

I was a miner for 23 years. I worked in two coalfields; first, in the Scottish coalfield as a young apprentice engineer where I qualified as a mining engineer; and then for 19 years in the Nottinghamshire coalfield. The different areas had different concessionary fuel agreements. Nottinghamshire at that time had a better agreement than most areas. When the Scottish miners were getting 7 tonnes per annum, the Nottinghamshire miners were getting 19 tons 17 cwt—I am sorry for talking in the old language.

That difference was not because of a deliberate preference for one area against the other, but was to do with local agreements. The Nottinghamshire miners were certainly entitled to their larger allocation of the national agreement. They had an agreement whereby they filled 21 cwt of tubs.

That was in the hand-filled days, of which I am sure Conservative Members will have great memories, when miners lay on their sides in water and dust in spaces of anything from 22 in to 3 ft. They were filling tubs, and getting paid per tub. Miners who were filling 21 cwt of tubs were getting paid per tonne, and the 5 per cent. extra coal that they were digging with their own hands went into their own concessionary fuel agreement.

That agreement lasted until 1981, when there was a national concessionary fuel agreement. That has always been part and parcel of miners' rights, and that is understandable. Who among us—even among Government Members—would deny a miner who has worked up to 3,000 ft underground the right to concessionary fuel? There are perks in other industries, and it is my view that concessionary fuel for a miner who has worked in those conditions to produce the coal is not a perk, but a right. There has never been any disagreement about that.

According to the then Secretary of State, it was a historical liability, which was causing problems in making the industry attractive to the private sector. I also mentioned pensions; I may get an opportunity later, if I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to speak on that point.

We now have a worrying situation in which the Government have taken on a part of our concerns by seeking to give assurances—I hope that they are copper-bottomed, but I have my suspicions—that coal will be provided for retired miners and for miners' widows and beneficiaries now. It is important that we write into the Bill the guarantee that mineworkers still in the industry—God knows, there are not that many of them—will have the same entitlement to coal as their predecessors.

The Government tell us in the Bill that miners' terms, employment contracts and so on will be the same under the Bill. That is not good enough. Even now, miners working down the pits in the British coal industry who are employed not by British Coal but by private companies contracted to British Coal have no entitlement to fuel. Even before the industry is privatised, men working down the pits have lost their entitlement to fuel.

The Minister would have to be very persuasive to persuade me and my colleagues that miners will not lose their entitlement to fuel when the private contractors who will be making bids to take over the industry after privatisation already do not provide a fuel entitlement. The Minister will have to be very persuasive to persuade me and others that the coal entitlement will remain. I suggest that it will not.

As some companies have already done, private sector companies will tell miners that, within three months, their terms and conditions will be changed. I can give an example. Pit closures have taken place recently in Nottinghamshire. Ollerton colliery was closed. I worked at Ollerton. When I went to that pit in 1968, it had 100 years proven coal. When Ollerton was closed, it was one of the most profitable pits in our coal industry; yet it has gone. It has been closed for reasons known only to those who have decided to bring the axe down on that pit.

I am told that salvage work is going on at Ollerton. British Coal is employing miners who have been given their redundancy notices to salvage stuff from the pit. They are employed on a week-to-week basis on lower money than they were paid by British Coal. They have no guarantees, such as fuel entitlements, protective clothing and so on. That is happening now, as we stand here discussing the Bill and listening to Ministers.

I see the Minister for Energy in his place. He usually comes in when I get the rare chance to speak on these matters. He has sought to assure us about the Bill, but his assurances do not hold water. We only have to reflect on what is happening in the industry today.

If the Minister is telling me that, as soon as this iniquitous Bill becomes an Act, everyone will be okay and miners will have protection and concessionary fuel, I do not believe it for a minute. I ask the Minister to accept what the amendment seeks to do. If he agrees with us that a miner who works 3,000 ft underground deserves a coal entitlement, he should give that guarantee in the Bill.

As we have heard in the courts of our land, statements and promises made by Ministers from the Dispatch Box which are not in the legislation do not mean anything. If the mineworkers are to be given the protection they need and deserve, the amendment must be written into the Bill. I hope that the Minister will consider it.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on this point. In the process of transition to privatisation the conditions for which miners have fought through the unions over the decades are being stripped away one by one. The entitlement to concessionary coal is a supreme example of that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said, the average entitlement of 4 tonnes of concessionary coal per annum is equivalent to about

[Mr. Peter Hain]

£1,000 before tax. That is a great deal of money in an area such as Neath, particularly to many retired miners and their widows.

In my constituency the private mine owners simply reneged on their commitment to provide concessionary fuel. For example, when Ryan Mining International took over some pits in the Neath valley, it abandoned its previous concessionary fuel entitlement and paid its workers £125 per year instead. That is about one eighth of the value of their entitlement if they had retained their previous concessionary fuel conditions. If one is lucky, £125 would buy 1 tonne of coal on the market in Neath. It would last no more than seven weeks in the winter months.

I cite an example to illustrate the point. An 81-year-old man who used to work in Rheola pit near my home village of Resolven suddenly received through the post a notice from Ryan Mining International, which had taken over the pit some two years before, that the company was dispensing with his discretionary fuel entitlement and would give him £125 a year as a substitute. That nowhere near met the needs for which he had depended on the entitlement that he had enjoyed for many years.

Another example is the private mining company Welsh Dragon, which has two mines in the upper Swansea valley. It simply terminated its concessionary fuel entitlement. The next week its workers and their dependants had their entitlement taken away from them. I emphasise the point made by some of my hon. Friends that concessionary fuel is not a perk. It is deferred wages. Many miners paid for the coal during their service in the mines. More than that, during their working lives, they contributed to the supply of house coal for widows of retired miners and miners who were not entitled to the full allocation. They contributed to a pool from which those widows and miners could draw.

Concessionary fuel is not an optional extra. It is a basic entitlement earned through deferred wages, in many cases through a long life of struggle working in the pits. It is a vital resource. The Government did not give us adequate assurances in Committee. Unfortunately, I do not expect the Minister to do so when he replies.

The threatened withdrawal of concessionary fuel is causing fear throughout south Wales and, I am sure, across the country. If the Government had any remnants of honour following their treatment of the coal industry in recent years, which has been enshrined in the privatisation Bill, they would give guarantees to those people who have been dependent on concessionary fuel for many years and expected to be so for many years to come. They now have hanging over them the sword of Damocles of the withdrawal of a vital entitlement on which they rely so extensively.

Mr. Clapham: Amendment No. 16 is essential if we are to maintain a floor level of terms and conditions in the mining industry. In 1947 when the industry was nationalised, a carry-over agreement was made which transferred all the terms and conditions of the previous period into the era of nationalisation. It provided a ground level of terms and conditions on which the negotiations with the new nationalised industry could build.

Since that time, a set of terms and conditions has been achieved which, while perhaps not providing all the conditions that I would like to see in the mining industry, provides good remunerative opportunities and, as my hon. Friends have said, concessionary fuel for people who work in the industry as well as their families.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) mentioned that the concessionary fuel agreement differed from area to area and colliery to colliery until 1983 when, for the first time in the industry, a national concessionary fuel agreement was achieved. That came into being after 10 years of negotiation. I think that the Minister would accept that to reach a national agreement to span a whole industry when many different agreements applied from one colliery to another and one area to another, was an enormous achievement.

6.30 pm

The agreement provides, as of right, entitlements to employees and their widows and is the first time that widows have received an entitlement as of right, rather than one that is passed from their husbands. The national concessionary fuel agreement provides for the allocation of smokeless fuel and bituminous coal where coal can be burned.

At present the use of smokeless fuel is growing and it is becoming perhaps a more important part of the allocation than bituminous coal. The agreement also provides cash in lieu. When widows or former miners become too frail to handle solid fuel, they can apply for a cash-in-lieu payment which will go towards providing heating and lighting in their homes.

It is essential that we maintain the agreement, and the Minister gave assurances in Committee that it will be applicable to former workers and their widows. However, he did not extend similar assurances to those who continue to work in the industry. The amendment seeks to ensure that the men who continue to work in the industry receive their concessionary fuel. That is an important entitlement. Unless that right is written into the statute, there is no doubt that the new employers will seek to change the terms and conditions very quickly.

All of the agreements negotiated in the industry have been embraced in the contract of employment. If, shortly after taking over a colliery, a new employer were to give notice that he was going to change the terms and conditions of the contract, within a short period we would be likely to see the concessionary fuel agreement replaced in the case of men who continue to work in the industry. I think that that would be grossly unfair.

My hon. Friend has already pointed out that it is not a concession as such; it is a right which is part of the remuneration package. Former workers and their widows were originally given the entitlement because men who worked in the industry had part of their entitlements stopped and put into a pool from which former workers and widows could draw their coal. The entitlement is part of a remunerative package and, on that basis, the Minister should accept the amendment.

In Committee we tried to impress upon the Minister the fact that the protection of terms and conditions should be written into the licences of the new operators, but he rejected our view.

Many other terms and conditions have been negotiated since nationalisation. The industry has always operated a very sophisticated industrial relations procedure and currently about 49 volumes of memoranda of agreement have been negotiated which apply across the board to collieries and workshops and provide good standards of

terms and conditions. Unless entitlements are written into the statute, it is likely that the new employers will withdraw them. They will do that by giving notice that they intend to change the contract of employment, or they may pass on colliery work to a subsidiary. If that occurs, the new terms and conditions offered by a subsidiary could replace the terms and conditions that the miner expects based on agreements that have been negotiated previously within the industry.

I hope that the Minister will confirm that he is prepared to ensure that conciliation procedures continue in the industry. Section 46 of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 set out conciliation and consultation procedures for the whole industry. British Coal terminated the consultation procedures in December 1985 and the conciliation procedures were terminated in May 1986 after notice was given of their termination in December 1985.

Since that time, new conciliation procedures have been agreed in the industry and British Coal agreed that it would meet the unions on a bilateral basis. Unfortunately, British Coal has not kept its word and, as a result, many of the meetings that should have taken place under the conciliation procedure have not occurred.

I hope that the Minister will ensure that conciliation procedures are adopted in the industry. I hope that he will accept consultation procedures for the industry and, in addition, that he will accept amendment No. 16. That is essential if we are to provide the floor level of terms and conditions required by miners who will be working for successor companies.

Mr. Tipping: My colleagues have quite rightly stressed the importance of the concessionary coal entitlement. There are widespread concerns about that in coalfield communities. The Minister has given some assurances, but there is an area of weakness affecting those employees currently working in the pits who will enter the newly privatised industry. This amendment safeguards their position for 12 months.

However, an important principle lies behind the amendment. Mineworkers have struggled for years, both through action and negotiation, to achieve decent terms of conditions and contracts. All that could change under a privatised industry. The date for restructuring may be 1 January 1995, but I think that the Government face an enormous challenge in moving from the current situation to that restructuring point.

It was pointed out this afternoon that the redundancy scheme will end on 30 April this year—just a few weeks away. Men and their families are making decisions and thinking very carefully about their futures. First, they want to know whether their pits will remain in operation and, secondly, they are assessing the chances of their pits surviving in a new, privatised world.

There are many unknowns in that assessment. The amendment provides the men with some security; it ensures that when employees transfer to a private employer they will not give away hard-won rights and conditions of employment.

Mr. Clapham: Does my hon. Friend agree that, if the Minister were to announce that he would allow the redundancy terms to operate for three years, that would engender confidence in the men who remain in the industry?

Mr. Tipping: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point because it was one which I intended to develop. I commend this amendment for at least providing the possibility of employment under the old terms and conditions for 12 months after restructuring. I think that the correct way forward is for the Government to tell the people who work in the mining industry that they will maintain the present redundancy terms through to the point of privatisation and beyond. I find it difficult to see how the 10,000 men who now work for British Coal can continue to work in the industry through to privatisation. The amendment is a limited step in the right direction but the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) for a three-year commitment would give people a great deal of confidence.

I know that the Minister has been approached by representatives of some of the mining unions who say that there is yet another approach to that which we are advocating. We are advocating the TUPE long-term conditions approach, but they suggest loyalty bonuses to people who stay in the industry up to privatisation. It is then not a matter of principle but of practicality. The Government are going full steam ahead towards privatisation but, frankly, they have not given sufficient thought to the matter.

I know from conversations in coalfield communities that miners who want redundancy but who are not given it by 30 April will, after that date, act in a ca'canny way. If they do not feel that they have been given a fair chance of working under the same protected conditions or of receiving a bonus, they can create havoc. The Minister needs to think carefully about how he is going to keep the 10,000 men who are currently employed in the industry working when it is privatised. It is a dilemma not only for the men involved, although it affects them principally, but for the Government, who have to handle the practicalities.

It would perhaps be appropriate if the Minister reassured the men and their families who are going through a difficult time and having to make hard choices,. It is very easy for me to talk about those choices, but it is very hard for the men and their families to contemplate the future. The Government could help them by giving them the assurances that they seek and they could also protect their own position by spelling out clearly how they intend to tackle the problem.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): Understandably, the debate has focused primarily on the issue of concessionary fuel, although the amendment in fact deals with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and suggests that there should be a right of 12 months' notice of any proposal by employers to change their terms and conditions. The House will recognise that the TUPE regulations operate because we have included them in the Bill.

The amendment appears to give British Coal employees unique rights which are enjoyed by no other British employee in any other industry. I find it rather difficult to follow the argument that, in some way, employees of British Coal are wholly different from those in any other sector or working for any other firm. That dispenses with the main thrust of the amendment but, as I said, the debate has concentrated on concessionary fuel.

I understand the concern felt by the recipients of concessionary fuel who are inevitably facing uncertainty in

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

the run-up to privatisation. If I may, Madam Deputy Speaker, and if it is within what I call the bounds of our adversarial system, I pay tribute to Opposition Members. At one stage, I thought that they would deliberately start a scare story and there was indeed some evidence of it a few months ago when we debated the paving Bill.

It was suggested that, somehow, the Government were determined to do away with people's right to concessionary fuel but I pay tribute to Opposition Members because they have not played that card. Having received assurances from me, through parliamentary answers and in Committee, they have worked hard to reassure many elderly people who were getting genuinely worried, and I thank them for that.

I repeat the assurance about concessionary fuel. After privatisation, the Government take responsibility for bringing concessionary fuel to those who are entitled to it and have not transferred to the successor companies. The successor companies will take responsibility for the entitlements of continuing employees. That is a clear undertaking, and responsibility for meeting the entitlement of continuing employees will be transferred to successor companies.

The question was asked—quite reasonably—whether successor companies might seek to renegotiate those entitlements. Of course they might, just as they might seek to renegotiate the terms of employment as they are entitled to do under the TUPE regulations. Many Opposition Members recognise that that might be in the interests of not only employers but employees.

6.45 pm

There is a recognition that some of the working practices currently followed by British Coal are not as conducive to competitive coal mining as they might be. The evidence for that is that the system of working and shifts applied at Asfordby, having been negotiated freely between the union, on behalf of the membership, and the management, has generally been recognised by everyone involved at the mine as giving them significant advantages.

I throw that out as an example because it shows that sensible negotiations can benefit employees and employers. It is not in anyone's interests to freeze for ever, or even for a lengthy and abnormal period, the particular terms of employment. However, I stress that TUPE will have to be followed and, if negotiations are to take place, they will have to do so in the context of TUPE.

Mr. Clapham: We are suggesting that there should be a ground level of terms and conditions, not that they be frozen for ever and a day. They should provide the level on which future negotiations would take place. In an industry which has varying degrees of technology, unless such protection is provided it is likely that high-technology pits will compete with low-technology pits and that the low-technology pits will survive because they are able to change the terms and conditions offered and pay low wages.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): We want them to survive.

Mr. Eggar: As my hon. Friend says, we want those pits to survive. I do not necessarily accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. Mines that are mined less intensively might produce a return for the owner and benefit people working there. There are many examples in other parts of the world, most notably the United States, of different mining methods being used and providing competitively priced coal and safe, secure employment for the men involved.

Let us consider the practical examples in our own coalfields. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson), whose constituency includes the Point of Ayr colliery, knows very well that an inspired management approach, the full co-operation of the work force and the use of what is by British standards an abnormal mining method to start with, followed by the use of continuous miners and their adaptation for United Kingdom conditions, has made the pit much more competitive than most people ever thought it would be.

I accept the hon. Member's argument that it has also meant a reduction in the employment level. I ask him whether it is better that there be significant numbers of men, but not as many as previously, using a different method of mining but still producing coal and providing employment, or a uniform system with a greater number of men, which probably would have led by now to the closure of that pit because it could not be competitive.

Those are the questions to which Opposition Members must be prepared to respond. They must recognise that, in the private sector, there will inevitably be different methods of mining—different approaches—but there must be protection for the work force, and that is what TUPE give,. That is what the undertaking under the transfer gives with regard to concessionary coal.

Mr. Redmond: If one follows the Minister's arguments to their logical conclusion, he obviously agrees with the mining production that operates in Colombia, where the children—

Mr. Eggar *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Redmond: It is cheaper coal—the Minister cannot have it both ways. If he is arguing that different methods would lower the costs, to follow his argument to its logical conclusion he agrees with children being used in Colombia to produce the coal that is being exported to this country.

Mr. Eggar: Although I am sure that the hon. Gentleman volunteered for the Committee, I know that he was not able to be a member. We have had a sensible debate and that type of argument is not in tune with the way in which the matter has been approached. I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will recognise that.

Mr. Hain: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: I will give way, but we are trying to make progress.

Mr. Hain: I am grateful. On concessionary coal, will the Minister tackle the problem experienced by existing private miners, who have, in south Wales at least, a separate agreement which dates back to 1953 but which is being unilaterally abandoned, as I have described, by successive mines? Those miners are offered no protection under the Bill. How will he reassure them and their dependants and so on, who rely on concessionary fuel?

Mr. Eggar: As I said in Committee and have said frequently, the Government will take on responsibility for the concessionary help to those people who are entitled but

are not transferring to successor companies. That is clear. The rights of those people who go to successor companies are protected under TUPE and they are also protected by means of transfer schemes under the legislation. I accept, and I make it absolutely clear to the House, that then there is an opportunity for a renegotiation which has to involve the work force; it cannot be arbitrarily imposed by the employer. There may very well be changes at that stage.

The objective of the amendment, which is to give unique rights to the miners as against any other group of employees, is inappropriate. I urge the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. O'Neill: It is not our intention to push the amendment to a vote tonight, but the fact that we are withdrawing it does not mean that we agree with the Minister in any way. We regard the mining industry as unique. No other industry in the United Kingdom requires people to work in the bowels of the earth in darkness, in very difficult conditions, to extract a product that is of great importance to the country. The people who do that in that industry are unionised. They are organised. They have agreements.

There are people who work in the North Sea—in boats, fishing, and in the oil rigs, extracting oil. Virtually none of those people enjoy the privileges and benefits that accrue from being members of a trade union. Men working in extremely difficult conditions have been able to secure for themselves basic rights. We feel that those rights are sufficiently important to be enshrined during a very difficult or uncertain transitional period.

The minimalist conditions that are afforded by TUPE, which at least extend for three months, could be far less than that if management took advantage of the sleight of hand which our lax industrial relations legislation currently affords them. That is why we want to make it specific.

We argue that the unique character of the mining industry is also reflected in the terms and conditions and conciliation arrangements that have been built up since nationalisation, and we do not wish to see that thrown out. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) put it, we want that established as part of the foundations of the next generation of coal ownership.

For those reasons, we feel that our argument is valid, and that it overrides the argument that we are assuming that mining should be treated as elitist because it is unique. We do not take that to be the case. We reject that argument. However, we recognise that there may well be other places where arguments such as those that we have made tonight can be advanced by people sympathetic to the cause of good industrial relations and to the benefits that all miners who work for British Coal currently enjoy—the entitlement to concessionary coal.

We believe that it is too important to have a guarantee for only three months, and we hope that it will be extended well beyond that. That is the minimum guarantee afforded by TUPE. With some regret, I will seek to withdraw the amendment, but not because we are satisfied by the Minister's assurances. As the Minister will be the first to admit, he is in no position to give assurances beyond the first three months. After that, the owners of the industry will not be responsible to the Government or to the House. I therefore beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 34, in page 78, line 30, leave out from 'State' to 'that' in line 32 and insert

'where it appears to him in the case of any restructuring scheme or modification agreement'.

No. 35, in page 78, line 34, leave out

'of the effects of the scheme to every such person'

and insert

'under this paragraph to every such person.

(1A) A notice to be given by the Secretary of State under this paragraph shall be given as soon as reasonably practicable after he makes the scheme or, as the case may be, gives his approval in relation to the agreement.'.

No. 36, in page 78, line 35, leave out

'in relation to any restructuring scheme'.

No. 37, in page 78, line 36, after 'scheme', insert

'or, as the case may be, of the agreement'.—*[Mr. Eggar.]*

Schedule 4

TAXATION PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 38, in page 83, line 20, after 'transfer' insert—

'(aa) the predecessor ceases, by virtue of any provisions of a restructuring scheme coming into force at the same time as the transfer, to carry on any trade or part of a trade which is not transferred to the transferee,'.

No. 39, in page 83, line 23, after 'continued' insert

'or ceases to be carried on by the predecessor'.—*[Mr. Eggar.]*

Clause 22

PENSIONS AND MINERS' WELFARE ORGANISATIONS

Mr. O'Neill: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 18, line 14, at end add—

'( ) The Secretary of State may at any time before the restructuring date make a scheme for the transfer of property rights and liabilities from the Corporation to the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation or a body or person to which its functions have been transferred under Section 12(3) of the Miners' Welfare Act 1952.

( ) A scheme made under subsection (4) above may only provide for the transfer of land in the freehold possession of the Corporation and associated property where:

(a) the land and any buildings thereon are leased to a Miners' Welfare, Charity or Friendly Society in pursuit of their charitable objectives; or

(b) the land and any buildings thereon have been consistently used for the pursuit of Miners' Welfare objectives during the past five years, regardless of whether or not any rent has been paid or demanded; or

(c) the land and any buildings thereon have been used for purposes which accord closely with the social, recreational, educational and cultural objectives of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

( ) Where a Miners' Welfare Charity or Friendly Society is unable to maintain recreational facilities it owns, either by freehold or leasehold, a local authority may agree to accept responsibility for maintenance of these facilities.

( ) Where a local authority considers whether to exercise its powers under subsection (6) of this section, it may apply to the Secretary of State for an increase in its standard spending assessment to cover the maintenance costs for a period not exceeding five years.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 23, in page 18, line 14, at end add—

'( ) The charitable aims of the successor body to the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation established under subsection (3) of Section 12 of the 1952 Miners' Welfare Act shall incorporate the charitable aims of that Organisation.

( ) The Charity Commissioners shall have due regard to subsection (4) of this section when determining the allocation of residual funds left after the winding up of Miners' Welfare Trusts and Charities.'.

Mr. O'Neill: We now come to one of the aspects of our coal heritage. In the previous debate, the Minister queried the uniqueness of the coal industry. I do not want to labour that point, but some areas are not only scarred by the extraction of coal, but have many attractive features that exist largely as the creation of the coal industry, and especially of the coal miners. I think of the sports facilities, the welfare halls and the health facilities that have grown up as a consequence of the miners' aspirations and recognition of what ought to be reasonable social provisions in a civilised community.

Those of us who represent mining communities and former mining communities know of a variety of such facilities. We also know of the valuable work that is carried out by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. This work extends to the provision of counselling and assistance for elderly and retired miners and support for injured miners. People injured in pit accidents in Yorkshire, for example, may be provided with special orthopaedic facilities. In all these fields, the miners themselves have been the main source of inspiration for developments and, in large measure, the sources of finance.

To an extent, this has been recognised. There have been protracted negotiations with the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. I shall hereafter refer to that organisation as CISWO, pronounced with a "S", in the certain knowledge that the next hon. Member to speak will pronounce the name with a "K". If we can agree to differ on that pronunciation, if on nothing else, I shall be more than satisfied.

7 pm

As a consequence of the strength of the argument put forward by the trustees of CISWO and the organisation's chief executive, Alan Vernon Jones, the Minister has gone some way towards meeting their case, although not as far as we should have liked. We recognise that there may very well be further work to be done in this area.

One of our concerns is that there is a gap between what has been promised by the Government to cover the current levels of expenditure and the cost of perceived requirements and that this gap may well be filled by the sale of some facilities. People assume that, in the main, welfare organisations have facilities that could be described, at worst, as drinking dens and, at best, as village social centres. It is true that, in some cases, the sales of alcoholic beverages are no longer sufficiently high to sustain social facilities. A number of difficulties have therefore arisen. In my own constituency, indeed, clubs have experienced problems.

It may well be that, in the face of these difficulties, it will be necessary to sell off some properties. What we do not want, and what these two amendments seek to guard against, is undue pressure on CISWO to dispose of properties that are of considerable value. Local authorities —in particular, those in Nottinghamshire—have identified the importance of the contribution made by CISWO facilities to the general sporting life of counties. In Nottinghamshire, provision extends far beyond football pitches to cricket grounds and so on.

I do not wish, as a Scotsman, to intrude on the private grief of the English about cricket, so I shall refer to the fact that, in Scotland, one of East Lothian's premier golf courses—hitherto called the Royal Musselburgh—is now owned by CISWO. This links course, which is not very far from Muirfield, has been supported substantially by CISWO over the years.

My recollection is that it is not too far from the home of a Mr. Cowan, who is the chairman of the board of trustees of one of the coal industry pension funds. I believe that Mr. Cowan makes use of it. As this is being recorded in *Hansard*, I had better be careful, although I am covered by parliamentary privilege. In every part of the United Kingdom, there are sporting facilities that exist because of mining communities' support. I have spoken about England and about Scotland, and I am sure that in Wales there are rugby clubs that have benefited from such sponsorship and support.

We want to make clear our recognition that some properties may have to be disposed of as they are no longer useful. However, a number of facilities are of considerable use, and are of great significance to communities. Their future must not be jeopardised by what we consider inadequate financial arrangements between CISWO and the Minister. We are not complaining that the Minister is being tight-fisted. We are probably aware of the role of the Treasury in these matters. Indeed, the Minister has travelled a considerable distance from a somewhat unrealistic starting point. But he must go further.

The assets of social welfare organisations across the country should not necessarily be plundered to make up a financial shortfall. These facilities are part of the country's legacy. They are a manifestation of the vision of the men who worked in the coal industry and wanted a better life for their communities. In the absence of state funding and of a local government commitment, they made provision on their own behalf.

They did so by building welfare halls, which became community centres, where meals on wheels are served and where mother-and-toddler groups meet. In some instances, basic health services are provided on a collective basis at these locations. Such facilities are important—indeed, vital. They are part of the fabric of the community.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend may recall that, in the course of the debate, there has been mention of St. John Ambulance, and of that organisation's important contribution in some areas. I understand that it is assisted and accommodated by CISWO. Will my hon. Friend suggest to the Minister also the importance of maintaining the collieries' musical tradition, which is demonstrated not least by fine brass bands?

Mr. O'Neill: The brass bands make a contribution—whether as substantial as that of the pipe bands in Scotland, I shall leave to others to decide.

Every part of the British coal industry has sought to identify areas of need and has itself made provision. The passage of time has in some respects reduced need, but in certain areas CISWO has sought to make provision that ought to have been made by the community as a whole.

Mr. Hain: My hon. Friend has referred to the funding gap. Can he confirm that CISWO's current budget is about £2.5 million and that, even with the Minister's concessions, given in Committee—the trust fund and the £1 million a year for five years, about whose source we are still uncertain—we arrive at £1.4 million? In other words, there is a funding gap of more than £1 million.

Mr. O'Neill: It was my intention to finish on this point. I agree with my hon. Friend, although the position is actually worse than he has described. The financial and management arrangements of a number of organisations are at least overseen by CISWO at national level. In accounting terms, that can be an inestimable contribution.

Not only are auditors' and bookkeepers' fees met and their needs provided for, but there is also a steady hand on the tiller. Thus, organisations are able to go forward. Many of the people who run these self-help bodies—that is, in effect, what they are—do not have the financial skills to enable them to handle today's problems.

This is a very important issue, which goes to the heart of our concerns about sustaining coalfield communities. We can expect to hear, during the course of the debate, of a number of examples right across the British coal field. Facilities must not be put under the hammer to meet the funding gap, which has been identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) and which will, I am sure, be underlined by other hon. Members.

The discussions between the trustees of CISWO and the Minister should not be regarded as the end of the road. We want to see the pressure maintained so that even better terms and conditions may be secured. At this stage, we wish to put down markers about the seriousness of the problem as we see it and to bring home to Conservative Members, some of whom, I am sure, will echo our concerns, the major contribution of the social welfare organisation and its myriad facilities to coalfield communities, former and present. We do not wish to see this jeopardised as a result of a shortfall of several hundred thousand pounds per annum.

Mrs. Peacock: Let me begin with an apology. It was rather remiss of me yesterday not to place on record my interest in the coal industry. That original interest is some 18 months old. My more recent interest, which must be registered, is very well documented; because it is so well documented, and often commented on, I did not mention it initially. I wish to put that right now.

I welcome the funds already proposed for CISWO. When I visited its establishment in the constituency of the Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), I was very impressed by all the facilities that it provided. Those facilities are available not only to miners, but to their families. Some of our larger industrial companies provide sports facilities in a similar way, including some in my constituency.

I appreciate, however, that, despite the funds that have been announced, there will be a gap. Having seen many of the sports facilities, I feel that it would be a great shame if some of them had to be sold off to plug that gap. Many of my colleagues will say that the cost of such facilities should not be borne entirely by the businesses concerned; that will clearly have to be discussed later.

As well as sport and welfare facilities, CISWO provides brass bands. I am very partial to brass band music—although I should add that it is not provided only by colliery bands: in Yorkshire, we have some very good textile company bands, some of which are almost as famous as the colliery bands that may be cited by other hon. Members.

There is a more serious aspect of the matter. The pit has been the centre of many people's lives and work; another important feature of their existence has been the surrounding welfare, social and sporting provision. The working part of a number of those lives is going, or has gone. In some areas, the surrounding facilities are all that are left.

Because the National Coal Board and, more recently, British Coal provided such good facilities, local authorities have not made similar provision in the areas involved. If all those facilities were lost, the authorities would have to start building them again. Surely, in the present climate—in which we encourage authorities not to spend too much—they should not be asked to undertake such expansion.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to add a little to what has already been decided. It is not clear yet where the extra £5 million a year will come from.

Mr. Ashton: I have represented a mining constituency for 25 years. One of my most stunning experiences was attending a widows' tea at Manton colliery two or three years ago. It was attended by 249 widows from a single pit area; the youngest was about 28 and the oldest about 88. It was an astonishing experience.

Nothing brings home the true price of coal with more impact than attending a miners' welfare occasion of that kind. In such communities men die much younger than women, but the existence of a community spirit and welfare facilities means that no one forgets the widows. In the inner cities, pensioners are found three weeks after dying of hypothermia because they could not afford a bag of coal and there was no one to look after them. Pit villages—or towns, rather; some towns in my constituency have populations of between 8,000 and 10,000—have an enormous, fantastic welfare facility.

The tradition continues. It centres on welfare provision, but there will also be a couple of football pitches, tennis courts, a bowling green and perhaps some pigeon fanciers in the neighbourhood; the whole arrangement has been a tremendous crutch for people living in mining towns. Indeed, it has formed the bedrock of their existence. These people grew up together, went to school together, married women living on the next street and went down the welfare together on a Saturday night. Their grandmothers and grandads went for the bingo. Everyone knew everything.

The welfare is handed down from generation to generation. It provides pre-school playgroups and maternity clinics; if the pit is closed, unemployed benefit is paid there, because the labour exchange—or, rather, the unemployment benefit exchange—may be eight miles away, and there may be only one bus an hour. The welfare centre is the focal point of the pit town or village, and its closure along with that of the pit would be a disaster.

Mr. Tipping: My hon. Friend has mentioned many sections of mining communities. I know that he has taken an interest in youth clubs in various pit villages. As pits close, we must find opportunities for young people; welfare organisations provide such opportunities. Unless Nottinghamshire, for instance, receives more generous support in that regard, we may face real problems.

7.15 pm

Mr. Ashton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There have been other changes. At one time, everyone who lived in a pit town or village worked in the pit; 20p, or 50p, was stopped from their wages each week to fund the whole business. Now, following requests for voluntary redundancies, the situation has changed. Until the recent closure of two faces at Harworth, in my constituency, it had 600

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employees; now, only about 40 people live in the town, and those who do not live there are not particularly interested. They will drive 10 miles to another pit village, and, because they may not contribute to the upkeep of the welfare organisation from their own wages, it starts to decline.

Fewer and fewer people use the bar facilities, because young people tend to go down to the discos in Doncaster or the nightclubs in Sheffield. There are still wonderful facilities for pensioners who want to play dominoes, but if the beer prices go up they cannot afford to go in. If the prices remain the same, the loan from the brewery cannot be paid off. It is a vicious circle.

We are not suggesting that everyone should have free beer, or even cheap beer. We are saying that these wonderful sporting and entertainment facilities must be preserved. My heart bleeds when I visit the site of Worksop colliery, which was closed about four years ago. The grass on the cricket pitch is now 2 ft high, the sport pavilions have been vandalised and gipsies have moved on to the site and parked their caravans. Because the pit no longer exists, there is no organisation to employ a groundsman. The council wants to maintain the facilities, but it has no cash: its standard spending assessment has not been increased to take account of the position.

CISWO is not just a one-off for each pit; it is an organisation. The coalfield communities and local councils must get together, with the Minister's assistance, and form a co-operative—a non-profit-making company that can do CISWO's work if necessary. A sports ground requires more than a tractor to cut the grass for half a day a week; it needs a tractor to go around perhaps 10 more grounds in the area with special equipment. An area organisation is required, rather than individual action involving individual councils.

The Select Committee on National Heritage, of which I am a member, interviewed the east midlands sports council on Thursday. It is very concerned about this colossal waste of sporting facilities. In Nottingham, for instance, the kids at Hyson green are desperate for a playing field. They experience all the inner-city problems of drugs, car stealing, rent boys and vice while, just a few miles away, magnificent sports facilities are going to waste. That is crazy, in view of the unique heritage involved.

A long list of international footballers originated from the pit villages: even Barnsley could name a team of 11 who were born in the area, and probably played for England. We had cricketers such as Freddy Trueman and Larwood; the whole culture of where they came from is simply vanishing. There are floodlit football pitches in my area, but the clubs cannot afford to switch the floodlights on. They have wonderful facilities, yet they cannot afford to run them.

International cyclists, such as Tommy Simpson who wore the yellow jersey right across Europe and won the tour de France, came from mining villages. Those villages and towns are beginning to experience the inner-city problems of crime, stealing cars and vandalism. People would use up their energy working down the pit. When they came up at night, they were so tired that they had two or three pints of beer and a game of snooker before going to bed at 10 o'clock—after all, they had to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning. The sporting facilities that took up their strength and energy at weekends are being vandalised and are a disgrace to us.

The miners' welfare is the hub of the village, not just for the footballers and the kids; it provides the pensioners' Christmas teas and chicken and the few quid they give them and day trips to the seaside in the summer. We are talking about the destruction not of a job but of a way of life and a culture that has continued for 100 years. We are asking the Government to accept the amendment because the coalfield communities want it. They are asking not for a handout, but for the continuation of an organisation that can bring together the facilities and continue the culture of mining areas.

Mr. Beith: If I have an interest to declare, it is simply that the Lynemouth miners' welfare institute allows me a room for my constituency surgery; that is a useful facility. I ask the Government not to add to the disaster of pit closures the collapse of facilities in pit villages at a time when young people desperately need them.

I seek some greater assurance from the Government. They must give the mining and coalfield communities time to build up new sources of support for sporting facilities —not least from the companies that might take over pits and produce new jobs. We do not want to frighten companies off by giving them a shopping list, but we should approach them to see whether we can get support from them for facilities which in the past were supported by the coal industry and the miners themselves.

In the parts of Northumberland that were mining areas, sports fields, welfare institutes and other associated facilities, many of them well used, are developing partnerships with the local authorities. Castle Morpeth council, which covers Lynemouth, Ellington, Widdrington and Linton, has had to take on more responsibility for what in the past have been miners' welfare facilities; the partnership is developing, but it is a painstaking and difficult process, particularly given that local authority resources are strained. We desperately need breathing space to develop more partnerships so that we do not lose the facilities.

Sporting facilities are particularly important. We need to be able to offer them to the many youngsters who feel that there is nothing left in the village except crime or messing around on street corners and getting involved in vandalism and trouble. Sport is a constructive alternative activity and we ought to keep it available.

As someone who was brought up on bands and who played in a brass band in an ex-mining village in my youth, I have the privilege of being the president of the Ellington colliery band. We are determined to keep the band in existence, whatever happens to the colliery in future. It provides a greatly valued community facility for all the events it attends, as do bands in all the mining areas.

Many extremely good bands are ex-colliery bands which grew up in the coal industry, but, because of the price of instruments, for example, some smaller communities will not find it easy to find the resources for that wonderful voluntary musical activity in which such high standards are achieved unless they continue to receive some support from the traditional mining industry welfare provisions.

Those important social facilities are needed more than ever in communities where mining has either gone completely or is much reduced in terms of the numbers that

it employs. Quite a number of companies are already showing willingness to sponsor community activities in such areas. In my constituency, Alcan sponsors local activities, as do Northern Electric. Racal Decca, a company that does not even employ people locally, is now backing shore-based watersports in Amble. We hope to find other sources of business backing in future.

We ask the Government to give us time and to give us the opportunity to keep the existing facilities by ensuring that all that CISWO has built up does not disappear overnight because it does not have the funding to continue.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I shall be brief as I know that time is limited. Like the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), I wish to declare an interest. Entered in "Who's Who" under my name is the fact that I am honorary president of the Fegg Hayes sports and social club, formerly the Fegg Hayes miners' welfare club. I want to draw to the attention of the House what happened to that club as an example of what could happen if our amendment is not accepted.

During yesterday's debate, we heard an impassioned plea from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Ashton: What about the hon. Member for Bassetlaw?

Ms Walley: My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) also made a valuable contribution; I put that on record too.

We heard an impassioned plea from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover who said that the coalfield communities are dying on their feet. In addition to all the waste and dereliction of disused mines, with people becoming unemployed and not being retrained because of lack of support from British Coal Enterprise, we face the further waste and disruption that will no doubt come to our communities if we do nothing about clubs such as Fegg Hayes, which was a miners' welfare club supported by CISWO.

Anybody who was born and brought up in a mining community knows only too well that the sports and welfare clubs are the heart of the community. We have heard about various clubs and sports facilities. We really cannot tolerate buildings and sports fields being left to die. I read with great interest that, in the Standing Committee—in which I did not participate—the Minister made some concessions concerning the long-term future of CISWO, but they are not enough.

Three years ago the Fegg Hayes miners' welfare, which is now the Fegg Hayes sports and social club, was about to go into liquidation. The trustees, even with the support of CISWO, could not keep that community centre going with all its facilities. At the eleventh hour they came to me, as the local Member of Parliament, to see whether there was some way in which it could be saved.

As I pointed out yesterday, company law overrides charity law. Only the Charity Commission stepping in at the eleventh hour and a brewery being prepared to come in and save it stopped the miners welfare club closing down. Since then, it has gone from strength to strength and it continues to be an important part of the local community.

If the House does not accept the amendment, and if the Minister cannot give the House an assurance that there will be long-term funding, how can we be sure that similar facilities to those of Fegg Hayes will survive? We certainly need an audit so that we know where all the different sports and social clubs are. We urgently need co-operation between CISWO and local authorities and the coalfield communities to save the land and the buildings and to ensure that, instead of the waste and dereliction, those clubs have some future in the aftermath of the terrible effects of pit closures.

I hope that in his reply the Minister will take into account what happened in Fegg Hayes and give us an assurance that what happened there can happen elsewhere in the country too.

Mr. Redmond: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker, for being called. I apologise to the Minister for my previous remarks, which he stated lowered the standard of the debate. I was trying to fetch it down to your level.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): My level?

7.30 pm

Mr. Redmond: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker, but one has grave reservations about whether the Minister understands what the coal industry privatisation involves.

I want to deal with two separate issues. The first concerns the paraplegic service in Pontefract, which does an excellent job, as did the Firbeck hospital and the convalescent homes. Better health treatment and the improvement in mining conditions mean that people are living longer. Miners retire a damn sight sooner and will, we hope, live a little longer. That shows that there is a need for convalescent homes where the lads and lasses can go to recuperate and enjoy themselves for a fortnight each year.

The amount of cash offered by the Minister for Energy is not enough. He is trying to lead us to believe that he is compassionate. If that is so, he will ensure that much more money is made available. Once we start to reduce the facilities available, it will be a downward spiral. There is a need for more money. Regrettably, he needs to argue with the Treasury to get that money.

My second point deals with the welfare organisations in mining villages. They are part of the mining heritage and of the culture in mining communities. The lads tossed money in and kept the local community alive when no one else was interested. They showed their foresight by attempting to provide facilities that would be used by all in the community. Regrettably, because of the decline of the coal industry in the past few years, the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation is in an embarrassing financial position.

The local authority in Doncaster has reached an agreement on maintenance and other matters with nine of the welfare organisations in Doncaster. It costs the authority about £250,000 to help maintain facilities and ensure that they remain available.

I do not have to tell the Minister that the Department of the Environment is seeking to bring about the demise of local government by placing cash restraints on local communities and local authorities. Given those restraints, there is no way in which local authorities can raise enough funds via the council tax to ensure that those facilities remain. There will, therefore, be a decline in the facilities available.

Already I have been approached by old age groups in Rossington, where the pit was closed by British Coal, although I hope that it will reopen. Because of the lack of

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funds at the colliery, there is a proposal to charge groups that use facilities provided by the welfare organisations. We are not in the game of ensuring that people in the twilight years of their lives, who enjoy a little get together in the week and the facilities provided by the welfare organisations, should have to depend on charity. Charity does not exist any more. To be charitable, one must be able to afford to give to charity. There is, therefore, a problem.

I ask the Minister not to consider the short term, what the cash on offer does, and the market forces that the Government operate, but to consider the long-term needs of those communities. Will he ensure that if anything should happen as a result of CISWO being given charitable status—which it seeks—and having cash flow problems, local authorities will manage the facilities? People in the mining communities raised the cash in the first place to provide facilities for future generations and the Minister is beholden to ensure that those facilities remain well into the next century.

Mr. Eggar: I think that I made it clear in Committee and when I wrote to hon. Members on both sides of the House that I fully recognise the important role of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation and other welfare organisations.

Sometimes we make a mistake when we identify CISWO with the welfare organisations, many of which are fiercely independent and rely only to a limited extent on the services provided by CISWO. Other organisations rely on it to a greater extent. It is one of the strengths of the social welfare system in coal mining communities that each region, and in many cases each village, has developed services, health facilities and buildings which are particularly appropriate for those villages and often very small communities.

The House is aware of the announcement on funding that I made in Committee. It might be helpful if I report to the House a discussion that I had with many members of the CISWO council on 17 March. I do not think that I am misconstruing what they said to me when I say that they gave a cautious welcome to the idea of replacing CISWO with a charitable trust. The council has said that it will examine how it can make a contribution to securing the future of CISWO services by raising external funds—a point raised by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—and recognises that a restructuring of CISWO assets may be necessary to make better use of the funds available within the structure and that it may also have to make administrative savings.

I am sure that the House will agree that, in the light of the CISWO response, the best way forward is a constructive dialogue. Its council members will keep in close touch with my officials during coming weeks and, if necessary, I shall meet them again.

Mr. Clapham: The formula involves an endowment of £10 million, followed by one of £5 million, to be made up of a payment of £1 million each year. Will the Minister confirm that that £1 million will come from the private sector once the industry is privatised? Will he tell the House the mechanism that will be set up to ensure that private companies contribute?

Mr. Eggar: The finance will come from the private companies. We have not yet decided how that money will be conveyed and calculated. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned that it may be a royalty and that it will therefore be related to production, which has been one of difficulties with British Coal, I assure him that we are concerned about the sum and the delivery of that £1 million per year rather than about the mechanism. I assure him that the sum will be £1 million.

I do not think that I am misconstruing the attitude of the CISWO council when I say that it accepted the need for change. It would not be appropriate, therefore, to accept amendment No. 23, which locks CISWO and its successors into its current charitable aims, which the council would not want.

Amendment No. 22 relates to physical assets. Much has been made, understandably, of sporting facilities. I yield to no one in my belief in the importance of team sports. I can tell the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) that my preference is cricket rather than golf—not that golf is a team sport. I may add that part of the reason for recent developments in English cricket is that village cricket does not play as large a role in the life of this country as it once did, which has shown through in the quality of county and English cricket.

The amendment calls for the transfer of assets to CISWO. Most of the sports facilities are organised not by that body but by local welfares, many of which would be appalled at the prospect of their facilities being run by CISWO, centrally or regionally. The amendment refers also to freehold land and properties, but much of it is held on long leases.

I acknowledge the importance to local communities of identifying land holdings. Many are not entirely sure of the basis on which they hold land—whether it has been gifted to them by British Coal, a lease exists, or a rental agreement existed that has not been maintained. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) nods, so obviously she has experienced that with her own welfares.

I asked British Coal to identify the land which it believes it owns and which is currently used for coal industry social welfare purposes, including recreation. We shall make decisions on the disposal of the land identified, who should receive the benefit of the use of that land and any safeguards required.

A point that arises from the speech of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is that some land is no longer actively used for recreational purposes, and is unlikely to be so used in future—because of a shift in the population or other reasons. We must be careful not to build in a totally inflexible system because some land—particularly that not used for some time—could readily be used by the community in other ways. It could be put back to recreational use, developed and so on.

I want to be sensitive to local needs on the basis of the best local information that I can obtain. As I made clear in Committee, I am wary of imposing from the centre a series of rules that, although they make sense in theory, do not work in practice locally.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Eggar: I will give way—but not to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), because he has only just entered the debate. I will give way first to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw.

Mr. Ashton: The Minister is right about the need for flexibility. There is no real demand for some playing fields

because of population movement. If the Minister will give an assurance that discussions will take place before the Bill returns from another place, I will withdraw the amendment in the hope of reaching agreement.

Mr. Eggar: I explained that we asked British Coal to draw up a list of assets. We have powers under the Bill to safeguard the use of land, where we are clear that British Coal owns it. I am confident that we can reach a series of arrangements without laying down hard-and-fast rules in legislation.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Eggar: No. I am trying to respond to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw.

Mr. Skinner: I have just one question.

Mr. Eggar: I am still trying to respond to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw, and I will then give way to the hon. Members for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North—all of whom have been present for the debate. If I do not answer the question of the hon. Member for Bolsover in that way, I shall then give way to him.

I am confident that we can safeguard the genuine and current recreational use of land, but I ask the hon. Member for Bassetlaw to allow us to do that in a flexible and sensitive way.

7.45 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke: One cannot pigeon-hole every case. There are examples in my constituency of recreational open space in an old mining village that the community or local authority wants to revitalise. There are periods when people move away—but when they get their assets together again, they move back and want to revitalise the area. If recreational and open spaces are surrendered to the highest bidder, that land might be used for the wrong reasons. It should be redeveloped in conjunction with the local people and local authority, who should have the first option to purchase—not the highest bidder. I hope that the Minister accepts that principle

Mr. Eggar: I cannot quite go down that route. Even when CISWO wanted to redeploy an asset such as a convalescent home that was not fully utilised, it had difficulty reaching an internal agreement. I do not want to misconstrue CISWO's response, but I made the point to that body that when it is reconstituted as a charitable trust, it must be able to take difficult decisions. That picks up the point made by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

I want to act as sympathetically as possible, but I suspect that, from time to time, some recreational land and buildings may have to be sold against local vested interest but for the greater good of social welfare within mining communities. That will not be easy, and the hon. Member for Midlothian and others will probably have to take the lead in local cases. We must not go against the whole thrust of the work of CISWO and the welfares in order to respond to local needs. If we impose much from the centre, there will be a loss of benefit.

Does the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North still want to intervene?

Ms Walley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Eggar: In that case, I give way to the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Skinner: I heard the Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and the ensuing exchanges. The Minister said that, given some flexibility, most land would be retained. Will he undertake an audit of CISWO's land and establish how much of it is used for recreational and other purposes? If 80 per cent. of that land is used for football, cricket and so on, will the Minister guarantee that he will write into the Bill that no less than 80 per cent. will continue to be used for recreational purposes? That way, any land over and above that not being used for recreational and social purposes could be sold off.

Mr. Eggar: I can say that I have asked for—I use the word loosely—an "audit" of the land that British Coal believes that it owns.

Mr. Skinner: Not all the land.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. CISWO and the welfares may also own land and assets. I do not want to get into the business of telling CISWO what to do with the land and assets that it owns. I am concerned only with the land and assets that British Coal owns, or believes that it owns. I suspect that there will be some dispute over title.

The next stage is to look carefully at that land and identify that which is used currently and actively for recreational purposes. We then need to see how we can provide the best assurance that the land will be retained for those purposes. Again, I say do not let us lock ourselves into the concept that it is to everybody's advantage, so to speak, that we should guarantee that a football pitch will for ever be a football pitch. The changing age profile in villages, for example, may well mean that people want to start playing bowls. Or the growing attraction of tennis may mean that, if they can raise the money for a tennis court, they should be able to redeploy the land. They might want to sell off part of the land to maximise its use. We must be careful that we do not freeze everything for current uses.

Mr. Redmond: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way as this is an important point. The community, not CISWO, owns the land and facilities. Therefore, CISWO is beholden to ensure that it serves the community and not become some quango that is there to make a fast buck and sell the land for profit. I hope that the Minister will accept the community's need, not some small body, to make the decisions about future needs.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman exposes the difficulties that I have when I try to respond to ideas of legislation. Some local welfares might be willing to have CISWO in a fiduciary capacity in some way; others, frankly, would not have it anywhere near the place. If I try to impose one system, which is the thrust of the Opposition amendment, I would please one group but offend another, so I plead for an acceptance that a flexible approach, as locally based as possible, is the right way forward. I believe that the way that I have tried to proceed should command the respect of the House.

Mr. O'Neill: We are grateful to the Minister for taking interventions and making a telling point in what was a fairly long speech. He has gone some way at least to

[Mr. O'Neill]

meeting some of our concerns. But we have to be guided in some respects by the response of the trustees of CISWO, who gave his proposition a cautious welcome.

The Minister said that the dialogue is continuing. It cannot continue ad infinitum. There has to be an end. It is clear that there are more things to be played for at this stage. We hope, therefore, that he is now more aware of some of the problems, because some of them emerged during the discussions that have been under way since October or November of last year. For those reasons, I shall seek the leave of the House to withdraw our amendment in the expectation that, if necessary, it will be looked at elsewhere. I am sure that the Minister will accept that, if we do not get satisfaction through legislation, there will be debates on the Floor of the House later this year to ensure that if the transfer of ownership takes place, CISWO and the communities that depend on the welfare organisations, regardless of the umbrella under which they operate, are represented and protected in the way that we see fit.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 5

PENSIONS PROVISION IN CONNECTION WITH RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Bell: I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 101, line 25, at end insert—

'(aa) for securing that, if modifications are made pursuant to sub-paragraph (a) above, provision shall be made for an independent person to have power to appoint and remove the chairman of the trustees who shall himself be an independent person, and for this purpose a person is independent if—

(i) he is not entitled to any pension right which gives rise to a pension obligation under the existing scheme;

(ii) he is not employed in the Civil Service of the Crown, whether in an established capacity or not, and whether for the whole or part of his time;

(iii) he is not a member of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom; and

(iv) he is not a member of the House of Commons;

and the period of appointment of the chairman shall be for a fixed term not exceeding five years.'.

Over the years, we have been given a number of assurances in relation to pensions. In October 1991, the former Secretary of State for Energy, Lord Wakeham, said on the privatisation of the coal industry:

"the pension interests of both current and past employees of the British Coal Corporation will be properly safeguarded."

Further assurances were given on the same subject by the Minister for Energy on 29 June 1992. He said:

"I say quite categorically that we are committed to safeguarding pensions, we will safeguard pensions, and we will use the most appropriate method to do just that."

A few days later, he gave a clear and unequivocal commitment that the British Coal pension fund would not be ripped off. He made the same statement when we discussed the matter further on the Floor of the House.

The Government have been helpful to the Opposition and interested parties in providing a series of documents covering the issue of pensions.

I now refer specifically to amendment No. 17, which has the purpose of inserting a new sub-paragraph (aa) that requires the Secretary of State to make proposals for the appointment of an independent chairman of trustees if he exercises the powers envisaged in sub-paragraph (a). That would enable the Secretary of State to make arrangements for the appointment of trustees. The current mine workers' pension scheme trustees believe it vital that beneficiaries of the scheme can feel confident that the chairman of trustees is able to exercise his or her responsibility without fear of Government pressure or interference.

Officials of the Department of Trade and Industry have made it clear to the present trustees that they envisage that new trustees will exercise full fiduciary responsibilities. We believe that the Government should welcome this opportunity to demonstrate that the new trustees will be able to act responsibly. In some respects, it should be an advantage to the Government to concede that point, as they would gain greater support and acceptance from the beneficiaries and would also be assured that an independent chairman would have to pay due regard to the guarantor's interests as well that of beneficiaries. The guarantor is likely to play a significant role in the working of the scheme.

In our view, an independent chairman would offer a measure of counterbalance. In addition, it is suggested that the period of appointment of the chairman could be limited to a fixed term, perhaps not exceeding five years. We are aware that there are continuing negotiations with the Government on that point. We are aware that the trustees would prefer a body, independent of the Secretary of State, to make the appointment. Our proposed amendment suggests certain criteria for independence that would have to be met by the appointer and appointee precluding any civil servant, Minister, Member of the House of Commons or beneficiary of the scheme. Therefore, in our view, it remains possible that the Government would accept such a condition and therefore the points are made in a non-partisan, non-political way. On that basis, I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Eric Clarke: I shall be brief, as the Minister gave guarantees in Committee. I was a trustee of the miners' pension fund for many years. We took the role very seriously and educated ourselves as best we could as lay members of a sophisticated and successful pension fund. One aspect that was always underlined to us was that, although we were appointed to represent the members of the NUM—there was a UDM member in the company, as well as the trustees who were appointed by British Coal —we were legally independent. In other words, we were responsible as individuals, not to our organisation, but to the fund itself. That was underlined on every occasion by our legal advisers and other people. The appointment of this person is dear to the hearts of the people who are in the fund.

It was once said that the lifeboats on a ship belong to the crew on a cargo ship—or otherwise to the passengers as well. The pension fund belongs to its members. That is the way I look at it. I hope that all the cynicism attached to the Maxwell fiasco has made us very cautious. People outside, especially members of pension schemes, are certainly extremely worried in case something in the Bill will in some way undermine their rights so that someone will be able to cream off money. I hope that when the Minister replies he will be able to reassure us.

The amendments would be in no way detrimental to the Bill; they will simply add to the assurances demanded by the pensioners, of whom there are a great many. In fact, there is a huge army of them out there. The Minister should think of the former size of the industry and then of the number of pensioners watching closely to see how the

matter is handled. If I go to any public function, or indeed any gathering of people of a certain age in my constituency, the subject of pensions, especially miners' pensions, raises its head nine times out of 10.

8 pm

The protection requested for the post-privatisation pensions agreement is reasonable, as is the limiting of the Secretary of State's discretionary powers to the period before 31 December 1995. We ask for a limit. We do not say that there is no responsibility, or that the Secretary of State is not answerable to the House, but there must be a curb on the laissez-faire independent powers.

The final provision would impose a duty to act in good faith towards the beneficiaries of the pension schemes when using the power to act in the national interest. There could be a conflict of interests here, but I hope that the balance will lean towards the individual pensioner or pensioners.

I am proud of the fact that I was a member of the fund for years. It has been most successful, and the people who ran it and invested in it, and the CIN, have something to be proud of. They were not only successful financially but created a lot of jobs. They invested in this country and elsewhere to create work with risk capital. I am proud of the fact that they used the money. They did not buy art treasures, stick them in a vault and watch them appreciating. They invested the money where it was needed. I am certain that the members of the pension fund wanted the money to be used in that way.

I hoped that things would continue in that way, but the Government have not accepted that idea. The fund could have been treated in such a way that someone who worked for any of the privatised companies could still be a fully fledged member of the pension fund. But the Government said no, froze the fund at that point and gave the new emerging companies the right to negotiate with someone outwith the fund. I see no logic in that, apart from ideological logic. I thought that people would have been invited into a worthwhile thriving pension fund—but that is the way the cookie crumbles.

I hope that the Minister will accept the amendment.

Mr. Eggar: The whole House recognises that discussions are continuing between the Government and the trustees of the two schemes. Progress is still being made, and I hope that nobody in the House will press for a detailed disclosure of exactly where we are.

On the substance of the amendment, the Government recognise that the chairman should carry the confidence of the fellow trustees and the beneficiaries. We also recognise the fact that the Government-appointed trustees, like any trustees, will owe fiduciary duties to the beneficiaries of the scheme. That is most important.

The Department is currently discussing with the trustees the arrangements for appointing the chairman. That is one of the issues that is taking up a fair amount of time. I hope that we shall be able to resolve the matter by the full agreement of the trustees in a way satisfactory both to them and to the Government, so I recommend that the amendment be withdrawn.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful for the Minister's response, and for the interventions by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke), who cast his net rather on the wide side for amendment No. 17. Nevertheless, he raised the subject that preoccupies many members of the pension fund, and certainly those who are the trustees. The question is: who owns the pension fund?

Ms Walley: Does my hon. Friend agree that many people involved, especially the trustees, have put a great deal of work into trying to impress upon the Minister the importance of independence? If there is no independent advice and no independent chairman, how can we have trust? I wish to bring to my hon. Friend's attention the great work that has been done on this matter, especially by Mr. Joe Wills, in my constituency.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has clearly taken a strong interest in the matter. The Minister has mentioned the importance of having an independent chairman, and in Committee we were told that the negotiations were still continuing. We had hoped that by this stage they might have been completed, which would have enabled the Government to table amendments on pensions for Report. We are aware that the negotiations are still continuing, and we are in close touch with the trustees of the various pension funds. I hope, as the Minister probably hopes—no doubt he will wish to take into account the comments made both in Committee and tonight—that the issue will be settled and the negotiations completed, so that the Government will be able to table amendments in another place.

On the basis of the Minister's comments and of the interventions by my hon. Friends, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Bell: I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 102, line 37, at end insert—

'(10A) The power of the Secretary of State to make regulations under this paragraph shall not be exercisable at any time after 31st December 1995.'.

We are concerned that any arrangements entered into at privatisation for securing pension benefits should be as watertight as possible and should not provide an easy way to alter the position in future. The amendment would impose a time limit on the regulation-making powers.

It is accepted that, to secure an orderly transition to privatisation, it is necessary and proper for the Secretary of State to have powers to modify the scheme. However, the Bill as drafted places no limit on the time during which the Secretary of State can exercise those powers. That would enable a future Secretary of State to modify the scheme and undo elements of the arrangements agreed at the time of privatisation—although we accept that there is a restriction to prevent the power being used to reduce accrued benefits.

The exercise of the powers in that way would clearly be contrary to the original purpose. The insertion of proposed subsection (10A) would prevent the Secretary of State's powers from being exercisable at any time after 31 December 1995. That would allow a reasonable period within which any drafting errors could be remedied. We accept that it may not be possible to get the necessary modifications right the first time, but our amendment would reassure the beneficiaries that no power of modification would be extant in the long term. After 31 December 1995 further modification of the scheme could be achieved only through the use of the scheme's amendment power. On that basis I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Eggar: I shall first I pick up the point made by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) at the end of his comments about the previous amendment. Yes, in an ideal world, I would have liked to come to the House with agreed amendments to the Bill. It has not proved possible to reach agreement with the trustees. It has taken longer than we anticipated. I very much hope that we shall reach agreement, and shall therefore be able to go to the other place with amendments in due course.

The hon. Gentleman has presented the substance of the amendment fairly. There are restrictions on the ability to use the existing proposed powers to reduce accrued benefits. It is generally recognised that there needs to be a time during which discussions can take place in case there have been any oversights during the drafting of the arrangements. The precise length of time is still under discussion. The length of time suggested by the hon. Gentleman's amendment is not entirely out of the ball park of what is being discussed. I am not sure that we shall agree on that particular period, but that sort of concept is being considered.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the Minister for responding in kind to the amendment. He was gracious enough to do the same in Committee. We welcome the various assurances that he gave on the previous amendment, the question of a time scale and the hope that we may see amendments to the Bill tabled in other place.

On the basis of the Minister's assurances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Bell: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 102, line 49, at end insert 'and

(c) so much of any pension obligation arising under the scheme as derives either from modifications of the scheme made after the restructuring date or from any surplus of assets of the scheme over what is required for meeting pension obligations under the scheme.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this, it is convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 20, in page 107, line 6 at beginning insert

'Subject to sub-paragraph (5A) below,'

No. 21, in page 107, line 18 at end insert—

'(5A) Where any modification by virtue of this schedule of any existing scheme confers any powers on the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State shall, in exercising those powers, owe the same duty of good faith to all persons who are entitled to any pension rights which give rise to pension obligations under the scheme as an employer would owe in exercising similar powers under an occupational pension scheme.'.

Mr. Bell: Amendment No. 18 deals with the post-privatisation benefits improvement aspect of pensions. One of our major concerns is that, under the proposed arrangements, it would be possible for the value of pensions payable to beneficiaries to be reduced in cash terms from year to year because of the way in which beneficiaries are to share future surpluses. The draft scheme and rules in the Bill provide for half of any such surplus to be placed in a bonus augmentation fund from which any additional benefits would be paid. As the proposals presently stand, the bonus payments will not be guaranteed and may be withdrawn following subsequent actuarial valuation, thus causing the value of pension payments to fall despite the existence of the guarantee. In the past, benefits to pensioners from surpluses have become a part of the normal pension and been subsequently indexed.

8.15 pm

We therefore consider that the present proposals fall too far short of what beneficiaries may reasonably expect, based on the historical position. The amendment is something of a halfway house, as it would include in the definition of principle pension obligations any payments made from the bonus augmentation fund, so that they would be covered by the Government guarantee. Amendment No. 18 does not require the index linking of such payments to be covered by the guarantee in paragraph 2(11)(b) of schedule 5. That would operate only in paragraph 2(11)(a) and not extend to the provision set out in the amendment. I hope that the House will excuse me for being technical about the amendment, but its importance is understood by the Government.

We are aware that the trustees are continuing to have discussions with the Government on that issue, but I do not believe that the trustees are entirely happy that the proposals as they stand are sufficient to provide proper security for pensioners, and think that a position that leaves open the possibility of pensions being reduced is unacceptable. My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) has already commented from his own experience on the benefit and importance of such a scheme.

Amendment No. 20 deals with the duty of good faith of the Secretary of State. Paragraph 5(5) of the schedule provides the Secretary of State with powers to direct the trustees in the exercise of their duties so as to have proper regard to the national interest. That power could be exercised in relation to scheme investments, actuarial assumptions and the distribution of the beneficiaries' share of surpluses. The provisions of that paragraph are also reflected in the draft scheme and rules, although they are subject to continuing discussions with the Government. Again, discussions are continuing between the Government and the trustees.

Amendment No. 21 would add a new sub-paragraph, (5A), which provides that the Secretary of State owes a "duty of good faith", analogous to that owed by employers in an occupational pension scheme, to all persons entitled to pension rights under the scheme. The employer acts as a guarantor in most final salary occupational pension schemes by ensuring that the scheme is adequately funded. By that method, the members' benefits are properly safeguarded. In carrying out his role under the pension scheme, the employer is entitled to protect his own interests, but in so doing he must not act contrary to his duty of good faith to the members.

Labour Members feel that it is appropriate to reflect that balance on the face of the Bill, with the Government as guarantor to the scheme. It is vital that some acknowledgement of the interests of the beneficiaries should be included in either the Bill or the draft schemes and that paragraph 5(5) should be substantially amended.

We acknowledge that the Government, as guarantor, will have an interest in investment policy, but feel that that should not extend to being able to direct investment policy without regard to the beneficiaries. Any power for the Government to intervene should be tightly drawn and be used only in extreme circumstances, allowing the trustees in normal circumstances to set investment policy in the light of the scheme's experience. We do not accept that the

Government should have power to interfere in actuarial assumptions. Those should be a matter for the scheme's actuary in consultation with the trustees and should not have any influence on the distribution of surplus to the beneficiaries.

If I may use a Latin phrase, which will no doubt please my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington), who, although he is not in his place, graced our Committee proceedings with lengthy words and a great knowledge of the English language, amendment No. 21 lives or falls by the principle of res ipsa loquitur—it speaks for itself.

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I shall speak in support of all the amendments covering pension provision, but especially in support of amendments Nos. 20 and 21, because the future pension provision for retired miners, those currently working and those yet to be employed is of great concern to the miners and families in my constituency. As hon. Members will know, Longannet is the only deep mine left in Scotland. It borders on my constituency and I have yet to meet a family in west Fife who do not have some past or present connection with the mining industry. Given that, at one time, there were 66 pits in Fife, that is hardly surprising.

Only two years after the Government came into office, there were still 4,000 miners employed in Fife. Now there is less than a quarter of that in the whole of Scotland. The statistics mean that hundreds, if not thousands, of miners and their families in my constituency are concerned about the Government's proposals for the two pension schemes.

It is encouraging to hear mention of the assurances that the Government are giving and of the discussions that are taking place with trustees, but the people of west Fife are deeply distrustful of promises and assurances given by the Government. I shall explain why. First, my view and that of my constituents is that if the Government had the genuine national interest that is referred to in the pension proposals, they would not have introduced the Bill in the first place. I place on record my deep and total opposition to coal privatisation because of the effect that it will have on pay, pensions and safety. There is not a shred of evidence that private mine owners and the Government have any concerns other than their profits when it comes to dealing with the coal industry.

I was reading some old newspaper cuttings and came across one about Lord Fitzwilliam. In 1873, he said that he was the owner of mines simply as a fund for himself and his family and they were to be used with regard only to his caprice—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am having some difficulty relating 1873 to pension policy in the future; perhaps the hon. Lady will come to that.

Ms Squire: What I am saying is that I support the amendments because we are concerned that the Government are looking at the two British Coal pension schemes in the way described by Lord Fitzwilliam back in 1873—that is, from the basis of their caprice and self-interest.

The second reason why my constituents and I question the proposals for the two pension schemes—the mineworkers pension scheme and the staff superannuation scheme—is their value of about £17 billion. That causes great concern to my constituents, miners, pensioners and their families because they are afraid that the Government have a hidden agenda. They are afraid that privatisation could threaten the security of current and future benefit payments, they are afraid that it could affect the real value of benefits paid and they are afraid that those who are still employed in the industry after privatisation could be denied equivalent pension rights.

The third reason why my constituents seek more than mere assurances from the Government is the abuse of pension schemes, which other hon. Members have mentioned, most notably, the Maxwell pension scheme. Only yesterday, there was a report in the Scottish papers about a Lanarkshire steel company which took over part of the industry after British Steel was broken up and privatised. The company used £300,000 from the pension fund to prevent the business from failing, and £80,000 of the money, which included workers' pension payments, remains unaccounted for. That is why we are looking for something wider than a national interest in this part of the Bill.

My fourth reason for supporting the amendments is that a balance must be struck between the interests of the taxpayer, whom the Minister claims to represent, and the interests of the beneficiaries of the schemes. The powers proposed in this part of the Bill are wide. What will happen if there is a conflict of interest between the national interest as defined by the Secretary of State and the views of the trustees in the three key areas of investment policy, actuarial valuations and the distribution of surpluses? Whose view would carry weight in those circumstances?

I know that time is short; there is a great deal more that I should like to say. I ask the Minister to look supportively and favourably at the amendments and recognise the national service and interest that past and present miners have given to the industry. As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, I seem to spend most of my time talking about security, insecurity and uncertainty, whether with regard to defence-related industries or, as today, the coal industry and the pension schemes. We are looking for a small lump of security in what otherwise seems to my constituents who have a connection with mining pensions as a massive seam of uncertainty.

Mr. Eggar: I do not think that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) had any misconceptions, but the Government have given a categorical assurance about safeguarding people's pensions and I do not want her to alarm her constituents needlessly.

What the amendments are about, especially amendment No. 18, is the precise terms of the Government guarantee. After extensive consultation with the trustees, the Government have agreed that a guarantee will be available to ensure that the pension, as from its base point, rises in accordance with the retail prices index, whatever happens with the actuarial position. The amendment would effectively extend the Government guarantee to pension increases above the RPI. It is the Government's position that that is not a reasonable expectation on behalf of the beneficiaries; it is perfectly fair for the Government to give an RPI guarantee but not that the bonus element of the pension should be guaranteed. It would be wrong to expect the taxpayer to provide a guarantee along those lines.

It would be wrong to guarantee bonuses from actuarial surpluses which prove on subsequent valuations to have been illusory. The hon. Lady knows that the assessment of surpluses can vary from time to time according to investment records and the assumptions that are made. The

[Mr. Eggar]

whole sector is difficult. At present, it is a matter of detailed discussion with the trustees and between the Government Actuary and the trustees' actuarial advisers. Progress is being made, but perhaps more slowly than we had anticipated.

Amendments Nos. 20 and 21 are to paragraph 5(5), the wording of which has always been a sensitive and difficult matter. Paragraph 5(5) relates to the need of the Secretary of State to be able to act on behalf of the interests of taxpayers and, equally, for the need of the trustees to be able to defend, if one likes, the position of the beneficiaries. That matter is still being discussed. I can honestly report to the House that progress is being made but we have not quite reached agreement.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the Minister for those responses. We are also grateful for the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) because she has sat here for a long time. We all listened with great interest to what she said. She has spoken in a debate on pensions which is of extreme importance to many thousands of people. She referred to the £17,000 million in the pension fund, which is a significant amount by anyone's standard. We had important debates in Committee on the matter and we went into it in great detail. As the Minister said, the matter is still being discussed and negotiated with the trustees of the pension schemes.

I do not wish to extend the scope of the amendments or the debate, but the consequences of the abuse of pension schemes, such as that by the late Robert Maxwell, are not far from our minds. There are many parts of pension law to which the House will return. As my hon. Friend said, a balance must be struck between the beneficiaries of the schemes and the taxpayers. We heard a great deal about that in Committee. The point made by my hon. Friend, which will rest with the House and certainly the Minister, is that there is a lump of insecurity and a massive seam of uncertainty in the country.

I come back to the point, on which the Minister has touched, that the negotiations have gone on longer than one would have thought. They went on during the Committee and have continued through Report. We are anxious but hopeful that the negotiations will be satisfactorily concluded in the interests of all parties.

I ask the Minister to bear in mind—I am sure that he will—that we shall be looking for proper amendments to the Bill as a consequence of the successful conclusion of the negotiations before the Bill passes to the other place. We shall be looking for that with great anxiety on one hand and insistence on the other. Otherwise, we may be returning to the issues on the Floor of the House in another context.

However, on the basis of what we have heard tonight, and fully understanding that negotiations are taking place, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 43

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUBSIDENCE

8.30 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I beg to move amendment No.2, in page 37, line 24, after 'substitution', insert—

> (a) in relation to any claim for compensation for subsidence damage, for references to the Corporation of references to the Authority; and
>
> (b)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 3, in page 37, line 24, after 'damage', insert 'otherwise'.

No. 4, in page 37, line 26, at end insert—

> '(1A) The Authority shall be entitled to recover all payments, costs and expenses made or incurred under subsection (1) above from the person (if any) who is the responsible person under subsection (2) of this section.'.

No. 29, in clause 45, page 39, line 32, leave out from 'State' to the end of the line and insert

> 'shall by regulations ensure that the Coal Authority will assume sole and proper responsibility for retaining the necessary expertise and resources for arrangements for the resolution of subsidence claims including'.

No. 28, in clause 46, page 40, line 39, at end insert:—

> '(2A) Where a claimant for subsidence damage is assisted by the subsidence adviser, the subsidence adviser shall be responsible for ensuring that the damage notice is forwarded to the operator responsible for damage or to the Coal Authority.
>
> (2B) Where the subsidence adviser has forwarded the damage notice to the operator, he shall inform the Authority of his action and send the Authority a copy of the damage notice.'.

Mr. Alexander: The amendment basically would require the Coal Authority to take over the responsibility for claims for subsidence damage after the date of the restructuring of the industry.

There has been uncertainty and confusion over subsidence, and I welcome the opportunity to raise the matter with my hon. Friend and to outline the basic concerns. I think that he would agree that experience of compensation claims generally suggests that the person who is liable can be as difficult as he or she can be before settling up, and they delay for as long as possible.

The proposed subsidence adviser may help in preventing that, but his powers seem very few, and the way in which the Bill has been drafted suggests that having the adviser cannot be the answer to the problems of properly dealing with claims.

There is no uniform procedure for claimants, and the danger is that those with potential liabilities may try to discourage claimants by making it as difficult as possible for them to claim. I should be glad to have my hon. Friend's reassurance on that aspect when he winds up this short debate.

Every hon. Member knows that even the most profitable company can become insolvent from time to time. We hear of large and virtually household names—I need not mention any of them—which have found themselves unable to meet their liabilities. Those who are suffering in cases of subsidence damage are particularly disadvantaged. They have generally received no benefit from the operation of the coal mining under their houses.

My hon. Friend stated in Committee that the Coal Authority would be responsible in the last resort. I accept what he says, but that is not in the Bill, and I would like reassurance again on that point. He also pointed to the

authority's right to terminate an area of responsibility for subsidence under clause 37. However, that is of little comfort to the claimant if there is no way of making the authority settle within a reasonable time, or at all.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Gentleman is correct in his explanation of the difficulties which could be faced by people suffering from mining subsidence damage if something is not included in the Bill which is firm and gives protection. Some of my constituents are having difficulty under the present system of registering and claiming for mining subsidence compensation. If we are witnessing problems now, heaven knows what the situation will be under privatisation. I support the amendment, and I am following the deliberations closely. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will press his case as hard as he can with the Minister.

Mr. Alexander: I like to think that I am pressing the case hard now.

The hon. Gentleman brings me to my next point. There is nowhere in the Bill where the authority on termination would be responsible for claims already made against the operator at the time of termination. That is partly the hon. Gentleman's point. If it is intended that the authority should provide some safety net, we should be told, and that should be put in the Bill.

I do not want to pursue the point for too long, and I conclude in this way. The explanatory note issued by the Department of Trade and Industry noted that the authority has a duty only so far as practicable to secure that

"those owed obligations in respect of subsidence damage do not sustain loss as a consequence of a failure by those licensed to carry on coal-mining operations to make reasonable financial provision for meeting their liabilities."

In a briefing sent to hon. Members who have taken an interest in the debate and in the Bill, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors noted that that just does not sound like a responsibility which will be undertaken and accepted in the Bill.

I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend's response to the concerns enunciated in the amendment.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) in expressing misgivings on behalf of a wide range of constituents in Selby district. They include private individuals such as farmers and householders, as well as people in official positions, such as the clerks to the Ouse and Derwent internal drainage board and the Went internal drainage board, and the administration manager of Selby district council. They continue to have misgivings about the prospects for proper administration and funding of subsidence problems.

I start by sounding a positive note to my hon. Friend the Minister, whose conscientious care for the anxieties expressed from all parts of the House about the implications of the Bill has been a model of what a helpful Minister should provide for the House. I am particularly grateful to him for making certain that we have been sent draft copies of the coal mining subsidence damage popular guide, and for his having taken the trouble to publish and circulate in advance the draft subsidence regulations. My hon. Friend has been disarming about that, and we are obliged to him for his helpful attitude.

The main anxiety about which I have received representations relates, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newark pointed out, to the possible insolvency of a licence operator. It was vividly expressed to me in a letter from Peter Bains, who is the clerk to the Ouse and Derwent internal drainage board. He made some commendatory comments about British Coal and the present arrangements and commented on the arrangements which apply to all private people in relation to British Coal.

As far as the internal drainage board is concerned, he said:

"I cannot speak too highly of the way in which British Coal discharge their obligations. Problems are identified quickly. Emergency measures are taken by British Coal when necessary. They are receptive to the requirements of the drainage board. Remedial schemes are prepared with the absence of bureaucracy. Above all, the cost is funded by British Coal as an essential priority.

The concern of the drainage board is this. What guarantee is there that remedial schemes will be funded by private companies without regard to their financial position? . . . What happens if a licensed mine operator becomes insolvent? I can answer that question myself, the position becomes disastrous."

As I would have expected, my hon. Friend the Minister helpfully examined the issue after I raised it with him on an earlier occasion. In a letter which he sent to me on 17 February he said:

"Where a mining company is liable, the Coal Authority will have a statutory duty to look carefully at the financial standing of mining companies, especially in relation to their ability to meet subsidence liabilities. Where necessary, the Authority will require operators to form special financial security arrangements, and the Bill provides that these arrangements can be set up so as to ensure that this security is effectively ring fenced for the protection of subsidence claimants."

Those words are prima facie helpful and reassuring, but they do not entirely and conclusively evacuate anxiety from my constituents, whether private individuals or corporate bodies.

The Minister clearly based his letter of 17 February on the provisions in clause 2(1)(c) of the Bill, which could hardly have a more robust or splendidly explicit and reassuring ring about them in terms of the Government's determination to make certain that moneys will be put aside and properly protected for meeting subsidence claims in case of insolvency. However, unfortunately, clause 2(1)(c) is governed by the tell-tale phrase "so far as practicable" in clause 2(1). That phrase is a term of art and not, unfortunately, a pillar of potential in the law courts.

Although clause 2(1)(c) is not meant to be so definitive as clauses 29 and 36, the fact remains that it is the introductory operative paving section, and it contains the dreadful, portentous and uncertain words, "so far as practicable".

I passed my hon. Friend's letter to one or two slightly jaundiced scrutineers in my constituency. In the words of one of them who wrote back to me:

"The 'security arrangements' to which Mr. Eggar refers will be no good at all unless they involve 'cash down' to await a subsidence claim. Bonds or guarantees from third parties no matter of what financial standing are no answer to the potential problems that I outlined. The reason for this is that the institutions (and their assessors) who provide such security are masters of delay and obstruction . . . But land drainage and flood protection remedial work will not wait, and drainage authorities are certainly not in the position of being able to advance the money until reimbursement."

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can give further reassurances to the House on the issue. I suspect that he probably can.

I am particularly encouraged by one further passage in my hon. Friend's letter of 17 February, in which he confirms that the Bill maintains the application of a rather abstruse but nevertheless living and relevant measure

[Mr. Michael Alison]

which is on the statute book at present—the Doncaster District Drainage Act 1929. The Act has enormous significance in the present context. My hon. Friend explained to me in the letter that he wrote that the Doncaster District Drainage Act will maintain its present incarnation and applicability as a result of the Bill. The Bill provides for that remote but important and living statute to continue in place.

The relevance of the Doncaster District Drainage Act 1929 is that, even before nationalisation in 1947, it provided that provision had to be made by private owners to contribute towards a sinking fund so that moneys were readily available for mining subsidence remedial work. The fund was made up of contributions from the private operators, but placed in the hands of the then river authorities and administered by them. Needless to say, a river authority which had control over a sinking fund wasted no time in dipping into its resources if private operators defaulted or failed to come up with the necessary remedial finance.

8.45 pm

As my hon. Friend the Minister has already implicitly accepted the precedent for requiring a sinking fund to be made available and for that fund to be placed in the hands of people other than the mining operators, such as the Coal Authority or a river board, I hope that something analogous can be provided, or at least considered sympathetically, so that we have a little pot of gold already in place which can be drawn upon and contributed to by the new coal operators and licence operators as and when a crisis of insolvency occurs. I hope very much that the Minister will be able to reassure us along those lines.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Looking around the Chamber, I see a small corps of veterans of the Coal Mining Subsidence Bill of 1991, who will recall the circumstances and the context in which we had to pass the Bill—a threatened dissolution of the House. Our desire to make sure that we got the Bill on the statute book prevailed over even the greater scrutiny that it deserved.

Therefore, a second opportunity to consider this fundamental issue must not be passed over lightly, especially as three years down the road have been three years of more heartache, concern and in some cases despair for my constituents in the villages of Edwardsville, Treharris, Quakers Yard and Trelewis. The fact that the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991 has not given the relief or assistance that one hoped and expected brings one back to examine the provisions in this Bill.

I draw one conclusion from the experience of considering the 1991 Bill. As much as we might put provisions in the Bill about the role of the Coal Authority, a subsidence adviser or whoever else, absolute powerful rights of remedy to householders affected by subsidence are the best and most effective way of dealing with subsidence.

I remember many of the debates we had about trying to strike a balance between the interests of British Coal and the worries and concerns of householders. Reflecting on those debates, I have come to the conclusion that that is not the premise from which we should start; we should start from the premise that a householder affected by subsidence has an absolute right. After all, he or she is an innocent party. That householder bought the house in the hope that it would be a wonderful home in which to invest savings and borrow against. But suddenly a bulge may occur in a wall and cracks may appear in the paths—the house takes on a mini-Los Angeles earthquake look—and a house which was a family's pride becomes a nightmare. That is not an exaggerated description of the plight of householders in communities such as mine and those of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

We are asked to explore the interests of the householder versus the interests of British Coal. It should not be a balance of interests; it should be fundamental that the householder, as an injured party, has a right to a speedy remedy under the law which is able to be enforced as speedily and effectively as possible. I do not think that the 1991 Act provides this and, as hon. Members have said, I do not think these essentially confused arrangements will provide it in the future.

Since the Second Reading of this Bill the Minister and his Department have published draft subsidence regulations, and we thank him that they have been made available and can therefore be taken into account in debating the provisions of this Bill. I eagerly picked up the draft regulations in the hope that they would represent the sort of remedy that the affected villages in my community have been seeking.

I turned to the provisions on which I spent considerable time—as I think hon. Members opposite did—in an attempt to get a decent provision to cover the situation of blight as a result of subsidence. Blight is one of the most dreadful consequences of subsidence. A dwelling can possibly be repaired in due course, but it becomes unsaleable for a considerable period, perhaps for ever. Blight is a deadly consequence in communities affected by subsidence.

I looked through the blight provisions because I had fought for them during debate on the 1991 Bill—I think that we had a clause inserted into that Bill from which these regulations derive. I hope that the Minister will tell us that these are only draft regulations and that he will be willing to listen to what I have to say, because there are two fundamental problems with the draft regulations about blight.

First, he is tying all of the blight provisions to the use of stop notices: either a stop notice has to be issued or there has to be the probability of an issue within a nine-month period before the blight clauses of these regulations can come into force.

In the case of Edwardsville, Treharris, Quakers Yard and Trelewis, very few stop notices have been served. Therefore, that provision would not trigger the blight provisions in the regulations. I think the issue and acceptance of a damage notice would be a more effective trigger for the blight provisions.

But I find the second subsection of the provisions most objectionable because it challenges the householder's right to serve a blight notice. Subsection 2(c) of the blight regulations states that

"the principal reason for the sale is a change in the owner's personal or family circumstances such as would be likely to cause any reasonable owner to decide to sell the owner's interest in the dwellinghouse."

What a curious continuing provision. The householder whose home is blighted—and has been demonstrated to be blighted by the fact that he has been unable to sell it at the

normal market value—will have to describe to British Coal or to a newly licensed mining company that it is his personal family circumstances which compel him to sell. Why should the householder have to do that? Why should he or she not just say, "I need to move; I wish to move"? Why does there have to be a detailed examination of the personal family circumstances of a householder before he or she can exercise the blight provisions under these regulations?

Since the operation of the 1991 Act, there have been one or two dreadful cases where people have had to go on their hands and knees to British Coal and beg it to accept blight notices, describing the most painful personal circumstances. Why should people who are innocent parties and who have done absolutely nothing wrong but who have the sad misfortune to own a home under which British Coal have made a hole have to explain, as set out in the draft regulation, the circumstances which compel them to decide to move? All they should have to do is express a desire to move and prove that the home has been blighted because it is unsaleable at the normal market price.

The provision of arbitration concerns me also—again, we pinned a lot of faith on this aspect in the 1991 Act. The Minister has provided a draft regulation on arbitration. I have found it very difficult to persuade people to go to arbitration. They are widely concerned that what we hoped was an informal, helpful, basically cheap and quick and speedy means of resolving the problems of disputes will be just as much a Goliath versus David confrontation as land tribunals and high courts have been in the past. People fear that British Coal will come along with its top advisers and override the values and concerns of individual householders who, under the draft regulations, have to carry their own expenses of going to arbitration.

As far as this Bill is concerned, what will be the role of subsidence advisers, the Coal Authority or the arbitration assessor in upholding, technically and professionally, the case on behalf of the householder concerned? Previously it has been an unequal battle when a dispute has occurred to try to get redress by going to tribunals or to the High Court.

Of course, no legal aid is available to householders in the case of arbitration. That is not what we wanted; we hoped that arbitration would be simpler, more effective and cheaper than previous methods. What provisions contained in the Bill, in the clauses that we are trying to amend, or in the draft regulations issued by the Minister will ensure that the individual householder is well equipped and capable of making sure that his or her case is heard properly, both professionally and technically, without incurring the costs that have been associated with other forms of procedures for resolving disputes?

I am sorry to delay the House but, on behalf of householders who thought that the 1991 Act would be something of a salvation and who have found subsequently that that was not so, I reiterate that we once again have an opportunity to provide a real remedy. Above all, we have the opportunity to give people real rights which enable them to stand up and overcome the grievances they justly feel when their homes are affected by subsidence.

In Edwardsville, Treharris and Quakers Yard it is ironic that much of the relatively recent subsidence occurred because British Coal decided to close the pit and mined it with great speed in the last 12 months. The people of those communities do not believe it is a coincidence that large-scale subsidence occurred in the last 12 months of the pit's operation. We are left with no jobs and no pits, only a legacy of subsidence. If we do nothing else, we should ensure that householders have proper and full remedy under the law.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Concern is being expressed by hon. Members of all parties about the provisions for subsidence. As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, the present situation and the past record are not perfect, but we are in danger of fragmenting liabilities in a way that could add to individuals' difficulties.

If every licensee is responsible, action will have to be taken against a licensee and only on the basis of assurances that we have received from the Minister will there be a fallback on the Coal Authority as a last resort. For many people, that may be far too late if they have become involved in litigation or are unable to enter into litigation but, because they have not done so, the Coal Authority says that they have not exhausted all the possibilities and that it is therefore not minded to represent their interests. The issue needs to be clarified.

I must press the Minister on one matter. There is no commercial reason for the Government to resist the proposed improvement. The Library notes refer to the *Financial Times* of 13 January, which reported:

"Prospective purchasers of coal mines are warning the Government that privatisation of the industry is being severely hampered by requirements that the new owners of mines must take on historic liabilities for subsidence. The liabilities could amount to hundreds of millions of pounds . . . Potential purchasers say that past liabilities may outweigh the likely business benefits of mining coal in some of the five areas for sale".

That is clearly a factor which one understands the Government might feel they have to take into account, but I am sure that the Minister will agree that it cannot be a justification for resisting an improvement to the Bill which would ensure that there was a clear, fair and straightforward means for individuals in particular to get redress. Does he agree that, in most cases, it would be much better if individuals went to the authority and that the authority dealt with the matter and undertook to recover the money or indemnify itself against any private owner?

In order that the Minister does not misunderstand me, I stress that I am not suggesting that private owners should not be liable for subsidence arising out of their own workings—of course they should be, and even perhaps for related cover. However, it is clearly not acceptable that those affected should find that a series of barriers are making it even more difficult for them to obtain redress.

For many people, going to one single authority and knowing that it is the authority that will sort out the matter is surely the best way to proceed. That authority can then undertake to recover whatever is required from those who are held liable in law, whether it is the private or the historic owner.

I shall not delay the House, but I am sure that the Minister will accept that the issue is causing concern to all parties. Although the assurances that he has given go some way to meeting that concern, they do not appear to have satisfied Opposition Members or, indeed, some of his colleagues.

9 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I shall be brief, because I agree with all that has been said. Most of us who have been dealing with constituency subsidence claims for a long

[Mr. Jim Lester]

time know how difficult it can be to prove a case. We are all familiar with insurance companies, including the reputable ones which operate on behalf of local authorities, who are quick to take the cover, but with whom it is difficult to push through a claim.

I stress the problems of insolvency caused by subsidence, which is not an exact science. I remember when the Huthwaite pit, just over the way from my constituency, planned a new seam and estimated that there would be about £1 million-worth of subsidence. In the event, there was £9 million-worth of subsidence, which was enough to close the pit because it was uneconomic.

One can imagine that private purchasers, running fewer mines and therefore unable to offset one against the other, could get into serious difficulties if a non-exact science can lead to greater liabilities than they are able to cover. As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, the cost should never be borne by innocent victims.

Mr. O'Neill: Amendment No. 29 would ensure that the expertise and resources to handle subsidence claims should be the responsibility of the Coal Authority, which we consider to be the appropriate regulatory body. It is essential that claimants have a simple procedure for the presentation of claims, which is the purpose of amendment No. 28.

The subsidence adviser will be empowered to handle all stages of a claim, allowing him to act fully as the claimant's agent. That will not only protect the customer but standardise the form of claims, thus easing the administrative load on the authority and the operators. It will also reduce the opportunity for fraud by directing claims to an individual responsible to the Secretary of State.

It is important that such channels and expertise are available in this critical matter, and we believe that it would be worth the Minister considering the issue again. We discussed it at some length in Committee, but there is widespread concern that a fragmented industry, with a diminished Coal Authority, will not necessarily provide the best protection for the legitimate claims of people who will have enough to worry them without wondering how long the claims will take and to whom they will be speaking.

Ms Walley: I wish to impress on the Minister how important it is that my constituents should be able to get proper compensation for the subsidence that has already occurred. The House should be aware that, under the present system, it is almost impossible to get compensation when it is needed. Whatever the Government might have done to introduce the arbitration scheme, I can give details of tens of constituents who have not been able to get compensation from the arbitration system. Unless the Minister takes on board the amendments that we have tabled, there will be even less accountability, and it will be even more difficult to get over all those hurdles to obtain proper compensation for damage that has been done to people's properties.

Anyone who lives in a home where there is subsidence, who walks down the sloping floor, who sees the cracks appear in their property, who has to live with all the uncertainties and with the realisation that they cannot sell their home because it is blighted will agree with the amendments. The Minister must go away and return with greater assurances than we have had. I wish briefly, on behalf of my constituents, to make that point to him.

Mr. Hood: I am anxious because the provision in the Bill about who will be liable for subsidence damage has a hairy-fairy quality. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) mentioned cracks in the walls. I have seen houses that were split down the middle. I have seen houses collapse.

A colliery in the Mansfield area, the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), was closed principally because the miners were then held responsible for the cost of subsidence. Sherwood colliery was closed because they could not afford to take the cost of subsidence off the backs of the miners who were producing coal at a profit, but against whom the costs of subsidence were being levied.

It is important that the Minister qualifies who will be responsible for the cost of subsidence damage. We are speaking about not a few thousand pounds, but literally millions of pounds. I hope that the Minister qualifies that before we have a vote.

Mr. Eggar: We have had a full debate, covering three areas. One area is the adequacy or otherwise of the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991. The second area is the procedure for claims under that Act. The third area is the financial position of the protection for any claims. I will try to deal rapidly with each of those areas.

I understand the worry of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) about the operation of the 1991 Act. It is fair to say that that Act marked a considerable step forward, and that both sides of the House welcome it as such. I have taken careful note of the arguments that the hon. Gentleman made about the operation of the draft subsidence regulations. They are indeed in draft, and I will consider them carefully when I read the record.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney was a little unfair when he discussed arbitration. We are trying to make the regulations governing arbitration as simple and accessible as possible. The householder will have to pay only £50. The other costs will be met by the responsible person—the company or the Coal Authority.

The arbitrations should be conducted on documents alone, except in exceptional circumstances, and there will be no scope for technical experts, expensive lawyers and so on to present evidence. We shall keep it, admittedly, as rough and ready as we can, but that is in everyone's interest.

I do not think that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney referred to the fact that we have introduced in the Bill the concept of the subsidence adviser, who is there to "hold the claimant's hand", if the claimant wishes. We are keeping the arbitration system separate from the role of the subsidence adviser—that is important—but the subsidence adviser could, under certain circumstances, if he felt it appropriate, write to the arbitrator and give a view, but it would not in any way substitute for the view of the householder.

Mr. Rowlands: I followed closely what the Minister said, and I am grateful for his explanation. Does that mean that the subsidence adviser will be able to engage on behalf

of the householder, or himself have available to him, professional technical advice if British Coal comes in heavy-handedly with professional technical evidence?

Mr. Eggar: No. The subsidence adviser is there almost as a layman to help the individual through the system, to make the householder's approach to the arbitration system more user-friendly. We are not trying to build in a great deal of technical expertise through the subsidence adviser. That is not necessary, and the purpose of the arbitration system is to do away with it.

The second main area covered in the debate concerned the whole procedure for claims. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) was kind enough to refer to the fact that we have made draft regulations available. In fact, we have also made available to the Committee a draft of the leaflet to be circulated to all householders. I see that an Opposition Member has a copy.

I quite understand why some hon. Members feel that the Coal Authority should be the recipient of all claims. This point was made in particular by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). There would be very considerable danger in such an arrangement. The Coal Authority will be located in Nottinghamshire. It will be remote. If the hon. Gentleman has in mind a sort of post box system, that would simply introduce an additional layer of bureaucracy. It would be an additional and remote hurdle. I am sure that most hon. Members would rather have a very clear duty placed on coal mining companies to deal directly with subsidence matters.

It is in everyone's interests that we should try to build up a relationship between local operators and the people whose properties will be undermined. Such a relationship would bring the problem home in a much more realistic way. I should have thought that, coming from the party to which he belongs, the hon. Memberber for Gordon would appreciate decentralisation.

There will, of course, be a right to go to the Coal Authority if there was any uncertainty about where a licensed operator was functioning. An application will go to the Coal Authority. If it is not the authority's responsibility, there will be a duty to pass it on to the relevant mining operator.

I hope that I have dealt adequately with points concerning procedure.

The major concern expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby, whom I thank for his kind remarks, and by my hon. Friends who represent Nottinghamshire constituencies, arises from the spectre of a situation in which a private operator is not able to fulfil its financial obligations in the case of subsidence.

My right hon. and hon. Friends, like hon. Members on the Standing Committee, spent some time discussing the words "so far as practicable". In legislative terms, those words express a very strong duty. The words that are normally used in such circumstances are "so far as reasonably practicable", which my right hon. and hon. Friends will immediately recognise as weaker.

Why do we use "so far as practicable", and not impose an absolute duty? The reason is very clear. When an absolute duty is imposed, the person on whom it is imposed has to cover every conceivable circumstance—such as earthquake or some form of nuclear attack. Such an onus would be quite disproportionate to the actual liability that an operator is likely to have to deal with. Thus, we shall not have to look at the substance of the obligation that is placed on the operator.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby is right to assume that the Doncaster Area Drainage Act 1929 will be maintained. That legislation, rather than the 1991 legislation, will apply. We shall use the powers under clause 65 of the Bill to deal with this matter.

My right hon. Friend also asked whether a hard cash fund is needed. Clearly, the form of financial security is a matter for the Coal Authority. An assessment of the financial strength of an operator will take account of whether security is necessary and, if so, in what form. We contemplate the possibility of the Coal Authority's being able to accept bonds, and the Bill expressly contemplates the possibility of a trust. The point is, however, that, in all circumstances relating to the financial strength of the operator and the likely contingent liabilities, the authority will have to form a judgment and satisfy itself that the financial obligations will be there.

Let us suppose that—notwithstanding all the provisions in regard to such matters as financial security—that security, having been called, is not adequate. In that unlikely circumstance, the Coal Authority would first establish whether anyone else wanted to take on the area of responsibility—in other words, the mining enterprise.

If that proved impossible, the authority would probably decide that the responsibility should be withdrawn from a company that would in effect be bankrupt, and should return to the authority. I seem to remember that such circumstances are covered in clause 37. The authority would then become responsible for all subsidence claims.

9.15 pm

Mr. Hood: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister is standing with his back to the Opposition. I am sure that he feels comfortable in that position, but I should be grateful if he would address the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Minister should address the Chair, actually—and he was looking at me.

Mr. Eggar: I apologise to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood). I shall fix him with a steely glare for the remainder of my speech—through the Chair, of course. I must say that I am not entirely sure how I can convey the steely glare through the Chair.

Mr. Hood: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have now had an opportunity to take a look at the Minister, and I withdraw my objection.

Mr. Eggar: For that small mercy, many thanks.

I hope that I have been able to deal with the various points that have been made—albeit in staccato fashion, because of the shortage of time. I repeat that I understand that this is a sensitive matter for many hon. Members and their constituents, but I am confident that we have built in the right form of security. I hope that, on that basis, the amendment will be withdrawn.

Mr. Alexander: I thank my hon. Friend for responding to concerns expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. His remarks deserve further study, and it may be appropriate for them to be discussed in another place. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 46

THE SUBSIDENCE ADVISER

Amendment made: No. 32, in page 41, line 12, at end insert—

'(5A) The provision that may be contained in regulations under this section shall include—

(a) provision for any matter to which the regulations relate to be determined by the Authority in such manner, and by reference to such factors, as may be described in the regulations; and

(b) provision, where any expenses are to be met by the Authority in accordance with the regulations, for amounts in respect of those expenses to be recoverable by the Authority from other persons with responsibility for subsidence affecting land.'.—*[Mr. Eggar.]*

Clause 47

DISPUTES ETC. AS TO SUBSIDENCE MATTERS

Amendment made: No. 33, in page 42, line 28, at end insert—

'(6A) The provision that may be contained in regulations under this section shall include—

(a) provision for any matter to which the regulations relate to be determined by the Authority in such manner, and by reference to such factors, as may be described in the regulations; and

(b) provision, where any expenses are to be met by the Authority in accordance with the regulations, for amounts in respect of those expenses to be recoverable by the Authority from other persons with responsibility for subsidence affecting land.'.— *[Mr. Eggar.]*

Clause 51

ADDITIONAL RIGHTS IN REGARD TO UNDERGROUND LAND ETC.

Amendments made: No. 49, in page 46, line 37, after 'actionable' insert 'in England and Wales,'.

No. 50, in page 46, line 42, after 'question;' insert—

'( ) the doing of any act which, apart from this section, would be actionable in Scotland by virtue of—

(i) any real burden (including a real burden *ad factum praestandum*); or

(ii) any statutory prohibition or restriction, which adversely affects the land in question;'.—*[Mr. Eggar.]*

Clause 52

OPENCAST OPERATIONS

Mr. Alexander: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 47, line 19, leave out 'after 31st December 1999' and insert

'except in respect of land for which a valid planning application for coal mining has been received by the relevant local planning authority by the date on which this Act received the Royal Assent,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 6, in page 47, line 34, leave out

'in relation to the period before 31st December 1999'.

Mr. Alexander: I am aware that it is getting late, so I shall be as brief as possible.

The amendments have cross-party support, and recognise the continuing concern that exists in another area. In the Bill, the Government propose that, until the end of 1999, private sector mining operators should have recourse to compulsory powers, through the Coal Authority, to gain access to land for opencast or drift mining. Those powers are quite extensive and deserve a little more debate before being approved.

The amendment seeks to put the privatised coal industry in the same position as any other private mineral industry, while ensuring fair treatment to anyone who has made commercial commitments on the basis of the current law. There is no obvious reason why private coal operators should be in a better position than other mineral operators whose land or rights they wish to acquire. The Government recognise that by limiting those rights to 1999. I fully understand the need to safeguard existing commitments, but the proposed period goes beyond that.

The amendment proposes, therefore, to limit the rights to those who have made serious financial commitment to any project, as demonstrated by the submission of a valid planning application. I use the word "valid" to exclude anyone who has merely sent a letter or expressed concern or interest.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Minister said that the five-year period had been adopted to allow time for a review of access to all mineral resources. If the intention is to produce a uniform set of procedures for accessing all minerals, and those procedures are unlikely to include compulsory acquisition powers, it is difficult for us to see why they need to be extended now to the private sector for coal alone.

My hon. Friend claims that as the ownership of coal vests in the nation, the nation has the right to have access to it, but many mineral rights are vested in people other than the landowner and access has to be negotiated in the marketplace commercially in the normal way. Why should coal be any different?

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Are not the rights being continued because they make the share value of British Coal's opencast executive that much higher and provide just enough time for British Coal to exploit all those areas currently being prospected?

Mr. Alexander: I do not wish to speculate along the same lines as the hon. Gentleman, but my hon. Friend the Minister has heard that observation and will no doubt wish to comment when he replies to the debate.

The existence of the compulsory purchase powers will distort the value of the land concerned and favour the mine owner over any other private interests. In 1975, when it first came about, it might have been tolerable in answer to a national need—and there was certainly a need for coal in the mid 1970s—but in a free market with no overriding national interest at stake, it seems oppressive and unusual and I ask my hon. Friend to justify it a little more before the House accepts it.

Mr. Alison: In support of my hon. Friend's amendment, I should like to place on the record my view that in the new, privatised environment, normal private treaty negotiation should be the order of the day between private licence holders and private landowners and the compulsory rights order procedure should be made redundant.

I am reassured in postulating that general principle by the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister has already conceded the validity of that proposition by setting a clear terminal date—the end of 1999—after which the compulsory rights order procedure will be made redundant and removed from the statute book. The fact that it has

been conceded as temporary and short-lived is a good reason for asking my hon. Friend to agree that it should be further accelerated and CRO procedures dropped forthwith.

My hon. Friend the Minister sought to reassure some of us on the matter, in particular a colleague of considerable distinction, my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), to whom he wrote a letter on 14 January this year. My right hon. Friend has been kind enough to allow me to refer to that letter. My hon. Friend the Minister was at some pains to reassure my right hon. Friend that, during the short-lived, interim, twilight existence that the compulsory rights orders procedure is to enjoy, it would be subject to decisions by the Coal Authority. He said not only that the procedure would be operated by the Coal Authority—it is a public body, so that might reassure people—but that that procedure would be subject to confirmation by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

One may think, therefore, that those two double fail-safe mechanisms will ensure that the CRO procedure will be benign, but it does not quite work out like that. Certain ramifications, involving the scope and activities of the Coal Authority, will make it almost unavoidable for the authority to confirm a CRO. The Coal Authority will grant a licence to an operator. Once that has occurred, the operator will take his licence to the Secretary of State for the Environment to obtain planning permission for coal extraction, for which it has obtained a licence.

Under those circumstances, is it likely that the Coal Authority , which has given the operator a licence, and the Secretary of State, who has given planning permission, will suddenly say, "Oh yes, we have cheerfully given you a licence and planning permission, but, bingo, we have suddenly decided not to give you a compulsory rights order"?

As night follows day, after the authority has given a licence and the planning authority has given planning permission, they will not then refuse to give an operator a CRO. It is self-defeating to give those powers to the public bodies, even if the idea behind it is to reassure the public. The mechanism is not fail-safe, but fail-foul. It will result automatically in CROs being granted when the Coal Authority gives a licence and the planning authority gives planning permission.

It is for those reasons that I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider carefully whether he needs to extend the life of the procedure and whether it would not be better to cut its throat here and now and move into the environment of private enterprise and normal private treaty negotiations between private organisations. I hope that my hon. Friend will at least consider the matter and perhaps alter it in another place.

Mr. Hardy: I am glad that the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) referred to cutting the throat of this evil proposal. If I had said it, it would have been regarded as distasteful. He is right, and I wish many other throats could be cut as far as the Bill is concerned.

The issue is important because it gives Conservative Members the opportunity to examine what the Government are doing. They are committed to free market forces and they are giving compulsory purchase rights to private businesses.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): It is unbelievable.

Mr. Hardy: It is an incredible development. If Conservative Members want to be able to claim that they possess political consistency, they should agree with the comments of the right hon. Member for Selby.

I feel strongly about opencast mining. I want Conservative Members to put themselves in the position of people who live in coal regions, who may have seen their deep-mined pits destroyed, with the attendant devastation and dereliction. They have to face the prospect of green fields and a decent environment being destroyed by the new technological capacity of the opencast miners. In the 1940s and 1950s, there was opencast mining to a depth of about 200 ft in part of my constituency, but some opencast sites now go down 600 or 700 ft.

Opencast mining schemes can last for a decade. Would any hon. or right hon. Conservative Member care to live near an opencast site if mining was going to last for 10 years? Would they want to listen to the empty lorries banging along the pavements for 10 years, and making more row when they are empty than when they are full of coal and spoil?

9.30 pm

In Committee, I talked about seven lean years followed by seven fat ones. One or two Conservative Members will recognise the origin of that phrase. For people who live near opencast sites, it is seven lean years with no reward, because the profits flow away from the coalfields.

The Minister for Energy said that Labour-controlled councils in coalfield areas were not helpful and that they were resistant to opencast mining. I hope that many of them are. In the interests of democracy and the people whom they represent, they do not want to give permission for mining on green-field sites.

The Minister should understand that there is a place for opencast mining—in an area where it would clear dereliction and devastation. That proviso should be the principal, and perhaps the sole, determinant of a favourable position.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) will understand why I asked the Minister's colleague whether, the next time that he visited his constituency, he would go a little further north and turn off the M1 to visit the Rother Valley country park, which came about because of a large opencast mining scheme.

That scheme was not a nuisance to local residents because they knew that they would benefit at the end of it. What benefit exists for people who have to live near some of the schemes that are envisaged? I suggest to Conservative Members that, while our responsibilities are to our constituents, we must have some regard for other people. I trust that Conservative Members who may feel that they are not in danger of being exposed to opencast mining will consider those who are.

During the passage of the Bill, I harassed the Minister on several occasions to tell us where the accessible coal reserves are. He eventually produced a map to show those areas. On Monday, I tabled a question to ask the Minister to list the 15 counties where accessible coal reserves are detectable and to say at what depth the most shallow seam lies. The Minister's answer was evasive and he said that that information was not available. If the old statement that our island is surrounded by fish and built on coal is at all accurate, there must be many areas of Britain where modern technical capabilities and opencast operations can reach coal reserves.

In fun, I suggested that we should set up a Henley opencast mining company, to take advantage of the arrangements to get compulsory purchase orders until 1999, so that we could turn over the constituency of the President of the Board of Trade. I would rather that they had opencast mining in Henley than in my constituency, but I want to be charitable and I would not wish a large, noisy, opencast, operation on a green-field site in any part of our island, especially if the local community deplored the idea.

The Minister has so far been unable to deny that the Government have been disposed to allow opencast developments to take place against the wishes of local communities, which are harmed and ravaged by such developments far too often. It is vital for the Minister to guarantee that the powers granted to him in the Bill will not be allowed to drive people to despair through the excessive nuisance that some of his hon. Friends seem to favour.

Mr. Lester: The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) spoke as if many Conservative Members do not represent coalfield constituencies where there is a potential for opencast mining, but most of the Conservative Members sitting here fall into that category.

The amendment gives the wrong signal. The Government and the Department of Trade and Industry are giving the wrong signal over compulsory use of powers, at a time when the Department of the Environment is concerned to revise the planning regulations that affect opencast mining. The description given by the hon. Member for Wentworth was entirely right. A potentially major scheme, Robinette, in my constituency could last 15 years, never mind 10, on a green-field site in the most beautiful part of the constituency. Already, compulsory notices are closing footpaths even before planning consent has been obtained. That gives rise to many rumblings among constituents when they find notices on footpaths that they have traditionally used saying that there is the potential to close them.

I want my hon. Friend the Minister to understand how deep are feelings in coalfield areas in which pits with workable reserves are closed, when planning consent for opencasting is given in the same area. It is obscene that pits equipped with valuable machinery and with plenty of workable coal are closed while green-field opencast sites, which cause despair and difficulty, are opened.

As it is late, I will not develop my argument, but I want my hon. Friend the Minister to appreciate the depth of feeling among residents of areas potentially affected by opencast mining when it is not necessary or required to meet the market.

Mr. Beith: Over the years, my constituency has produced as much opencast coal as any other in the country. Many of my constituents say, "Just a minute. Hang on—isn't it time we had more control over our county?" The same is true of south Wales and other parts of the country, where deep mining has ended and large opencast tracts are threatened. Residents are seeing the extension of compulsory powers to private companies, even if for a limited period, that are totally inappropriate when there is no overriding need for opencast coal. They see also the closure of deep mines, leading to opencast supplies being sought, and the abolition of the ceiling on the size of private opencast sites.

The sale of British Coal's opencast resources arises from the Bill, and it is proposed to revise the mineral planning guidance note, which still contains the words "national interest"—albeit in a slightly different phrase. No "national interest" exists that requires opencast mining. There is a commercial interest, and sometimes an employment reason or the possibility of restoring derelict land through an opencast operation—but there is no "national interest" to say that we need opencast resources.

The country has more coal than British Coal knows what to do with, and deep mines are being closed on a ludicrous scale. There is no overriding demand, as my constituents and those of Conservative Members know perfectly well. They are not fooled or in the least impressed by being told at an inquiry that the inspector must take into account that it is in the national interest to have access to opencast resources.

The dice are too heavily loaded against proper planning consideration of opencast operations. They are loaded by the existence of compulsory powers, and by existing and possible future planning guidance.

Containing and limiting the role of opencasting is reasonable and sensible, now that we have ample supplies of coal and are closing deep mines far faster than many of us feel is right. The planning situation should reflect that, and so should the powers made available. That is why I press the Minister to accept the amendments.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): My attention was first drawn to the problem of compulsory rights orders and their effect in the Bill by the Country Landowners Association. I declare my interest, as I have many times before, as a member of that organisation—although I am glad to say that I am not aware of coal being anywhere near my farm, which is a blessing.

I am extremely anxious about the provisions that the amendment addresses. I share the dislike of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) for opencast mining. My mind goes back to memories of his own area—the hon. Gentleman will recall that I once stood for Wakefield in the West Riding—and to a day, many years ago, that I spent campaigning in West Virginia with Senator Joe Rockefeller. I saw the total ravages that had been created in that state by strip mining, which Joe Rockefeller quite rightly said that he would bring to an end. I agree very much with what the hon. Gentleman said, but the amendment is not so much about opencast mining as compulsory rights orders.

My hon. Friend the Minister was kind enough to write to me earlier in the year, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) referred to that letter. I remain very anxious about the provisions of the Bill. I agree very much with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby. I hope that, when replying, my hon. Friend will look sympathetically at the terms of the amendment and will seek to amend the Bill in another place.

Mr. Hood: I know that hon. Members are keen to rush their contributions tonight, as I am, but opencast mining is just too important a subject to speed through the House without proper examination. I am sure that the Bill was thoroughly examined in the Standing Committee—I make

no criticism of that—but I am a bit wary of rushing it through tonight without making a few points that need consideration.

I come from a mining background. In my political life, I have been very much involved in the British coal industry. All my views have been shaped on issues concerning a British coal industry. But I am also conscious of being a Scottish Member of Parliament. The Bill threatens what is left of the Scottish coal industry. If—there is bit of hairiness about it—the Scottish coal industry, vis-a-vis deep-mined and opencast, is sold separately, it is my considered view that that would spell the death of what is left of the deep mines in Scotland. It is important that we have some answers from the Minister about that.

I speak also as a Member with one of the biggest—if not the biggest—opencast sites in Europe in my constituency. Some hon. Members may be aware that Clydesdale is a large urban-rural constituency of more than 500 sq miles. It is an area with no deep mines now, but in my earlier years, in my father's time, there were many deep mines in the area. It has a history of involvement in the mining industry. In comparison with the deep fields of Yorkshire and the midlands, it is an area of shallow coal. I have said before that one can walk over the moors in my constituency, kick over a sod of grass and find coal. It is rich with shallow coal. It is said that there are 140 million tonnes of reserves in the Douglas valley alone. Therefore, I am concerned with what the House does about opencast. The Clyde valley starts in my constituency.

Those who have heard "Song of the Clyde" have heard Kenneth McKellar or, before him, Robert Wilson say that the Clyde starts from lead hills and flows all the way to the sea—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sing it."] I am very much tempted to; I am sure that the House would be appreciative if I did. I have been a bit of a crooner in my day, but will relieve the House from my "Song of the Clyde".

9.45 pm

My constituency is very much a rural area; it is one of the loveliest parts of Scotland to come to on holiday or for a visit. Hon. Members are welcome to come there any time. Clydesdale now relies heavily on tourism for its employment because, thanks to the Government, much of our manufacturing industry has been destroyed, so tourism is a major employer. We must protect our environment to protect the jobs in tourism.

If there is any relaxation of planning legislation on opencast—there is a hint in the Local Government (Scotland) etc. Bill that that may happen—and local authorities are less able to protect the environment from the ravages of opencast, great damage will be done to our communities.

My constituency is one of the largest rural areas to deliver a Labour Member of Parliament—at least, it is one of the largest at present. Of course, many rural areas will deliver Labour Members of Parliament in the not too distant future. But if Conservative Members think that they can sit there in their nice wee rural areas with coal 300 ft or 400 ft below them, and not have their areas ravaged by the powers given in the Bill before us and by other Bills affecting local government, they are kidding themselves.

My local authority has recently opposed a planning application to mine coal in my constituency. It has opposed the application so far, and it will continue to do so unless the Bill takes away its power to do so. If that happens it could have a devastating effect on my constituency. I bring that fact to the attention of hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, because I am sure that Opposition Members are already well aware of it.

The present mania for pit closures has raised another environmental question—water pollution. I discussed the matter today with a young student doing research on the effect that the massive pit closure programme will have on water pollution. Opencast mining is a great water pollution threat, too. The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) seems to be shaking his head, as if to say that that is not true. Clearly there is no opencast mining in his area; he probably has more experience with sheep than with opencast coal.

Water pollution is one of the first problems that any opencast site causes to our communities. It is certainly a problem in Scotland, and in the north-east of England Easington colliery, which was the last pumping station treating water, has recently been closed. I do not know—I hope that the Minister can tell us—what will happen where water used to be treated and pumped by British Coal. Who will accept the responsibility? I do not think that the Government have thought about that problem.

If the Government say through the Bill that they will be satisfied for the pumps to be switched off and the rivers to be polluted, that will spell serious problems for every community that will be affected by water pollution—and serious problems for the Government, too. I suspect that, at this delicate point in their negotiations with the European Union, the Government will fall foul of EC directives. Therefore, it is most important that when we deal with the opencast issue we know what powers are being given to the bodies that seem able to walk away from the problem.

Some of the comments that we heard earlier about the attempt to give powers involving compulsory purchase orders to mining companies who buy up land frightened me. We are living in a time when the Government are centralising power. They are giving power to the Executive, to quangos, to unaccountable local authorities, to health boards, to trusts, and so on. The Bill takes us further down that road and will give powers of compulsory purchase to private enterprise, which will be driven by profit. That is not a power that the House should give freely.

I hear Conservative Members talk about the European Union and the Community and about the House giving up sovereignty to unelected bodies in Brussels, yet the Bill gives powers to people in our country who are not accountable and over whom the House will have no control. It is a serious question and I am sure that the Minister knows what we are talking about, but I doubt very much that he will address it.

Mr. Skinner: Several Tories have spoken on the question of opencast mining. I get the clear impression that if we voted on a well-drawn amendment to suit those Tories and if their votes followed their speeches—

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I have a well-drawn amendment.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman has one? That is good because one thing is certain: we need to stop opencast mining. We cannot allow the idea of opencast to be acceptable on the basis put forward in the Bill when so many Labour Members and some Conservative Members are opposed to the very idea.

[Mr. Skinner]

Everyone knows that getting coal by opencast is relatively easy now. In recent years many people who live in coalfield areas where pits have closed have rallied against the idea of opencast and, on some occasions, have been victorious against the proposed opencaster and British Coal. Sadly, however, at the very time at which it is becoming a little more difficult for British Coal to get away with opencast because of opposition from villagers and others, the Bill proposes to make it a lot easier. My policy in Derbyshire for the past 20 or so years has been not to support opencast applications at all, even where they were of so-called benefit to the villages. I took a principled view against all opencast applications in my area.

A few years ago, a village in my constituency, Arkwright Town, was nearly blown up because methane was coming out of the old coal mine, which had been closed. British Coal came along with a proposition to opencast the whole area and said that it would move the village of 232 houses to the other side of the road provided that the residents accepted opencast. I objected. Finally, British Coal received approval. Now that the privatisation Bill is going through, some of those villagers who were promised a new house on the other side of Arkwright Town are beginning to wonder whether they will get the opencast but not the houses.

It was proposed to build 232 houses on the other side of the village. The villagers were to have a pub, a school, a miners' welfare and all the various community facilities. The opencast has begun. I want the Minister to answer the question that all those people have asked me to put to him: has British Coal given him the assurance that, notwithstanding the provisions of the Bill, when the Coal Authority takes over, those village facilities and the 232 houses will be built for the people who will have to put up with 10 years of opencast mining? I hope that he can give that assurance tonight. I opposed the proposal, but the villagers believe that, if they have to put up with 10 years of opencast, they have a right to the houses that were promised in the first place.

I hope that, before the Bill finally becomes an Act, we shall be able to get all the Tories who are opposed to its opencasting provisions to vote against them, either when the Bill returns from the other place or on some other occasion. That will ensure that we stop private companies imposing compulsory purchase orders to enable them to decide on and, in many cases, exploit opencast sites. Everyone knows that 10 years of opencast mining results in great big holes and the toxic waste is dumped in them.

The Government will make money out of the opencast mines. They will shut the deep mine pits—as they have done—and then they will make a ton more money by dumping toxic waste from ports in Britain, Germany and God knows where else. Someone will make another big killing. People in Britain do not want opencasting. In every coalfield area, people want us to oppose the proposals. I hope that the Minister, too, will find them unacceptable.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: The Government's decision to extend compulsory rights orders to 1999 gives an unprecedented advantage to companies that seek to exploit opencast mining. It is done to ensure that the share values for the sale of British Coal are as high as possible. It will encourage the exploitation of areas that have already been prospected by 1999; companies will be encouraged to exploit the areas by 1999 because their unfair advantage and the compulsory rights orders will end at that time.

The Government's decision will enable private companies to blight coalfields and my constituency of Warwickshire, North by making opencast mining applications for as long as compulsory rights orders can be obtained. The Government are giving opencast mining companies unfair and deliberate advantages in making applications and sacrificing coalfield communities and the environment on the altar of privatisation, ideology and greed. That is what the Government are doing and that is what will happen to every village in every coalfield area where there is the prospect of opencast mining. The amendments seek to change that.

I can tell the House from personal experience in my constituency the sort of attitude that the Government have displayed to opencast mining. In 1991, there was a public inquiry in my constituency over the Birch Coppice site. Birch Coppice is a former pit; it was closed a few years ago. Beyond that pit is another pit, Baddesley. That pit was closed a few years ago but there is still coal on the site.

The opencast mining executive of British Coal decided that it wanted to exploit the Baddesley site, so it made an application in 1990. Mineral planning guidance 3 was in operation at the time. A public inquiry took place in July and August 1991 to consider the application on the basis of MPG3, which gives enormous advantages to the opencast mining executive in making an application.

The application for opencast mining threatened the villages of Baddesley Ensor, Dordon and Grendon and directly threatened about 10,000 people. If the application had been granted, the threat would have extended to other villages and about 20,000 homes would have been affected. It threatened the environment, the quality of life of people in those villages and the value of their homes.

A few months after the public inquiry, the Government published interim planning guidance with regard to opencast mining. Two years later, I was still writing to the Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment asking why there was no decision about the Birch Coppice opencast site: why had we not had a decision after two years even though homes were blighted? On 2 August 1993, we had the publication of the report of the inquiry in favour of granting opencast mining. But the Secretary of State overruled the public inquiry and on 2 August he decided that there would be no opencast mining at Birch Coppice. We were absolutely delighted that he made the right decision; although he had taken two years to do it, we could forgive him.

Three weeks ago, the Secretary of State for the Environment—undoubtedly after consultations with colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry—decided to set aside the decision reached on 2 August 1993 because he had made a mistake. After two years of blighting the area around Birch Coppice and 20,000 people's lives, the Department decided that it had made a mistake. It has now set aside the decision not to grant permission for opencast and has put the whole thing back into the melting pot. We now do not know whether 20,000 people will have a hole the size of 250 football pitches and up to 600 ft deep next to their homes. The crass incompetence of the Department of the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry in making this non-decision beggars belief.

We know now the sort of attitude that the Government have to opencast and to the coalfield communities. It was clear—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No.14 (Exempted Business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Coal Industry Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—[*Mr. Wood.*]

Question agreed to.

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: We now know the attitude that the Government have to the coalfield communities because it is clear. It was clear when the decision was made on 2 August 1993 that it should not have been made in that way. When we approached the civil servants to find out whether they had taken legal advice, we found out that they had not bothered to take proper legal advice. Instead of making the decision based on MPG 3—as they ought to have done—they made the decision based on the interim planning guidance.

They had not given British Coal the opportunity to make representations on the matter. For any lawyer in the House, that was a classic breach of the rules of natural justice. On 2 August 1993, the planning officers at my council knew that, and all the opencast objectors knew that.

We want to ensure that the people in the coalfield communities, and particularly Birch Coppice, get a decent and quick decision which says no to opencast. Local people should have the right to refuse to have opencast in their area unless a derelict site is involved and they want it. They should have the right to say no. The Government have shown absolute contempt for the coalfield communities and I hope that the Bill will not be passed.

Ms Walley: Like the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), I have an interest to declare. I was born and brought up in Staffordshire. I should like Conservative Members to come to Mow Cop where my constituency starts and look at what was the north Staffordshire coalfield. They will see the dereliction of the pits that were closed down because they said that we did not need deep mine pits. They should look at the open green-field countryside and at the proposed opencast sites in Biddulph South and Biddulph West, in my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Sir D .Knox), whom I do not see in his place.

The Minister may think that he has got away with closing down deep pits. If the Bill goes ahead and the opencast proposals rip up the whole countryside in the face of opposition from so many people—such as the people against opencast in the midlands group—let him think again.

We do not want the countryside scarred. We want a real commitment to environmental protection, and it is high time that the Government stopped talking about the national interest when it comes to opencast coal mining. It is time that they did something about an energy policy, and that should be taken into account in the new MPG 3 guidance notes.

Mr. Eggar: Understandably, there has been a debate on the issue because people feel strongly about opencast in general. Of course, the debate on this particular set of amendments is about compulsory rights orders.

The principle of compulsory access is well established. It is not well known, but all mineral developers, including those of oil, gas, and sand and gravel, can get access to land on a compulsory basis. They are able to apply to the High Court for compulsory rights under the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Act 1966. There is nothing new in the concept of compulsory access.

I suggest to the House that the issue is what the procedures for gaining access and the safeguards should be. In the Bill, we are carrying forward the compulsory rights order regime but are adding two absolutely critical safeguards in recognition of the fact that the private sector, rather than British Coal, would be the instigator.

The first of the two safeguards is that the Coal Authority and not the operator will make the orders. In other words, the operator will have to convince the Coal Authority that an order is appropriate. Secondly, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) pointed out, the Secretary of State will have to confirm an order if and when it has been made. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already made it clear that he will confirm a compulsory rights order only when it would be in the public interest.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby, in a slightly uncharacteristically uncharitable assessment of the role that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be likely to play, suggested that because planning permission would have been given, my right hon. Friend would automatically confirm a CRO. That is not the case. My right hon. Friend would have to consider in each case the separate question whether it was in the public interest for the rights of the landowner to be set aside, albeit in practice temporarily. That is not a decision that he could take lightly because it would be subject to judicial review and other appropriate procedures. He would have to invite representations from all interested parties and the decision could be taken only in the light of careful consideration of the arguments that might be made in those representations.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would have to treat the planning application entirely separately from a decision whether to confirm a CRO. If he did not do that, he would be subject to judicial review.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to intervene and I shall certainly be swift about it. Does he agree that the experience of people such as my constituents and people in areas such as Selby is not good when it comes to ministerial or British Coal decisions? Wintersett and North Featherstone, which are the only country areas in my constituency, are currently the subject of an opencasting proposal. That proposal has outraged the community.

Mr. Eggar: I understand the worries about opencasting, but we are discussing compulsory rights orders. I am trying to address my remarks directly to that issue.

So we have a principle of compulsory access to all minerals. We have built into the Bill a series of safeguards over and above the compulsory rights order as it exists at present, but we accept that the present system cannot

[Mr. Eggar]

continue ad infinitum, so we have time-limited it: if no further proposals are made by the Government, the CRO powers will definitely fall away in 1999.

We feel strongly that we need to have a proper review of compulsory access to all minerals and that we should not continue to treat coal separately from other minerals. That is because there is no inherent justification for treating coal separately. We need a review because many interests need to be considered, including those of landowners, farmers, tenants and the various minerals industries. We enter that review with an entirely open mind.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I am obliged to my hon. Friend as, I think, the only Member of Parliament who happens to own a coal mine. If Opposition Members come to Fife—they are more than welcome to dine with me and stay with me—I can show them what has been achieved when opencast mining has finished around us: it is a vast improvement in the landscape, on which I place great importance.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. and learned Friend has an extremely valid point. In other parts of the country—forgive my sense of surprise—there are examples of good restitution of opencasted mines.

In view of the assurances that I have given that we shall have an open review of the powers, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) and Opposition Members will be prepared to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Before we move to the vote, I hope that the Minister will answer the question that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about what will occur with the Arkwright opencast development now that the new measure is before us. It is based upon an arrangement that the people in the area will be relocated and given new homes. Is that arrangement guaranteed for the future?

Mr. Eggar: I think it is the first time that I have seen the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) coming to the rescue of the hon. Member for Bolsover, who seemed not to be paying attention. I can inform both hon. Gentlemen that British Coal's commitment to build a new village—including a social centre, houses, shops and a pub—is formalised in an agreement with the local planning authority and would be binding on any successor or transferee.

Mr. Alexander: I should like to thank my hon. Friend for his contribution to the debate. I am not entirely convinced by his argument—no doubt he will not be too surprised to hear that—but I am well aware and mindful of the fact that there will be a further and perhaps more wide-ranging debate on the subject in another place. Bearing in mind that fact, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 53

ENVIRONMENTAL DUTIES IN CONNECTION WITH PLANNING

Mr. Ashby: I beg to move amendment No. 60, in page 48, line 5, after 'application,', insert

'there shall be a presumption against opencast mining and'.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 61, in page 48, line 10, leave out 'and' and insert—

'(aa) to the extent of the environmental impact of the proposal on the area;

(ab) to the balance of costs and benefits of the proposal; and

(ac) to the existence of current opencast mining operations or any such operations as have ceased within a period of five years immediately preceding the date of the application, within a radius of five miles of the proposed site of operations.'.

No. 10, in page 48, line 10, at end insert—

'(aa) to environmental considerations prescribed in relevant local plans; and'.

No. 42, in page 48, line 10, at end insert—

'(ab) to the desirability of avoiding nuisance to nearby residents in the form of dust, noise, vibration, lorry traffic, visual intrusion or loss of amenity, and the need to respond to the expressed concerns of those residents regarding the proposed development; and'.

No. 63, in page 48, line 10, at end insert—

'(3A) A person who formulates coal-mining proposals shall be required for the purposes of paragraphs (aa) and (ab) of subsection (2) above—

(a) to prepare a full environmental impact assessment, and

(b) to prepare a full cost-benefit analysis.'.

No. 62, in page 48, line 24, at end insert—

'(c) to formulate proposals for the compensation of land owners affected by the proposal for any loss of value on their property if sold during the period of opencast mining.'.

Mr. Ashby: Much of the debate in respect of compulsory purchase has taken place during the debate on previous amendments. I did not speak during that debate, but I must say that I can never understand why compulsory purchase orders did not end yesterday—I see no reason to have them in any sector, except in cases of national emergency. That is the stance I have always taken and always will take.

Although I am speaking to amendment No. 60, the gravamen of my case against compulsory purchase and the strengthening of the environmental aspects of compulsory purchase are to be found in my amendment No. 61. I will be seeking the strongest assurance from my hon. Friend the Minister, and if that is not forthcoming I know that I and some of my hon. Friends, as well as some Opposition Members, will seek to divide the House on that amendment.

We have had too little debate about opencast mining during the passage of the Bill, yet it has become the single most important aspect of all coal mining. It is rather sad that we reached this part of the Report stage as late as 9.30 this evening and I know that many of my colleagues wish us to proceed as speedily as possible. However, this is a subject which we could debate for one whole day.

All hon. Members who have opencast mining in their constituencies know how horrific it is and how it causes dirt and filth. They will also know that opencast mining affects those—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that conversations will be carried on quietly. The hon. Gentleman is having difficulty in speaking to the amendment, and some of us are interested in hearing what he has to say.

10.15 pm

Mr. Ashby: I am grateful, Madam Speaker. It is difficult.

All of us who represent areas in which there is opencast mining know how dreadful it is and how it affects our constituents. Opencast mining is the single most important issue in my constituency where there are not only applications for opencast mines but such mines already exist. An opencast mine affects not only the immediate locality but the area around it. Some people believe that my constituency is in danger of resembling a lunar landscape.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) hit the nail on the head. For too long, British Coal has had the most enormous powers which stem from the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 and have continued under successive Acts. Those Acts mean that we —the people who live in the area and who object to planning—have to prove that opencast mining should not take place. The burden of proof lies with us—we have to prove that something which has a devastating effect on the character of an area and which lowers the value of property should not take place.

It is an insult that a company such as British Coal should be allowed to say that it wants an opencast mine in an area because it believes that it is in the national interest. Without a by your leave, the matter goes before the local planning authority which is terrified of British Coal and starts finding reasons why it should be allowed to proceed and, in any case, it is up to the objectors to prove that it should not be allowed to proceed. The burden of proof in this instance should resemble the law in other aspects of our life. If a company does something that will destroy an area and lower the value of its property, the burden of proof should be on that company to prove that it should be allowed to proceed.

When the planning application has been made, the full extent of the environmental impact of the proposal should be considered. There should be a full environmental impact assessment—nothing less will do. It is no good my hon. Friend the Minister saying that it is a matter for the planning authority, because all the Acts covering the coal industry deal with planning and, in respect of the burden of proof, favour the Coal Board. It is therefore absolutely right that the planning aspect of opencast mining should be dealt with in the Bill.

One of the problems is that planning matters are often dealt with in various sections of various Acts. The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) spoke about the Department's problems in deciding on the legal ways of objecting. It is a minefield, if I may make a slight pun. It is very difficult for legal advisers to decide how to frame objections because they have to consider the provisions of so many different Acts. Perhaps the necessary grounds should be set out in the Bill.

When making a planning application, it is absolutely essential that a full cost-benefit analysis is undertaken. The costs and benefits of any proposal must be examined and must include the need for and price of coal, the cost of extracting it and the environmental cost to the area. It is essential that it should be built into this part of the Bill.

Another aspect should also be built into the Bill. When, as is the case in my area, there is one opencast mine, with another such mine three miles away and another three miles away in a different direction, it has a devastating effect on the area. When an application is made, the fact that there are opencast mining operations in the locality must be taken into account. Sometimes, one opencast mine has just ceased and, within a year of the hole being filled in—a year after 10 or 15 years of sheer hell—an application is made for another opencast mine only a couple of miles away, so there are another 10 or 15 years of hell. The mining operations move around the constituency in that way. The fact that an operation has ceased in the area should be taken into consideration when an application is made.

Amendment No. 62 states that those making the applications should

"formulate proposals for the compensation of land owners affected by the proposal for any loss of value on their property if sold during the period of opencast mining."

That is very important.

I received a letter, as recently as 10 days ago, from a constituent whose house is adjacent to an opencast mine. She is in a desperate situation. She is now a single parent. There has been a divorce in the family and she is desperate to sell her property. Her property has been valued at about 40 per cent. less at the moment because there is an opencast mine nearby. She has no redress; no compensation. She will lose 40 per cent. of the value of her property because there is an opencast mine nearby. She cannot tell the operator, "I have to sell my property now. You have to compensate me for that loss."

That is the purpose of amendment No. 62. I seek an assurance from the Minister that he will consider the problem carefully and ensure that when proposals are made they contain proposals to compensate landowners, in the event of their property having to be sold, for the loss of value during the period of opencast mining.

I have fought opencast mining ever since I became Member of Parliament for Leicestershire, North-West in 1983. Since then, I have fought every single proposal and I will continue to fight every single proposal. The collective effect of the amendments that I suggest will put right so many of the wrongs that have been done when applications have been made. We have fought and refought those applications. One of the problems of which I want the Minister to be aware is that in the past, if British Coal made an application and it was refused, another application was made, then another and another.

Acceptance of the amendments would put right so many of the wrongs that we seek to right.

Mrs. Peacock: I appreciate that there is very little time left, but, having sat here since 2.30 this afternoon, I wish to spend just two minutes on this issue. Perhaps I may be excused also on the ground that I am one of the hon. Members in whose name amendment No. 42 appears.

There should be no need now for a presumption in favour of opencasting. That is not in the nation's interests when we can obtain coal from other sources. In earlier times, it was undoubtedly necessary, but much of the necessity has disappeared. We shall always have some opencast activity. I appreciate that coal obtained in that way is often needed for mixing with deep-mined coal. However, most opencasting should be undertaken on derelict land and not on open green fields. In my area of Yorkshire, it is particularly insensitive to apply for planning permission for opencast mining virtually on top of deep mines that have just been closed. Communities there could hardly be expected to welcome such a move.

We should try to ensure that planning permission for opencast activity is granted in respect of derelict land only.

[Mrs. Peacock]

Certainly the few green fields in the valleys in my area, where there is a great deal of industrial activity, are relied on for leisure and they should not be put to mining use. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give me some assurance in respect of this matter.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Opencasting and planning are inextricably entwined, but it is a great pity that we have to deal in a coal debate with what are essentially planning issues. I asked during the Second Reading debate, as I have done repeatedly following business statements since then, for a separate planning debate to discuss these issues. Alas, that has not materialised and this debate is necessary.

I am not automatically opposed to opencast applications. Last year, together with Opposition Members and the Leeds council, I sponsored legislation to enable a massive opencast development to cure a serious problem of dereliction in my constituency. I accept that where there are infrastructure developments, such as major roads that are undermined by old mine workings, there is a need for opencasting. The land has to be graded and levelled so that the road may be built.

But, just as there are circumstances in which opencasting is acceptable, equally there are circumstances in which it is not acceptable. At present, my constituency is being plagued by a succession of unsuitable opencast applications in respect of the area around the town of Garforth. These put at risk the whole of the planning environment that has been built up for that town. We are attracting world-class, world-quality investment, and the last thing that investors want is an environment shattered by opencast mining on the most sensitive green belt in the entire Leeds area.

I seek three things. The first is the ending of the presumption in favour, in the national interest, of opencasting. The second is recognition of the fact that environmental factors should be decisive in determining opencast planning applications. The third is a provision for local authorities to be able to set the environmental criteria for opencasting, preferably in the local plans affecting their areas. Local people should be able to decide what is right.

As it is late, I shall go into no further detail, save to say that it is interesting that when we are discussing opencasting it is now the Labour party which wants to bring the debate to an end quickly. On all other occasions, Labour Members want to talk indefinitely. There is great uncertainty about whether the three principles that I have mentioned will be enshrined in the revision of minerals planning guidance note 3. I hoped that these issues would be clarified before the Bill left the House. Unfortunately, they have not been. Thus, the amendments are necessary.

Mr. Eggar: I listened with extreme interest to the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and for Elmet (Mr. Batiste). I was not at all surprised to hear them speak very passionately on behalf of their constituents. Indeed, they have been very vociferous in making their concerns known to me over the past few months.

I should like to pick up in particular a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet. This is a matter for planning procedures. The Bill has nothing to do with environmental regulation or with safety regulation.

My hon. Friends have an ideal opportunity to make their points to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. As they know, consultation is currently taking place on MPG3. I am sure that my colleagues will pay particular attention to the three points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet. I suggest that my hon. Friends pursue the matter in detail with my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury, who will doubtless wish to take careful account of the views that they have expressed on behalf of their constituents. The Bill, however, is not the right vehicle in which to introduce the change that they so earnestly desire.

10.30 pm

Madam Speaker: What are the wishes of the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) in regard to amendment No. 60?

Mr. Ashby: I wish to withdraw it, Madam Speaker—although I wish to pursue amendment No 61.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment proposed: No. 61, in page 48, line 10, leave out 'and' and insert—

'(aa) to the extent of the environmental impact of the proposal on the area;

(ab) to the balance of costs and benefits of the proposal; and

(ac) to the existence of current opencast mining operations or any such operations as have ceased within a period of five years immediately preceding the date of the application, within a radius of five miles of the proposed site of operations.'.—*[Mr. Ashby.]*

Amendment negatived.

Clause 63

INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: No. 31, in page 60, line 25, at end insert—

'(1A) References in this Act to the treatment of coal in the strata shall be taken not to include references to any operations which—

(a) are carried on in relation to coal in or to which any oil or gas that exists in its natural condition in the strata is absorbed or adsorbed; and

(b) are so carried on wholly for the purpose of winning or getting that oil or gas;

and in this subsection "oil or gas" means oil or gas within the meaning of section 9 above.'.—*[Mr. Eggar.]*

Schedule 9

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment made: No. 44, in page 139, line 21, at end insert—

'The Land Registration (Scotland) Act 1979 (c.33)

. In section 28(1) of the Land Registration (Scotland) Act 1979 (interpretation), in the definition of "overriding interest", after paragraph (eg) there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(eh) insofar as it is an interest vesting by virtue of section 7(3) of the Coal Industry Act 1994, the Coal Authority;"

'.—*[Mr. Eggar.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, and Prince of Wales's consent, on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall, signified.]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

10.31 pm

Mr. O'Neill: I am conscious that we are straining the good will of the House; hon. Members anticipated a vote considerably earlier.

We have been debating the Bill since 4 pm, and in that time we have covered a fairly extensive area. We have dealt with concessionary coal and trade union rights following privatisation, we have discussed the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, the latest stage that has been reached in the pensions debate and, in the past two hours, we have discussed, at some length, issues raised by subsidence and opencast mining.

It would be wrong to say that Opposition Members have been successful in regard to any of those issues. Perhaps, if some of the Conservative Members who have spoken today had secured the permission of the Government Chief Whip, they might have been able to speak in Committee and obtain some victories. In that event, the Government might have had to come here tonight to seek changes of their own. The vast bulk of the amendments that we have debated were tabled by Opposition Members, although there is a fair amount of agreement across the Floor on some environmental questions.

We are still opposed to the Bill. We consider coal one of our greatest national assets; we believe that British Coal and its research departments have succeeded in developing technologies that make coal easier and safer to win than at any time in our history. Moreover, we now have coal that can be burned in coal-fired power stations in a way that is not only environmentally friendly but capable of more thermal efficiency than ever before. That is a testament to the success of public enterprise: in its years of public ownership, the coal industry has been able to achieve safety levels that are without parallel anywhere in the world.

In this connection, it should perhaps be repeated that in 1946, when coal was nationalised, it was commonplace for men working in the British coal industry to die every week. Every year, 1,000 men died in the coal industry. Every day, three men died, so one miner died in every eight-hour shift every working day of every year. The current figures are a fraction of that. They are still too high, but they have reduced because of the safety measures and the industrial procedures we now adopt and, more than anything else, because the hand of profit no longer lies across the industry as it did before public ownership.

We do not believe that a privately-owned coal industry will have learned very much from the past. We expect that the cowboys and fly-by-night operators will be operating not just opencast but deep mining, if they can satisfy the Coal Authority. The criteria of the Coal Authority are nothing like as strict as we would like.

The Labour party is not simply opposed to the Bill; it is also committed to the reintroduction of public ownership of the coal industry. We believe that the coal industry can be safe only when it is in the people's hands and only when miners are employed as public servants.

Earlier tonight, the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) said that he was unique in the House as being the only Member of Parliament who owned a coal mine. As always, the hon. and learned Gentleman was wrong. Everybody in the House still owns the British coal mining industry.

Coal is a fuel of the future with a technology that will take it beyond the simple purposes of burning. I spoke last week to the last Labour Minister for coal, Alex Eadie, the former Member of Parliament for Midlothian. He repeated something that I have heard him say many times—that coal is one of the most valuable assets we have; it is too valuable to burn. There are far better uses for it. I doubt that Britain will have a coal industry under private ownership that is capable of taking advantage of the technical opportunities and of meeting the desperate environmental needs that could be alleviated by exploiting clean coal technology.

We believe that the industry has a future, but only in public ownership. When Labour returns to power with the support of the mineworkers and the people dependent on the industry we shall restore it to public ownership and ensure that it is a safe industry for people to work in producing the fuel that the country's long-term energy needs will require. That is why I ask my hon. Friends to vote against Third Reading.

10.37 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: Since Second Reading, the Bill has been changed only by minimal Government amendments. The past two days of debate on Report have shown that, however strong the arguments, the Government will always refuse to accept the need to amend the legislation to deal with fundamental issues raised on both sides of the House.

Yesterday, we debated the duties and responsibilities of those who may take over the pits to protect against mine water flooding. Today, we have had consensus across the House on the importance of having a presumption against opencasting and for protecting underground mining rather than developing opencasting. There was no adequate guarantee on subsidence or that rights and liabilities will be upheld. There was no adequate answer on CISWO and the welfare interests of mining communities. There was no guarantee about the future of British Coal Enterprise. On all the specific matters on Report there have been no concessions from the Government, however logical the arguments.

The fundamental reason why the Bill should not receive a Third Reading is that the Government are trying to sell off the industry without any security for coal. The reason is the same one for which they were criticised on Second Reading. They did not come to the House willing to put coal securely in the context of the energy industry and to review that industry. Instead, they have considered the coal industry on its own, piecemeal and not within the context of the taxation system.

There has been no energy review or review of the nuclear industry. We still await that. Neither has there been a review of the subsidy of nuclear fuel and the consequent advantage that it has over coal. We have had no guarantee that we will try to find the best environmental strategy for the energy industry. There has been no review of the future of electricity generation. Until the Government realise that they are not dealing competently with energy—for example, by producing a strategic energy policy, which is

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

their duty—and that energy, taxation and all our assets must be considered and decided together, they do not deserve support in this place or outside it.

The Government are trying to pull off a speedy sell-off, with no security for coal. As an energy strategy that is irresponsible and is a betrayal of those people in the coal industry who have contributed to Britain being an energy-rich, energy-efficient and energy-prosperous country. For that reason, I and my right hon. and hon. Friends will join other Opposition Members and, I hope, some Conservative Members in opposing the Government as we have opposed them at earlier stages of the Bill.

10.40 pm

Mr. Barron: I rise for a few minutes to take up one of the major issues that will result from this privatisation Bill. For many years, the Government believed that the size of the British deep-mined coal industry had to be reduced dramatically. That policy has greatly damaged employment prospects in coal mining and in the service industries and has caused many hon. Members problems. Thousands of young people have not had the opportunity to go into the mining industry that I and many other people had when we left school many years ago.

The last phase of the closure programme started in October 1992, when the Government announced that they would reduce the number of pits to that envisaged in the Rothschild report, although it was denied that that was the intention when the report was first leaked in 1991. At that time, the Minister for Energy and the President of the Board of Trade laid great store by the fact that anyone who lost his job would be protected by the announced redundancy payments.

I questioned the Minister in February and he replied:

"The Government is prepared to fund the current redundancy terms for miners until 30th April 1994, and where redundancies are proposed before 30th April, for so long as the consultations with the unions on any such proposal continue."

That statement—I hope that the Minister will listen—has thrown the British Coal work force into confusion. Last night, I spoke to Stan Robinson, who works at Kiveton colliery in my constituency, which is one of the 12 market-tested pits that Conservative Members thought that they had saved. He told me that on 20 January the work force heard from senior management that it had four different options for the future of that colliery. Two would involve the colliery continuing to produce coal until 1995, one would involve it producing coal until early September 1994 and the fourth option was that the mine would close in April.

The House will know that, for some people, enhanced redundancy payments can mean additional sums of up to £17,000, yet two months after the consultation meeting at Kiveton colliery the work force have had no definite statement of British Coal's intentions. British Coal can rightly be accused of being guilty of mental torture of the work force.

Maltby colliery in my constituency is to restart production in September. Originally, it was to be mothballed. More than 100 British Coal employees appear to be left with the choice of accepting redundancy, within the terms of the Minister's reply to me, or risking losing the chance of that enhanced redundancy payment if they wait, and a different employer makes them redundant after the industry is privatised. Are the Government prepared to inform British Coal that people who remain in the industry after April will have the enhanced redundancy payments that they currently enjoy protected? It is grossly unfair that people whose interests Conservative Members voted to protect in 1992 and 1993 will have a gun held at their heads again over the next six weeks.

What are the implications for the British Coal part-time workers who have been made redundant of the House of Lords ruling of 3 March? Most of them were women who worked as cleaners or canteen staff. The European Court of Justice states:

"According to the case law of the Court . . . the concept of 'pay' within the meaning of Article 119 of the Treaty comprises of any consideration, whether in cash or kind, whether immediate or future, provided that the employee receives it, albeit indirectly, in respect of his employment from his employer, whether under a contract of employment, legislative provisions or made ex gratia by the employer."

In the House of Lords judgment of 3 March, Lord Keith of Kinkel expressed this opinion:

"The provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, whereby employees who work for fewer than 16 hours per week are subject to different conditions in respect of qualification for redundancy pay from those which apply to employees who work for 16 hours per week or more, are incompatible with Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome".

Will the Minister tell me and the hundreds of part-time workers made redundant by British Coal whether they now qualify for some of the enhanced redundancy payments made to mineworkers over many years? I hope that the Minister can answer. I hope also that Conservative Members will put pressure on Ministers who said that they would protect the interests of British miners undergoing the restructuring phase. They are not. Those workers will have a gun at their heads for the next weeks. It is disgraceful that they still do not know whether they will forgo tens of thousands of pounds if they hang on to the unforeseen future of coal privatisation.

10.46 pm

Mr. Hardy: The Bill is one too far. It demonstrates complete insensitivity to history and the way that the Administration are spurning the very concept of one nation—and it will not a put a feather in any prime ministerial hat. The Bill will certainly mean that all the rest of the days of this Parliament will make no difference—at the end of it, that lot will be gone.

10.47 pm

Mr. Hood: I rise to comment on this objectionable Bill and to express my criticism of the recent cat-calling from the Government side of the House against hon. Members who wanted to make a contribution. It seems that Conservative Members are more concerned about getting home to their beds early than hearing what this Government are all about. The day will come—tragically, it may not be their generation who will suffer but those that follow—when the folly of giving the Bill a Third Reading will be realised.

Earlier this week, Lady Thatcher fainted. She will not need smelling salts tonight, because she will be really up—really pleased to see the Bill receive a Third Reading, because she came to power in 1979 to achieve what the Government seek to achieve tonight.

The Bill is an insult to our history. There are no economic or political reasons for it. Mines were nationalised in 1947, not because nationalisation was a

wonderful idea but because of the failure of private enterprise to run an important industry in the interests of the nation.

I have sat here over the past seven years and listened to Euro-sceptics talk about our giving away the sovereignty of Parliament while the Government give away our natural energy and destroy the coal industry, as they are doing tonight. It is even worse than that. Only a couple of years ago we criticised Bob Maxwell—and rightly so—for stealing £500 million of Mirror pension funds. We have a Government who are putting their hands into miners' pension funds with this Bill and saying nothing about it. The Government are stealing from the miners 10 times what Maxwell stole from the Mirror pensioners. It is an outrage and it will come back to haunt the Government.

The hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) can laugh and sneer. He is a young whippersnapper and does not know what it is like to work eight hours in any day to earn his living. The Government have destroyed the lives of thousands of miners, their families and their communities. It is a shame on him and on the House that we should be considering such a Bill here tonight.

10.50 pm

Mr. Barnes: This is a sad Bill, because it comes on top of the Government's destruction of the coal mining industry. They have destroyed communities and a resource that we in this country should be able to use. Coming on top of that destruction, the Bill is inopportune. After the wounds that have been inflicted on the coal industry, it should have a period of stability in which it can mobilise and organise the bits that are left. Instead, we have a radical piece of legislation that is affecting a whole host of areas, including pensions, concessionary coal, opencast mining and people's futures.

The Government should not be pushing this measure on people who have suffered under the previous measures, because it is inappropriate and inopportune. There should be time to recover from the burdens that the Government have placed on our communities.

10.51 pm

Mr. Bell: Following on from what was said by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), my hon. Friends the Members for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), if ever there was an industry that should never have been privatised, it is the coal industry. The ramifications go far beyond the question simply of money and production. The consequences for the environment and for families in mining areas throughout the country have been too enormous for the Bill to address.

It was George Orwell who called the miners the caryatids of the earth. That was at a time when miners had dignity, their families had respect and they lived in that dignity and respect. We are seeing tonight a Bill that brings to an end a nationalised industry that was one of the greatest industries in our country and whose work force was one of the greatest in our country. My hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan touched on this gently. It was General MacArthur who once said, "I shall return." We shall return again to the coal industry. We shall return again to miners and their families. We shall return again to an industry that will be strong. We shall return again to a Government who have an energy policy. We shall return again to a coal mining industry that belongs to the people.

10.53 pm

Mr. Eggar: The transfer of the coal industry to the private sector is a momentous step. It has widespread ramifications in the crucial areas of safety, pensions, subsidence, licensing and the environment. The Government have spelt out policies that pay due regard to the importance of the issues concerned and have made available to the House the fullest possible information.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), like all other Liberals, has opposed this privatisation Bill just as he has opposed every other privatisation Bill that has been introduced by the Government. But he does so, as ever, in a highly irresponsible way. I refer him to the Liberal Democrats' manifesto of April 1992. What does it say with regard to the coal industry? It states:

> "We will liberalise the coal industry by transferring ownership of coal reserves to the Crown . . . and issuing licences to operate pits to other groups, as well as British Coal".

What will the Government do under the terms of the Bill? What have the Government done as a result of the decision to lease and license pits? Exactly that. It is typical of the Liberal party that it fails to recognise the fact, and to give credit where credit is due. As ever, the Liberal party says one thing in the House but another in its manifesto and yet another out in the country.

When the Government first announced our policy of privatising the coal industry, it was rightly described as the ultimate privatisation. It could more accurately be described as an idea whose time has come. What has given rise to that change in attitude? More than anything, it has been the debate on the Bill.

Before we started dealing with the Bill I should have been hard pressed to say what the arguments were in favour of a state-run coal industry. But I imagined that Opposition Members would find and put forward those arguments. In fact, we did not hear one reasoned argument from them in favour of state ownership. Instead, at the 59th minute of the 11th hour of the debate the chief Opposition spokesman gave us an uncosted pledge to renationalise the industry in future. I hope that he has checked his figures with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), because he thereby entered into a major spending commitment, which we shall cost and draw attention to in future.

The fact is that there has been no sensible argument in favour of—

Mr. Hood: Without compensation.

Mr. Eggar: No compensation? Now we are getting down to the real arguments at the core of the Labour party. Two Labour Members have said that they would not pay compensation. I am prepared to give way to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill). Will he now confirm that his pledge to renationalise the coal industry means that he will do so without compensation?

Mr. O'Neill: The Labour party has always paid compensation when it has taken anything into public ownership. Those who seek to do anything else are in no way representative of the Labour party's record or of its likely future policies.

Mr. Eggar: So the hon. Gentleman has now made a spending pledge and taken on other Labour Members head on. I am most willing to give way to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) if he would like to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Hood: I am delighted to answer the Minister, and I shall give him my view frankly. In answer to his challenge, I say that if the Government are silly enough to give our industry away we should be brave enough to take it back without compensation.

Mr. Eggar: We have just had more of a debate on Labour's attitude to nationalisation and to the private sector than we have had in the previous 65 hours of debate on the Bill.

Let us face the fact that the most deep-rooted and pervasive problem besetting the British coal industry has been and remains state ownership. Privatisation is the solution to the problem that state ownership has caused. We believe that the industry must be returned to the private sector as soon as possible, because that is the way for the future.

I urge my hon. Friends to give the Bill a Third Reading.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 312, Noes 271.

Division No. 179] **[10.58 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael

Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger

Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

PETITION

Peakes Parkway, Grimsby

11.12 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I wish to present a petition from Marjorie Mary Blyth of 68 Highfield avenue and from 3,146 other residents of Highfield avenue and Peaksfield avenue in Grimsby against Humberside county council's compulsory purchase order to build the Peakes Parkway in Grimsby.

The petitioners object to the purchase order and to the Peakes Parkway scheme because it builds a major road through a densely populated area; because the quiet location of the area was an incentive for them to purchase their homes in the first place; because the road will run 18 to 20 m from their front windows; because they will lose their front gardens to the road; because they fear for their health if the land is taken to build the new highway; and because the noise and pollution created would confine the elderly and bronchial sufferers to stay indoors.

They object also because they question the validity of the scheme—the cost has escalated from £7.5 million to £14 million in three years and will probably be £20 million at the end—and because they feel that the road is unnecessary.

The petition ends:

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray your Honourable House that the Order may not be brought into operation.

To lie upon the Table.

Uganda (Debt)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

11.13 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I am grateful to have the opportunity to raise the matter of debt in Uganda on the Adjournment of the House. Uganda is the fourth poorest country in the world, with a gross national product per capita of just $170 in 1991. Despite having access to every available debt relief measure already instituted by northern creditors, it still faces a foreign debt of some $2.6 billion. That debt is simply unpayable.

The most recently available figures show that Uganda pays about $100 million a year in debt servicing and repayments, which approximates to one third of the Ugandan Government's budget, and almost four times the amount spent on health and education combined throughout the country. Last year, debt service payments accounted for 48 per cent. of the value of all exports from Uganda. If the total debt service owed to all creditors had been met, the figure would have risen to a massive 83 per cent. of exports.

Further consideration should be given to the extent to which Uganda is able to tackle the severe health problems which afflict its people. Many tropical diseases are endemic, and AIDS is a major problem. The HIV-positive level among women in Uganda is a frightening 17 per cent. Yet Uganda is able to spend only half of the World Health Organisation recommended minimum of $12 per head for sub-Saharan Africa. Of that, a mere 20 per cent., or just over $1 per person, is contributed by the Ugandan Government themselves. The remainder comes from donor sources.

In quoting a raft of statistics, one runs the risk of obscuring the reality of the argument. The bare facts in respect of Uganda are that the country is stuck in a quagmire of debt, and is in real danger of being sucked under. The tragedy is that, unlike some other countries defined by the World bank as severely indebted low-income countries, Uganda has not deliberately defaulted on its debts.

In 1987, the Ugandan Government, assisted by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank, embarked on an economic recovery programme. It aimed to promote economic rehabilitation and growth, restore internal financial stability and establish a liberal economic environment which encouraged private sector investment. It succeeded. The result has been a liberalisation of prices, the removal of trade restrictions, the privatisation of state enterprises, and cuts in the numbers of people employed in the civil service and the armed forces.

I am by nature, as you might understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, suspicious of and even hostile to such structural adjustment programmes imposed by the international financial institutions on countries such as Uganda. All too often they represent the application of a model of economic management which fails to understand the basic needs of people living in the world's poorest countries, and lead to living standards being driven still further downwards. However, in the case of Uganda, like it or not, the programme worked.

The IMF and the World bank arranged financing of about $1.2 billion for the programme, and the result has been a reduction of inflation to below 1 per cent. by the

middle of last year, from an all-time high of 240 per cent. in 1987. A revised version of the economic reforms was agreed for 1991-94, accompanied by additional financing of $1.7 billion. The result is that Uganda's economy grew by 7 per cent. in 1992-93, and a further 5 per cent. growth is forecast for the current year. The 1991 programme also involved a debt management strategy designed to reduce accumulated arrears and achieve a sustainable level of debt service.

So the Ugandan Government have done everything that could reasonably be expected of them to regenerate their economy and reduce their debt under existing rules. Yet they remain saddled with a crippling and still mounting debt burden. Their major problem is multilateral debt, almost exclusively to the IMF and the World bank. That accounts for almost 70 per cent. of Uganda's total—about three times the average for sub-Saharan African countries.

Crucially, annual debt servicing to the IMF bleeds one third of Uganda's foreign exchange earnings. If repayments owed to the IMF, most of which were loaned on a non-concessional basis, continue to increase at the present rate, in 1997-98 cash flows from that organisation to Uganda will be negative. What possible justification could there be for one of the world's poorest countries paying money to one of the world's richest multilateral organisations? The lunatics really are poised to take over the asylum, if they are not already installed.

It should be clearly stated and understood that no meaningful reduction in Uganda's crushing debt burden is possible until its payments to those institutions are reduced. Although the World bank accounts for a large proportion of total debt stock, it has provided a net transfer of funds to Uganda of about $600 million since 1987. That was facilitated through the conversion of International Bank for Reconstruction and Development loans into IDA concessional terms under its fifth dimension programme. Despite this, debt servicing to the bank remains high, and existing measures must be accelerated through the provision of additional resources.

Attempts by the IMF to increase concessionality through the enhanced structural adjustment facility have failed to alleviate the burden of Uganda's repayments, and its present soft loan agreement with ESAF comes to an end in November this year. The only practical option available to Uganda is to seek a replenishment of the ESAF to carry it over the next few years.

Currently, the Ugandan Government are using aid given for balance of payments support to repay multilateral debt. So bilateral debt is incurred to meet the immediate payments due under multilateral debt—never its donors' intended purpose. Bilateral debt to the so-called Paris Club currently stands at $282 million, or 11 per cent. of Uganda's debt. But, under club rules, there cannot be any rescheduling or reduction of debt contracted after a country's first visit to the club—in Uganda's case, 1981.

So the Ugandan Government are left with an unsustainable debt repayment bill to the Paris Club, which amounts to a convincing case for bringing forward the cut-off date. This should certainly be no earlier than 1986, when the present Government, under President Museveni, took office. It is surely wrong—not to say grossly unfair—to hold the present Government and the Ugandan people liable for debts incurred by earlier autocratic regimes which abused human rights and siphoned off millions of dollars of aid assistance, some of which left the country, never to return.

What can be done to provide the helping hand which Uganda needs so desperately? Earlier this month, my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), accompanied by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) and Mrs. Carolyn Culey of Oxfam, visited Uganda. My hon. Friend reported that, while scarcely surprised to find the country facing severe economic difficulties, he was nonetheless shocked to learn at first hand of the price being paid by ordinary Ugandans for the debt crisis burdening their country.

He saw the extraordinary efforts being made by Ugandan health professionals, as well as British aid agencies, to tackle not only the AIDS pandemic but also the results of poor nutrition and the remaining effects of the dreadful civil wars of the 1970s and early 1980s. He was in no doubt that the current health crisis which afflicts the country is not the result just of bad luck or bad planning, the legacy of the Amin tyranny, or the falling price of coffee on the world commodities market. It was clear that the major factor is the diversion of scarce resources from human development to debt repayment.

All members of the delegation returned with the unshakeable belief that, as Uganda has taken every possible step to deal with the internal causes of its debt, urgent action is needed to assist it in dealing with the external causes. I strongly support the view of Oxfam that the international community which lent money to Uganda has a responsibility to help Uganda to repay it.

For some time now, as part of its "Africa: Make or Break" campaign, with which I am privileged to be involved, Oxfam has called for the Governments of the northern nations to encourage the IMF to sell part of its gold stocks. That would generate the necessary resources to write off the debt owed to the fund by Uganda, as well as several of the other most heavily indebted countries.

It would hardly represent a revolutionary step—after all, the IMF's original structural adjustment facility was financed by this method, and, indeed, the Chancellor of the Exchequer recently proposed a further sale to finance the replenishment of ESAF. For Uganda, it would represent a lifeline.

The British Government have recently shown their willingness to take the lead at G7 level in relation to finding a means of relieving the most indebted nations. The proposal to reduce the Trinidad terms is perhaps the most obvious, but the pressure applied on the Japanese in Washington last year by the Chancellor also represented a welcome initiative, and an attempt to achieve agreement within the world's richest nations on the question of debt.

Tonight I ask the Economic Secretary what steps he is prepared to take in terms of the case of Uganda. There is nothing more which Uganda can do itself to address its debt problems. Will the Government accept that the international community should now accept its share of the responsibility? In the past, money was lent recklessly at high interest rates to Governments which squandered it. Why should the present Government of Uganda bear sole responsibility for that?

On current projections, there will be a net outflow of around $200 million over the next five years from Uganda to the IMF as ESAF repayments become due. Will the Government accept that it is morally wrong for one of the world's poorest nations to be transferring resources to one of the richest institutions? If not, why not?

Until now, the Government and most of their northern counterparts have argued that multilateral debt cannot be

[Mr. Mike Watson]

written off, because to do so would undermine the credibility of the international financial institutions, while selling part of the IMF's gold stocks would generate inflationary pressures. I suggest that such assertions do not withstand close scrutiny. I have already referred to the sale of gold stocks and the precedents for it.

Given the relatively small scale of finance involved and the depressed state of the global economy, it is difficult to envisage how any of the actions that I have suggested might cause serious inflationary pressure. Fears about setting precedents for middle-income countries could be answered by imposing strict criteria for eligibility.

Further, what do the Government have to say about the ability of developing countries to pay their debts? Governments have accepted that as the critical factor in dealing with bilateral debt—rightly so—so what is the rationale for refusing to apply the same principle to multilateral debt? Why should not there be limited reductions for severely indebted low-income countries, of which Uganda is one of the most extreme examples?

If the Government will not meet such a request, will the Economic Secretary agree to take steps to deal with Uganda's immediate problem? For example, will the Government make an additional £5 million available in response to the Ugandan Government's appeal for a £25 million fund to meet debt repayments? Uganda needs that level of support immediately in order to make repayments to the multilateral agencies. Failure to meet those obligations will jeopardise Uganda's ability to secure desperately needed development assistance.

I have already mentioned the difficulties in relation to bilateral debt and the Paris Club. There is a strong political case for moving the cut-off date in Uganda's case to 1986 when the present Government took office. Will the Government support that idea? I believe that they should. The club has a rule that debt which has already been rescheduled once cannot be reconsidered. It would be helpful, to say the least, if that rule could be relaxed; I have to ask whether the Government would be prepared to argue for that on Uganda's behalf with other club members.

What will the Government do to help Uganda? The case for coming to Uganda's aid is perhaps the strongest that can be made on behalf of any developing country. If the Government are not prepared to help, it sends a grim message to the people not only of that beleaguered country but those of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. I hope that, for their sake, the Economic Secretary will respond positively.

11.27 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I applaud the determination of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) to raise this issue on the Adjournment, and I congratulate him on doing so in such compelling terms. It is a considerable tribute to him and to the issue that he has raised that the debate is so well attended by hon. Members of both parties. I acknowledge immediately that the matter has been raised by many of our constituents, and I know that interest in it goes beyond those hon. Members able to attend tonight to people outside.

I acknowledge in particular the presence of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) who has been to Uganda recently. I have of course had a report of his visit and the deliberations that he had there. I also acknowledge the interest of my hon. Friends the Members for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who have written to me separately.

Uganda is a beautiful but troubled country. It is a country of great riches but of great poverty, too. Many of us are conscious of our bilateral and multilateral obligations to those who have struggled with the millstone of debt and the heritage of repression which Uganda has undoubtedly has. Therefore, the sentiments behind and the contents of the hon. Gentleman's speech were well received by the House.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend accept that President Museveni has fought valiantly for the people of Uganda, and that the prospect of hundreds and thousands of people being driven across the border from the Sudan as a result of the Muslim fundamentalism movement would place an even more intolerable burden on the people of Uganda and make the problems highlighted by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) even worse than they are now?

Mr. Nelson: I agree that the cause and effect of such migration will be a tragedy, and I know the interest that my hon. Friend has in that matter. I believe that he is to visit the country concerned shortly, and I shall be interested in his observations when he returns. I thank him for his contribution to the debate.

Uganda is one of the world's poorest and most indebted countries. The Government recognise that Uganda, like many similar developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is confronted by an unsustainable debt burden. I assure the House that I share many of the anxieties that have been expressed.

The Government, and especially my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, have taken a leading role in the development of realistic and sustainable solutions to the problem of developing country debt. It is important to recognise that there can be no simple blanket solution that is equally applicable to all developing countries. That is why the Government's policy is based on a case-by-case approach. We believe that, for the poorest and most indebted countries, simply refinancing and rescheduling debt service obligations is not enough. If those countries are to make progress towards sustainable economic development, debt reduction is essential.

However, it is wrong to attribute all the problems of developing countries to high levels of external debt as the debt is often a symptom of deeper economic problems. The Government believe that, if the long-term prospects of developing countries are to be sustainable, those fundamental economic problems must be tackled. For that reason, we are committed to working closely with our colleagues in the Paris Club group of creditor Governments and the international financial institutions.

As the House will know, the Paris Club now grants debt rescheduling to the poorest and most indebted countries, under what is known as the Trinidad terms. That concessional form of debt rescheduling is the direct result of an initiative that was launched by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1990.

As a result of the Trinidad terms initiative, 20 countries, including Uganda, have to date benefited from a reduction in their official debt burdens, almost $6 billion of debts

have been restructured and more than $2 billion of debt has been forgiven. Those Paris Club agreements include a commitment from creditors to consider a reduction of the whole stock of official bilateral debt after three to four years, subject to satisfactory performance under an International Monetary Fund programme.

Although those agreements represent a substantial achievement, the Government believe that more could be done to help countries such as Uganda. We are urging our fellow Paris Club creditors to improve the existing Trinidad terms. We hope that they will agree to give debt reduction along the lines of the Prime Minister's original 1990 proposal.

Especially, we believe that some countries should be eligible for an immediate stock of debt reduction—possibly up to 80 cent. in the most deserving cases. To qualify for such treatment, countries would have to be up to date with their debt service payments and have established a one to two-year record of economic reform under an IMF programme.

There is still some work to do before a Paris Club consensus can be achieved, but we are hopeful that such stock of debt operations can be agreed for one or more countries this year. If we are successful, we hope that Uganda can be among the first beneficiaries, although that will partly depend on other creditors' views.

Of course, the Paris Club can only contribute to easing the burden of official bilateral debt. For most countries, but especially in Uganda's case, that is only one part of the story, for more than 60 per cent. of Uganda's debt is owed to the international financial institutions—as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central pointed out.

Uganda's outstanding debts to the World bank currently stand at $1.8 billion, and she owes a further $362 million to the IMF. Those figures are substantial, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that cash flow and the ability to pay are at least as important as the level of indebtedness.

Indeed, it is worth remembering that more than 90 per cent. of Uganda's debt to the international financial institutions is on concessional terms, designed expressly to assist the poor countries. Especially, Uganda has benefited from the World bank's International Development Association and the IMF's enhanced structural adjustment facility. Those are both sources of highly concessional long-term finance, with interest rates of only 0.5 per cent. The United Kingdom is an important contributor to both.

In December, the Government announced that they would provide an extra £50 million to help enlarge the enhanced structural adjustment facility. That is in addition to our original contribution of up to £327 million. The United Kingdom has also contributed £620 million to the most recent replenishment of the IDA. Further help in meeting the interest payments on Uganda's non-concessional World bank loans has also been forthcoming, through the bank's fifth dimension facility.

It is also important to remember that the picture in Uganda is dynamic, not static. In 1992—the latest year for which World bank figures are available—Uganda made debt servicing payments of $37 million to the international financial institutions. However, in the same year, those institutions made positive net transfers to Uganda of $162 million.

The World bank expects its disbursements to Uganda to continue to exceed repayments for several years. Furthermore, although Uganda faces sharp rises in its debt service obligations to the IMF, it is also eligible for a further ESAF arrangement under the enlarged facility. If this is agreed, the funds provided are likely to exceed, or at least match, debt service payments to the IMF.

There is another way in which the World bank has assisted Uganda. In February 1993, Uganda completed a buy-back operation on $153 million of its commercial debt. Under the terms of the agreement, Uganda paid a cash settlement of just 12 per cent. of the face value of that debt, using grants provided through the debt reduction facility of the International Development Association.

In recent weeks, the Government have received a number of representations urging us to support the writing off of Uganda's debt to the international financial institutions. However, the funds of both the IMF and World bank are finite and revolving. They are intended to be available for use by members when and where they are most needed. Writing off debts owed to these institutions would reduce the pool of funds available, and risk undermining their ability to assist all developing countries.

In the case of the World bank, debt write-offs might endanger its high credit rating. It is this high credit rating that allows it to raise money on the most favourable terms, and keeps the interest rates that it charges on its own loans as low as possible.

The Government recognise that the process of economic adjustment for countries like Uganda is long and difficult, especially when their adjustment efforts are hampered by high debt burdens. The Government are committed to assisting this vital adjustment. Last year, aid of £15 million was agreed for Uganda. This will help support economic reform.

However, it is also crucial that progress be made on the problem of Uganda's debt burden, and the Government have been working on ways to achieve this. To date, Uganda has benefited from a concessional rescheduling of its official bilateral debts and from targeted, conditional and highly concessional financial facilities from the international financial institutions.

The Government very much hope that further support from the Paris Club will be forthcoming this year, in the form of a stock of debt reduction, and we shall do everything in our power to achieve this. Furthermore, our representatives in the World bank and the IMF will continue to look for new ways to support Uganda's adjustment efforts.

There are just two more positive things that I want to say in response to the hon. Gentleman. The first is that, as I said earlier, Uganda received a Trinidad terms rescheduling in 1992. Any future discussion of Uganda's Paris Club debts might consider whether the existing cut-off date could be moved from 1981. That point was raised by the hon. Gentleman at the end of his speech.

Under existing Paris Club rules, debts contracted after the cut-off date cannot be rescheduled. But the United Kingdom could, and would be willing to, agree to a call to have the cut-off date moved so as to increase the amount of debt that could be rescheduled. In other words, we agree with the hon. Gentleman. But this is not something that can be done bilaterally; it needs the co-operation of others.

Secondly—this is an important point—the Paris Club is now seriously considering the possibility of early stock of debt operations, although in this area, too, consensus has yet to be reached. However, the United Kingdom has identified Uganda and Bolivia as two front runners for such treatment, and we shall seek every opportunity to press the claims of these most troubled countries.

[Mr. Nelson]

In raising this matter, the hon. Gentleman has done a service not just to the House but, in particular, to Uganda. I applaud the way in which he introduced the debate, and I congratulate all hon. Members, on both sides, for their presence and for their interest in this most important and pressing matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Thursday 24 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 14 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk

1. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received about the future marketing of milk.

4. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the reorganisation of the milk marketing board.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are consulting on the milk marketing board's amended reorganisation scheme.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the milk market is in a state of structural deficit because of the operation of quotas? Does she therefore further agree that if Milk Marque—whose motto is "He who dares, wins" —obtains 80 per cent. of the milk market, as it wants to, there is a danger that there will be exploitation of the consumer and of the food processing industry, and a loss of jobs in that industry? Does that not provide an unanswerable case for having a milk regulator?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is fresh from his agricultural triumphs of yesterday, but he appears to be proposing a form of "Ofmilk" that I do not entirely favour. The Government's view is that Milk Marque should be subject to the competition authorities, exactly like any other business. We regard that as an adequate protection for consumers, producers and businesses.

Mr. Luff: May I urge my right hon. Friend to resist the pressure from the industrial giants of the dairy business and to stand up instead for the interests of the dairy farmers of Worcestershire and the rest of the country by ending the uncertainty over the marketing of milk at the earliest possible date? Is she aware that in my constituency of Worcester, where Milk Marque will have its headquarters, creating up to 50 new jobs, there is enthusiasm for the idea that the free market in milk, along the lines suggested by the MMB, should come into existence by the end of the year at the latest?

Mrs. Shephard: Both my hon. Friends have clearly illustrated the balance that needs to be maintained between the interests of producers, consumers and business. I greatly regret the delay in setting up the new revised arrangements—1 April was the date selected by the board itself—but I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) that, in the interests of his constituents and of consumers, producers and businesses, it is more important to get the arrangements right than to proceed too quickly to an artificial deadline.

Mr. Maxton: What representations has the right hon. Lady received and what discussions has she had with the Secretary of State for Health to ensure that, whatever the future structure for the marketing of milk in England may be, it will actively encourage greater sale and use of both skimmed and semi-skimmed milk for the sake of the future health of the nation?

Mrs. Shephard: We are in close touch with the Department of Health both on the excellent document "The Health of the Nation" and on all kinds of advice given to consumers. As I have said in the past, I believe that common sense should prevail in such matters.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Is the Minister aware that in all sectors of the milk industry there is growing impatience at the Government's delay, caused partly by the MMB, in reaching a firm decision on the reorganisation of milk marketing in England and Wales?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes. As I have already said, I greatly regret the delay. Considerable progress is now being made. MAFF officials have had many discussions with the board about the scheme, and the board has now submitted amendments to the reorganisation scheme. A further set of amendments was submitted as recently as 2 March. We issued the consultation document for producers, consumers and other businesses on 9 March, and we have asked for responses by 8 April, so I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that we are pushing matters on.

Food Sales Abroad

2. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to encourage the sale of British food abroad.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): We have launched a number of initiatives. The latest is the continental challenge which is helping United Kingdom food suppliers to exploit the opportunities presented by the continental retail market.

Mr. Hendry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that the food trade deficit has halved since the 1960s, and will he welcome the new food marketing course unveiled by my right hon. Friend the Minister at Sheffield Hallam university, which shows that the Government, the producers and the academic world are working together more closely than ever before to boost British food exports?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend and can confirm the contribution that our approach to food marketing has made to help to reduce the current food deficit, which is still all too large, but at least progress has been made in the right direction. He is right to emphasise marketing, which is the key to ensuring that food producers produce what the marketplace wants, whether at home or abroad.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Would not the Germans be much reassured about imported beef if there were a live test for bovine spongiform encephalopathy available in the United Kingdom? May we have an absolute assurance that the Government are supporting every project to research the issue of a live test?

Mr. Jack: I think that the German Government would do themselves a great favour if they considered the excellent scientific report on the safety of British beef which has already been agreed not only by scientists in the United Kingdom but by Community scientists. The German Government are waging a wholly spurious campaign. We consider every sensible proposal for additional research in this sphere, but, as I said, the German Government could do far worse than examine the evidence already before them.

Mr. Hicks: Does my hon. Friend recall that a few years ago the United Kingdom used to export pigmeat and pigmeat products? Is he aware that that is no longer the case, partly due to the decline of our domestic production as a consequence of the alleged illegal dumping of pigmeat and pigmeat products on our market by our European competitors?

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the issue. He will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister has raised in the Council of Ministers and with the Commissioner questions of, for example, illegal state aid in France. I refer my hon. Friend to a recent report produced by the Meat and Livestock Commission which examined the pig industry. He will find in it some interesting facts, especially in relation to the type of pig produced here and our processing industry which, if altered, would deal with some of the marketing problems to which my hon. Friend rightly referred.

Dr. Strang: But surely the Minister recognises that the German Government's decision to press for a ban on the import of British beef into Germany has aroused British concern about BSE? I accept that there is no evidence of a link between BSE in cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in human beings, but is the Minister satisfied that the Medical Research Council has all the resources that it needs to do all the research that it can, taking into account the fact that the incubation period for CJD in human beings is very long? Will he welcome the German Government's decision to embark on their own research project to consider the possibility, however remote, of a link between BSE and CJD? In the meantime—*[Interruption.]* It is a very important issue—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that it is a very important issue, but a supplementary question means one question, not a catalogue of statements or long explanations. There should be only one supplementary question, from wherever it comes.

Dr. Strang: I am grateful, Madam Speaker. Will the Minister reconsider the decision not to accept the Select Committee's recommendation to ban the use of calf brain and offal in the human food chain?

Mr. Jack: I am surprised at the line that the hon. Gentleman has taken on this serious matter, because the way in which he approaches it lends credence to some of the misleading reports that certain newspapers have published on BSE in this country. The reporting of half bits of information and half-truths without exploring the excellent science base that already exists does not diminish in any way the statements of safety that have been made about the consumption of home-produced beef.

As I said a moment ago, in my view, the German Government will look carefully at our own science which is excellently resourced, as is the science in the European Community. If they want to do their own scientific tests, they can do so. However, what they are proposing is illegal, it breaks the single market concept and it is fundamentally wrong.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that reducing production costs is a way to encourage the export of food and food products from this country? Therefore, will the Ministry look favourably at a proposal from my constituents trading as Flightpath Farmers, who want to feed the modest excess of quota that they are producing on their dairy farms as dried milk to their stock, thus reducing their costs?

Mr. Jack: Flightpath Farmers are flying high with their ideas this afternoon. Of course, we welcome ideas to reduce the costs of the production of foodstuffs. Much of our research and development effort is directed at just that point. I think that my hon. Friend has raised the issue with my right hon. Friend the Minister, and I can assure him that it will be looked into very carefully.

Animal Health

3. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on how she expects deregulation to improve animal health.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): Deregulation, prudently and carefully applied, will improve the position of the livestock industry while protecting animal health and welfare.

Mr. Prentice: Does the Minister accept that BSE, with all its appalling consequences, would never have happened were it not for deregulation of the meat rendering industry? Does he agree that there is a close connection between deregulation and threats to animal and, indeed, human health?

Mr. Soames: No, on neither of those two points do I agree. The purpose of the deregulation initiative is to question, rightly, the justification for every regulation. The Government's intention at all times is to protect human and animal health, to protect animal welfare and to safeguard taxpayers' money. We will do nothing to compromise either human health or animal welfare.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the regulation of pig farmers, which will result in the

phasing out of tethers and dry sow stalls, will put them at a commercial disadvantage compared with their competitors on the continent? Will his Department consider ways of helping them when they are faced with significant reinvestment? If there is no aid, we will see a decline in the British pig market and an increase in the importation of pigmeat.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend speaks from a position of considerable knowledge, having more pig farmers in his constituency than any other hon. Member, so we treat what he says with considerable respect. As he knows, aid will not be available for the transition period. However, I can assure him that animal welfare remains extremely important in this country, as he will realise; it adds greatly to the selling power of British goods, and it is wrong to think otherwise. The people of Britain attach great importance to it. I assure my hon. Friend that we will not introduce unilaterally any new measures that would be to the economic detriment of our producers.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister agree that the greatest contribution that could be made to the welfare of sheep in this country would be the reintroduction of compulsory sheep dipping? Is he aware that there is a terrible incidence of sheep scab affecting potentially about 1 million sheep in my constituency as a result of the absence of compulsory dipping?

Mr. Soames: The hon. and learned Gentleman is at odds in his argument. When there were compulsory controls, sheep scab was never properly under control. Now that the regulations have been abandoned, there is still exactly the same remedy as there always was for controlling sheep scab, which, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows perfectly well, is to dip his sheep, and farmers should do so.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

5. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about access to the environmentally sensitive areas of West Penwith, Somerset, lakes and moors, the South Downs, the Pennines, the Dales and the Broads and the payment farmers will receive in return for such public access.

Mr. Jack: New arrangements launched on 9 February for these ESAs will make available £274 per mile for approved routes.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that it is welcome that there is to be extra public access both to those areas and to areas that are covered by country stewardship schemes, but how are the general public to find out which areas they are now entitled to go into?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman is a member of the Ramblers Association and, apart from walking "them thar hills", he and his colleagues have an important function in ensuring that the message about extra access to environmentally sensitive areas is made available to walkers. We will also be making the information available to local authorities, tourist information centres and local libraries. We will try to ensure that farms are properly signposted so that walkers will know where the new and excellent facility is available.

Mr. David Nicholson: I welcome what my hon. Friend has said about this initiative, but is he aware that it has been fairly difficult in recent weeks for anyone to have access to the Somerset moors and levels because they have been flooded by up to 8 or 10 ft in some areas? While that may be good news for birds, it is pretty bad news for farmers. Will he do all that he can to put pressure on the National Rivers Authority to improve its pumping and dredging activities?

Mr. Jack: I am aware of the problem to which my hon. Friend rightly draws attention. I will look into the point about the NRA and see precisely what progress has been made about the pumping arrangements. He will appreciate that ensuring that there is a proper and adequate water level on a more permanent basis is central to improving the environmental area of the Somerset levels.

Agricultural Earnings

6. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest available figure for the average weekly earnings of agricultural workers in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figure is £217.18 per week.

Ms Corston: Even though farm workers earn only 70 per cent. of the average industrial wage, does the Minister agree that the poverty of farm workers will be made worse if the agricultural wages board is not committed to set a whole range of statutory rights, including minimum rates of pay, overtime rates, sick pay schemes, holiday schemes and maximum rents for agricultural tied cottages? Will the right hon. Lady undertake to retain the wages board in its present form?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Lady will know that the agricultural wages board is subject to a review every five years, and that this time we are taking the opportunity to review the workings of the board. She will also know that we have had a large response to consultations, with some 4,000 responses in all. The vast majority of those were in favour of the retention of the board. The complications that the hon. Lady outlines are among the issues that my right hon. Friends and I will be taking into account, and I hope to make an announcement soon.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: In spite of her answer, does my right hon. Friend recognise that the good arguments that have been used for the abolition of all the other statutory wages boards apply equally to the agricultural wages board? Does she agree that, given a free market, it is more than likely that the average level of wages would rise? She should not be subsumed by the siren voices of those who would like their negotiations to be carried out for them.

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is quite right that the Government in general believe that all barriers to employment should be removed, and that statutory wage controls distort wage and employment levels and destroy jobs. However, he would be the first to recognise the quite overwhelming support among employers and employees in the agriculture industry for the retention of the board. It is interesting to note that the Tenant Farmers Association

supports the abolition, and so do some individual National Farmers Union commodity committees, in particular the potato committee.

Dr. Strang: Is the Minister aware that, even with yesterday's increase, which comes into operation in June, the average hourly pay of farm workers—excluding overtime, but including bonuses—will still be less than three quarters of the industrial average? Will she take on board the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) that it will not be sufficient to retain the boards, but that it is crucial that she retains all the legislation that provides minimum rates of pay at every level and a statutory right to holidays and to holiday and sick pay?

Mrs. Shephard: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the wages announced yesterday were set by the board, with representation from both sides of the industry. I am sure that he is also aware that the wages of agricultural workers fall below the average wage; but so do those of other groups—people in a number of manufacturing sectors, distribution, repairs, hotels and catering, construction, transport and communication.

Equines

7. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on minimum residue limits of veterinary products in equines.

Mr. Soames: Under Council regulations, maximum residue limits must be established by 1996 for active ingredients in veterinary medicines used in food-producing species, including horses. That does not apply if a horse is not destined for human consumption.

Mr. Heald: I welcome my hon. Friend's reply. Does he agree that is important that ponies should be protected, and would he care to comment further on the position concerning ponies and their owners?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That matter is dear to the hearts of many of our fellow citizens. I can assure him that the regulations that we have in place to ensure that ponies are not exported for slaughter or, indeed, that any horses are not exported for immediate slaughter are extremely important to us. We retain them at a very high level of vigilance. Our minimum value system, as everyone knows, has served us extremely well and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Food Handling

8. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the budget of her Department is devoted to the promotion of the safe handling of food.

Mr. Soames: A large proportion of the work of the Food Safety Directorate, which accounts for about one third of staff resources in the core department, is devoted to the promotion of food safety, including the safe handling of food.

Mr. Griffiths: I wonder whether the Minister would tell us when he last had the rather humble gastronomic experience of eating a sandwich from a store such as Tesco, and whether, when eating it, he was reading the *Which?* report on the safety of eating such sandwiches, because he will know that one in six are deemed to be dangerous to public health. Will he therefore take steps to ensure that all pre-packed sandwiches have a clear sell-by date on them and that more money is made available for the training of all staff who have to handle and sell sandwiches?

Mr. Soames: I would hazard a guess that I eat more Tesco sandwiches than the hon. Gentleman or, for that matter, many other hon. Gentlemen. The hon. Gentleman's assertion was fatuous. The standards in the British food industry are probably the highest in any country. Our hygiene training is the envy of the world and all the regulations on food safety in this country render our consumers the best protected, in the safest environment, in any country in Europe.

Mr. Brazier: Following that robust answer, may I ask my hon. Friend whether he agrees that we must resist pressure from the Opposition for yet more regulation? Surely the British people want a sensible balance to be struck between food safety and a reasonable regulatory burden so that British jobs are not destroyed throughout the food chain.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. The food industry, together with pharmaceuticals, aerospace and a number of others, is one of the best in Great Britain. My hon. Friend is correct. Any additional regulatory burden would do no good. The food industry depends on high standards of hygiene for its great success. Everything that my hon. Friend says is true. We believe that we have exactly the right balance, and we should continue to strike that balance.

Mr. Martyn Jones: In spite of the Minister's reply and his defence of the British food industry, there has been a huge increase in cases of salmonella food poisoning in the past few years. Given that all the evidence that has been given to the Agriculture Select Committee suggests that the Government's slaughter policy has had no effect in preventing that increase in salmonella food poisoning, will he now accept that the £1,048,000 that has been wasted on compensation for slaughtered flocks would have been best spent on educating food handlers in the use of eggs?

Mr. Soames: No, I do not believe that. The Government policy on all those matters has been driven by our professional independent advisory committees. The salmonella policy is to provide all necessary controls consistent with the need to protect public health.

The hon. Gentleman must understand that what makes food safe is not regulation but high standards and the food industry's determination to provide consumers with wholesome, safe food. That is precisely what they get.

Equine Slaughter

9. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many equines were slaughtered in the United Kingdom in the past year; how many of those equines were slaughtered for consumption (a) in the United Kingdom and (b) abroad; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Seven slaughterhouses in the United Kingdom are licensed to slaughter horses. Last year, they handled some 4,000 equines for human consumption.

Data are not kept on the destination of the meat, but, so far as the Department is aware, the vast majority of the meat produced was exported.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that if foreigners must eat our horses, they should accept them slaughtered rather than transported alive? Is not that a much more humane way for horsemeat to be sent abroad? Does he agree that this country has no tradition of eating horses and that our history, culture and fame are built on the back of horses? Will he promise that, like me, he will never eat a horse as long as he lives?

Mr. Soames: I feel that the House should know that I have never, and will never, eat a horse. My hon. Friend is a doughty champion of the interests of horses. Although eating horses is alien to the British people, we must acknowledge that some of our friends within the excellent single market to which we belong have strange habits and wish to eat horses. We do not permit the export of horses for slaughter; they are slaughtered in this country and exported on the hook. The minimum value system has served this country well and we will continue to stick to it, come what may.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that, every year, this country exports 1.8 million live animals, often in conditions of great cruelty? Can he not begin to stop that cruelty by banning the export of live calves, which are exported from this country at an early age, mainly to Holland, and raised in a process that is banned here?

Mr. Soames: Even the tortured mind of the Opposition must know the difference between a calf and a horse. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that it is possible for animals to be transported in a humane and decent fashion. We seek to export our welfare standards for animals to the rest of Europe. Whenever we have an opportunity to prosecute those who break the rules, we do so with great vigour.

Mr. Paice: My hon. Friend knows that I am privileged to represent the centre of the British bloodstock industry around Newmarket. Despite the assurances that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), does he accept that no measures relating to equines for human consumption should be allowed to impinge on the effective running of the stud farming industry, in which Britain is, and always will be, pre-eminent?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is right. He represents with great distinction the headquarters of the British racing industry—another industry in which Britain leads the world—and is fully aware that the Jockey Club issues licences for the export of horses. Those are perfectly normal licences, issued in the everyday conduct of the business of horses going abroad for sporting purposes, such as polo or racing. We are entirely satisfied with our minimum value system and I am happy to give my hon. Friend the absolute assurance that he seeks.

Mr. Morley: The Minister will be aware that, sadly, New Forest ponies often supply much of the horsemeat trade. However, is he aware that, due to falling prices for horsemeat, there is a worrying new trade in supplying New Forest ponies for laboratory research, particularly to the Glasgow university veterinary school? I understand from the Home Office that some of those ponies arrive there in poor condition due to poor handling and transportation. The Home Office says that it is a matter for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Will the Minister assure the House that action will be taken to ensure that the highest standards are maintained?

Mr. Soames: With the usual admirable co-operation for which the Government are rightly famed, I have not been told of that case. However, if the hon. Gentleman chooses to make those details available to me, I will look at them. The minimum value system—the system which protects those animals that are most vulnerable, such as the Shetland and other small ponies—really does work. It has stood us in good stead and we will stick to it.

As to the other point, the hon. Gentleman knows that it is perfectly possible to transport animals decently. If they are not transported decently, the matter should be looked into with all the vigour that the law can command.

Food Labelling

11. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on food labelling.

Mr. Soames: Current activities on food labelling include the consolidation of the existing regulations, the introduction of a standard format for nutrition labelling and discussions on several issues in the European Union.

Dr. Wright: I am grateful to the Minister. Is he aware that there is widespread public support for a clear and effective food labelling scheme which covers not just what is in the food that people eat but how it is produced—in particular, whether it is produced by gene technology, including human genes, and whether it is a cruelty-free product in terms of animal welfare? Will the Minister introduce a clear scheme of that kind and does he understand that it is his job to introduce not just measures that the food industry will permit but measures that the consumer wants?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is a little wide of the mark. My first job is to protect the interests of the consumer, and we do that with determination and vigour. The hon. Gentleman is a former chairman of a community health council and therefore takes an interest in those matters.

The question of genetically modified organisms is fiendishly complicated and one on which we asked our specialist advisers—the Polkinhorne committee and the Food Advisory Committee—to give us the advice that, in every instance, we have taken. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that clear, concise labelling that gives all the information that people need to make an informed choice is essential and we will ensure that that is just what they get.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that we men have to pay a price for splendid food labelling? Has my hon. Friend shopped at a supermarket recently and had to fight his way past the women who are studying the ingredients of foods and their sell-by dates?

Mr. Soames: No, I have not. I have always found the British public extraordinarily trusting, in that they know

perfectly well that the food on offer in our stores is of a very high character and if it is there to be sold it will be sold because it is good, safe, wholesome, nutritious and, I hope, British food.

Salmon Farming

12. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions she has had with her European Community counterparts in respect of the salmon farming industry.

Mr. Jack: I and my hon. Friend the Scottish Minister with responsibility for agriculture and the environment discussed the problems of the farmed salmon sector with colleagues at the Council of EU Fisheries Ministers in December 1993.

Mr. Macdonald: Now that the Scottish industry has presented to the European Commission the Ernst and Young report, which provides hard evidence of dumping and the unfair subsidies that are given to the Norwegian industry, will the Minister give an undertaking that the Government will make a formal request to the Commission to press for a proper investigation of that evidence before the Scottish industry is absolutely decimated by the dumping?

Mr. Jack: I can understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the difficult situation in which Scottish salmon farmers find themselves, but the evidence of dumping in the report presented to the Commission was based on information from as long ago as 1991.

The hon. Gentleman is quite right: there has been a subsequent report from Ernst and Young, dealing with Norwegian state aid. It is now up to the Commission to follow up that matter. However, I think that it is more relevant to follow up the excellent work done by my hon. Friend the Scottish Minister in his meeting with the Norwegians on 18 February when co-operation between Norway and Scotland was discussed.

Mr. Bill Walker: In those discussions, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that Norway hopes to become a member of the European Union? If it does, it must be made to understand that it cannot be a member of the Union if it is giving unfair subsidies to an industry that is in direct competition with Scottish produce. Should not it be made to understand that now, before it joins?

Mr. Jack: Having spent 130 hours in the past three weeks in Brussels dealing with enlargement negotiations, I am sure that Norway has no doubt about its obligations should it become a member of the European Union. I can assure my hon. Friend that the matters that lie at the heart of his question have been drawn to the attention of Norway and that the Commission is aware of them. It is important to realise that good co-operation between the Norwegian and Scottish industries is the best way out of the current problems.

Mr. William Ross: During his discussions with other member states, did the hon. Gentleman give consideration to the problems created by salmon cages, whereby increased numbers of parasites affect other fish such as sea trout? Will he consider the problems related to the salmon farm off the coast at Larne, which is situated in the open sea?

Mr. Jack: I am aware of the problem to which the hon. Gentleman refers. One of the problems in relation to the extra output of farmed salmon and trout relates to the ability to overcome some of the water-born diseases. If the hon. Gentleman will write to me with further information on the specific point that he mentioned, I will look into it.

Animal Diseases

13. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on progress on the steps taken to prevent the spread of animal diseases from abroad.

Mr. Soames: The Government take animal health very seriously and have announced newly strengthened measures to monitor imports of live animals to ensure that our high animal health status is safeguarded.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is considerable concern in Birmingham about a recent consignment of sheep into our city, some of which were diseased? Will he confirm that he will look into that issue as a matter of great urgency?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to comment on that important matter, which I know has aroused concern in Birmingham and elsewhere. There have been certification and welfare problems with those consignments, which our chief vet has taken up with the chief vets of the countries involved. We have expressed our concern over a number of welfare issues, in particular the absence of journey plans. Safeguarding the welfare of the animals is a high priority and I assure my hon. Friend that we have drawn the matter to the attention of the Polish authorities and, where appropriate, the Belgian authorities. My hon. Friend need have no fear—we will continue to protect with all the vigour at our command the high animal health status of this country.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that what he has said will be of little consolation to my constituent who has had to have the whole of his herd confined because a beast was imported from Poland, apparently through Germany, and no checks were made? The affect on animal health in this country was not only immediate, but is likely to lead to the bankruptcy of the farmer involved. It is not good enough for the Government to say that they will draw the matter to the attention of the Polish authorities. What is the Minister doing to protect British farmers and British goods?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Lady, who has debated such matters with me on many occasions, knows perfectly well that if she gave us details of the individual case we should be happy to look into it. All the farmers in Britain rightly urge on us the absolute necessity to maintain our high animal health status within the complexities of the single market. I assure the hon. Lady and all those farmers that we shall do that by ensuring that all the certification is correct and that all the checks are done where they should be done, and by vigorous policing at this and other ends.

Farm Incomes

14. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the trend in farm incomes over the past year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Over the past two years, farm incomes have shown a significant recovery in real terms. That is welcome news and I hope that it will be recognised as such.

Mr. Ainsworth: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Does she accept that that is indeed welcome news to farmers in my constituency of East Surrey? Does she further accept that low inflation and low interest rates provide the ideal circumstances to allow the farming industry, like every other industry, to succeed?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is correct. The substantial fall in interest rates, which is a direct result of Government policy, has made an important contribution to the increase. As a result, farmers' interest payments have fallen by £240 million in the past year.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister agree that the common agricultural policy costs every family in Britain £28 a week and that the set-aside scheme has gone up by 28 per cent., which has increased farm incomes? Why cannot the farm workers receive a good proportion of that, instead of being given only 1.5 per cent?

Mrs. Shephard: As I think I have told the hon. Gentleman before, I welcome him to the fold of prudent spenders. I am delighted that he supports the Government's attempts to reduce the cost of the common agricultural policy. The hon. Gentleman must also take pleasure from the fact that the recent wage rises for agricultural workers were agreed by both sides of the industry, as I have already told the House.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, rather than using organophosphorous dips, as suggested in the answer to Question 3, a simple injection of Ivomec, which controls scab, lungworm and roundworm, would improve the income of sheep farmers?

Mrs. Shephard: I agree with my hon. Friend that Ivomec makes a suitable alternative to OP dips. She will know of the trouble to which we have gone to make the use of such dips safe for those who are obliged to use them.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Dame Jill Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that qualified majority voting in the European Union should be considered strictly on its merits? Is not it right to argue robustly for a more democratic system and to fight our corner, instead of throwing away Britain's hand as the Opposition parties certainly would?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a good point. We are strongly committed to enlargement of the Community and also to the long-term success of the European Union, but, to be successful, the countries of the Community must be responsive to the individuals and peoples in that Community.

As I told the House on Tuesday, I believe that we are right to argue vigorously for principles that are important both for Britain and for Europe's future, and that is what we are doing. We need a balanced decision that safeguards the rights of minorities. When we entered the Community, representatives of 30 per cent. of its population could be voted down: now the figure is 40 per cent. An automatic and unqualified extension to 27 would perpetuate that trend, and I believe that it should be checked now. In 1996, we need a proper, wholesale reform of the system.

Mr. John Smith: On that subject—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I call the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) to order.

Mr. John Smith: On that subject, can the Prime Minister explain why there is such confusion—as revealed in the press this morning—over the Government's policy on Europe? Is not it because the Prime Minister one day seeks to appease the anti-European faction in his party and on the succeeding day seeks to reassure the pro-European faction? Why is he, as usual, trying to face both ways?

The Prime Minister: If anyone had the faintest idea where the right hon. and learned Gentleman stands on this issue, he might be entitled to ask that—perhaps he will tell us.

It is absurd to suggest that arguing for better decision making in Europe, which is what I seek, is anything other than the right way to approach the negotiations. It is right to stand up for the principles that we think are correct. It is not thought anti-European when the Italians argue their case on milk quotas or when the French hold up the enlargement of the number of seats in the European Parliament for their interests. We are arguing for points of principle that we consider of importance, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister realise that it cannot be responsible to put at risk the enlargement of the European Community by a damaging dispute, which is at most about four votes out of 90? Why does the Prime Minister not realise that he is putting at risk the accession of four countries that are friends of Britain and are net contributors to the budget?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the British Government were foremost in creating the opportunities for those countries to enter the Community and we are strong supporters of their entry. That does not mean that we must concede each and every aspect of the allied negotiations to ensure enlargement. I said on Tuesday, and I repeat now, that there is time to resolve qualified majority voting without any delay to enlargement. In Brussels, my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary described several possible

avenues to a solution. So long as the political will is there, on the part of others as well as of the United Kingdom, the matter can be settled within a matter of days.

Mr. John Smith: Is not the truth of this whole affair that the right hon. Gentleman is more concerned to protect himself and his position from attacks within his own party than to fight for Britain's real and lasting interests in the European Union?

The Prime Minister: That is unworthy of the right hon. and learned Gentleman. If that had been remotely true, I should not have stuck, as I did, to the importance of carrying the Maastricht treaty through the House despite the twists and turns of the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his party. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has demonstrated yet again that the moment something from Europe, whatever it may be, is put to him, he concedes. He has conceded the ending of our national veto, a minimum wage costing £20 billion, a 35-hour week costing £20 billion and every big spending plan to come out of Brussels. Europe cannot afford that, and Britain could not afford the sort of policies that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would accept.

Sir Malcolm Thornton: In view of my right hon. Friend's recent and very welcome statement in favour of sport in schools, may I commend to him a report called "A Charter for Sport in Schools", which was launched this morning and which links sport firmly into the state of the health of the nation? May I also draw to my right hon. Friend's attention the fact that, for the first time, this links together national sporting bodies, teacher associations and the medical profession? Will my right hon. Friend use his good offices to give the report all possible support?

Mr. Skinner: You can hit that one for six.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for his advice.

I strongly agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of sport in schools, not least because not only is it a natural part of growing up for most youngsters but it instils a love of sport in people which they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Q2. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms Corston: On both 10 November 1992 and 4 February 1993, the Prime Minister told the House that claiming public interest immunity was a ministerial obligation which could not be waived. In view of today's statement by the Attorney-General that Ministers have a discretion whether to claim such immunity, will the Prime Minister now retract his statements?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Lady may have been misled by some lunch-time news reports, supplemented by comments by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Let me read to the House what my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General said in his opening statement to the inquiry this morning. I quote:

"Where documents or information fall into a class that has been recognised by the courts as attracting public interest immunity, the relevant Minister is under a duty to make a claim."

Mr. Mans: Given that unemployment is falling faster in this country than in any other European Union nation, is not the main lesson that other member nations can learn from us that deregulation of the market and the reduction of social costs encourage investment and create extra jobs?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that can be seen, not just in the position between the United Kingdom and other European nations but in the position between Europe as a whole and Japan, the United States or the Pacific basin. There is absolutely no doubt that a deregulated economy is likely to create more jobs and that an economy that does not pile too many social costs on employers is likely to have a higher proportion of its work force in proper work.

Q3. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Does the Prime Minister know that in my constituency the production of the corporate jet aircraft is in danger of being transferred, lock, stock and barrel, to an American production line? More than 900 highly skilled and valuable jobs to Wales in my constituency are at risk. What intervention will he make and what guarantee can he give? May I show him a model of the aircraft to remind him that it is the best of its kind in the world? If he believes in British manufacturing, what will he do to help the workers in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of the specific question that he raises this afternoon. I appreciate his efforts to keep those jobs in his constituency. I share that concern and so do the Government. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has pledged the full support of the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry will shortly be visiting the parent company in the United States. In recent years, Wales has made tremendous achievements in attracting jobs. In the past decade, it has secured more than 11,000 inward investment projects guaranteeing 110,000 jobs. It is an excellent haven for inward investment and jobs and we will do all that we can to help retain those.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the ultimate guarantee of Britain's national interest and sovereignty is the national veto, which the Liberal and Labour parties would abandon in their desire to allow Brussels to rule us?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree that the national veto, which is, of course, a separate matter from qualified majority voting, which we have been discussing, is an important matter. It has been conceded by the leader of the Liberal Democratic party and the Leader of the Opposition. He shakes his head, but he still has not read the socialist manifesto that he signed up to without reading and to which he is bound.

Q4. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Michie: On reflection, is the Prime Minister still not prepared to listen to the 1 million people who voted no

to the Government's proposals for Scotland's water? Does he accept that the folk of Strathclyde sent a clear, dignified, civilised and democratic message not worthy of an abusive response and that his own Tory councillors in Scotland now advise that he and the Secretary of State for Scotland should take back the proposals and think again? If the Prime Minister wants his party to survive in Scotland, he should think again.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady will, I think, understand that neither the referendum nor the opinion poll was particularly relevant because neither suggested any alternative structure for the industry. The status quo is obviously not an option, because Strathclyde will not exist as a local authority. There is, therefore, a need for an alternative and it is clearly nonsense to think that each of the new single-tier local authorities could be a separate individual water authority. For that reason, I said that the referendum was an expensive stunt and I still believe it to have been so.

European Court

Q5. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the extent to which European Court decisions are extending the powers of the European Union.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a serious point. It is important that the Court does not extend its powers beyond those established in the treaty. We expect it to use its jurisdiction responsibly and impartially to uphold the rule of law in the Community. We need it to ensure that all member states play by the rules.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I appreciate that answer very much. Is not it worrying that the Commission is regularly using the Court as a means of stretching and extending EC powers, as we have seen recently on social legislation? Will my right hon. Friend find out from the Commission why on earth it announced last night that it will take action against us under the broadcasting directive, with particular reference to our national licensing system for overseas satellite stations? Should not we have less action and more unity of purpose to try to solve problems, instead of these foolish legal actions?

The Prime Minister: I gather that there is a complex interaction in what is happening. The Commission has announced that it is taking us to the European Court of Justice over the implementation of the broadcasting directive. The point at issue is that the Commission wants licensing to be organised in one way, while we think that it is best done in another. We have defended our position robustly since the opening of infraction proceedings and will continue to do so. I do not believe that the Commission is seeking to spread its activities through the actions of the Court in the way that my hon. Friend suggests, and it would certainly need to operate within the treaty rights that it has been given.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam Speaker. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 28 MARCH—Progress on remaining stages of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

TUESDAY 29 MARCH—Motion on the Railways (Rateable Values) (Amendment) order.

Motion from the Committee of Selection on the Membership of the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs.

WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH—Opposition Day (8th allotted day).

There will be a debate described as "Pension transfers and the need for direct regulation of the private pensions sector", on an Opposition motion.

THURSDAY 31 MARCH—Debates on the Adjournment.

It may also be for the convenience of the House to know that the business for the first week back after the Easter Adjournment will be as follows:

TUESDAY 12 APRIL—Progress on remaining stages of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

THURSDAY 14 APRIL—Opposition Day (9th allotted day).

There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, of which the subject is to be announced.

FRIDAY 15 APRIL—Private Members' Bills.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday 30 March to consider European Community document No. 6703/88 relating to equal pay and the supplementary explanatory memorandum relating to the burden of proof in the area of equal pay and equal treatment for women and men.

[Wednesday 30 March:

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community document: 6703/88, Burden of Proof (Equal opportunities). Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 43-xxxiv (1987-88), HC 15-iv (1988-89), HC 15-xxv (1988-89), HC 79-i (1992-93) and HC 48-v (1993-94).]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement, and in particular for giving us some indication of what he has in mind for the week after the recess.

Will the Leader of the House find time for an early statement from the Secretary of State for Transport about the new timetable that he seems to have announced for the privatisation of British Rail? Is the Lord President aware that, at Asea Brown Boveri in Derby, 700 job losses were announced today, not because the company is uncompetitive or because we do not need new rolling stock, but because, as a direct result of the continued shambles of rail privatisation, there are no orders for which to compete? We would like an early statement from the Secretary of State on what is happening in that regard.

Will the Lord President also find time for a debate on the increase in prescription charges? He may recall that this year they amount to yet another tax on the sick, as they have gone up by five or six times the rate of inflation. In those circumstances, is not the least that we can expect that the Secretary of State for Health comes to the House to account for such a huge increase?

Finally, as the Attorney-General is now giving statements to the press about his evidence to the Scott inquiry, will the Lord President press him to reconsider his refusal to make a statement to the House?

Mr. Newton: It seems to me that, at a time when the Attorney-General is, or can only recently have finished, giving evidence today—I understand that he is expected to give further evidence tomorrow to the inquiry—the last of the right hon. Lady's questions is wholly inappropriate.

On the right hon. Lady's first question, I cannot make an immediate promise about statements by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but I am sure that the whole House would wish to express its regret at redundancies, whether they are in Derbyshire or in any other part of the United Kingdom. I will of course bring her comments to my right hon. Friend's attention.

I cannot promise a debate on prescription charges. No doubt there will be opportunities to raise the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I must say that I find it difficult to understand what point the right hon. Lady would make, given that she would effectively be seeking to deny the national health service money that could be spent on patient treatment, new hospitals and the like, at a time when she is constantly calling for more.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend provide time in the near future for the House to discuss the system of law-making in the European Community? Is he aware that there is widespread support for the Government's patriotic and constitutional attitude to voting in the Community, and rising concern about another matter? In 1992, the Community passed 1,526 regulations and 122 directives; in each case, there was no proper examination of that ill-considered and intrusive flood of foreign legislation.

Mr. Newton: I have three comments to make. First, we have well-established arrangements in the House for scrutiny of much of this material—although, given what he has said, I acknowledge that my hon. Friend probably does not think them sufficiently satisfactory. Secondly, the Government's increasingly successful emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity should reduce that flow, and perhaps even reverse it in some respects. Thirdly, my hon. Friend will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about the Community's mechanisms generally in response to a question at Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The notice of our business after Easter is extremely welcome. I am especially pleased that the Leader of the House has found time to allow three days for the Report stage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. He will be aware, however, that crucial issues are involved in that Report stage—some of them subject to a free vote, on a non-party line basis. What steps is he taking to make the order of consideration of clauses available to the House as soon as possible, so that hon. Members can make their dispositions accordingly?

Mr. Newton: Part of that question is really for you, Madam Speaker. There is, however, an established order of

discussion in the ordinary course of events: Government new clauses come first, followed by other new clauses, and so on. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is familiar with that procedure, but my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will be glad to give him any help we can.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. One sometimes feels in this job that there are more brickbats than plaudits.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Would my right hon. Friend be good enough to let us have a debate on the magnifying, exponential curve of regulations that arrive not just from Europe but from this country, and their utter absurdity and impropriety if we believe in a free society?

Mr. Newton: In addition to what I said a moment ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) about European matters, let me draw the attention of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) to the major effort being led by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, under the general heading of deregulation. Given that a Bill on the subject is currently being considered, there will certainly be opportunities for discussion in due course.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May we have a statement at senior level—not just from junior Scottish Office Ministers—about what has happened in Strathclyde? Will the Leader of the House take it from me, with my particular political history, that the matter raises very serious problems for the Union between England and Scotland, exceeding those simply connected with water? If it is seen that no notice is taken of the issue, and it is dismissed from—if I may say so—a rather haughty position, there will be real and lasting trouble in Scotland.

Mr. Newton: Let me make two points. First, the Local Government (Etc.) (Scotland) Bill is still in Committee, and the hon. Gentleman is a member of that Committee; secondly, the hon. Gentleman has had a statement—or, at least, a comment—within the past quarter of an hour from a very senior figure indeed.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that we debate foreign affairs far too rarely in this House? Could not Tuesday's business be changed? Instead of debating what he has announced, could we have a debate on the Balkans?

Mr. Newton: I recognise and respect my hon. Friend's reasons for pressing me again on the matter, but there are a quite of number of people to whom it is important that we should proceed with the establishment of the Select Committee on Northern Ireland.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that right hon. and hon. Members are being told that tomorrow the Government will be laying an amendment to the Service Pensions Order that will affect war pensions and war widows' pensions? Is he further aware that it is the Government's intention, as stated by the Minister responsible for war pensions in another place, to make the order effective on Monday next week—28 March—leaving only two non-parliamentary days, Saturday and Sunday, in between? Would that not be grossly contemptuous of this House?

Mr. Newton: I do not believe that my right hon. Friend would behave in a way that was grossly contemptuous of the House. I understand that he is following established procedures for amending war pension provisions, but I shall bring the right hon. Gentleman's comments to his attention.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. Friend aware that businesses in Kent are under great threat both from the flood of foreign apples and other fruit, which is damaging Kent's fruit industry, and from the licensed trade's difficulties with differential tariffs on drink? Will he allow a discussion of those matters in the House, as they are of great concern to the people of Kent?

Mr. Newton: I take note of my hon. Friend's comments. As a Member of Parliament representing the county across the Thames, I can say that apple growers in Essex might also express some concern. I cannot immediately promise a debate, but there will be an opportunity to comment on agricultural matters at least during the rest of today's proceedings.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House provide time next week for a debate on transport so that we could incorporate a discussion on early-day motion 939, on the takeover of Yorkshire Rider by Badgerline?

[*That this House notes the proposed £38 million buy-out of Yorkshire Rider bus company by Badgerline; further notes that Yorkshire Rider is 49 per cent. owned by the employees who have not been consulted in the deal; is concerned at the paucity of the offer bearing in mind Yorkshire Rider's £86 million turnover and £10 million of assets; recognises that the success of Yorkshire Rider in maintaining a viable network in West Yorkshire is because of sacrifices over a number of years by the workforce including pay cuts; is concerned at reports of profits on the deal for directors of up to £3.8 million each; and calls on the Secretary of State for Transport and the President of the Board of Trade to intervene to protect the interests of the travelling public in West Yorkshire.*]

On the face of it, that takeover has been brought about because the directors received very generous contributions for agreeing to the takeover. It places in jeopardy the public services built up by Yorkshire Rider, which is 49 per cent. owned by the workers who provide the Yorkshire Rider service but who have not been consulted on that takeover. Surely we could debate the involvement of the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and for Transport in the matter, which could seriously jeopardise transport in west Yorkshire.

Mr. Newton: I understand that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade may be required to make a decision on that takeover under his merger control powers, in the light of advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. I think the hon. Gentleman will understand that, under those circumstances, it would not be appropriate at present for me or the President of the Board of Trade to comment.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade cannot come into effect until more than 100 Parliaments ratify the treaty? Although the House will not be one of those 100 or more, for reasons of which my right hon. Friend will be aware,

[Sir Richard Body]

does he not agree that we should none the less have the opportunity to debate some of the implications of the Uruguay round, particularly in view of the reservations and doubts expressed by certain industries in this country?

Mr. Newton: I take note of my hon. Friend's request, although I cannot immediately give an undertaking of a debate at a particular time.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland about his role in the planning of the imminent visit to the United Kingdom by the President of the Republic of Ireland? The Secretary of State describes it as a private visit, but Mrs. Robinson will be carrying out public engagements and, in particular, will be entering my constituency as if she were the President of it and the rest of Northern Ireland. She will be acting in a manner that is discourteous to Her Majesty the Queen, and as if the constitutional claim in the Irish constitution were a reality. That has been connived at by the Secretary of State and organised by persons who draw their income from the British taxpayer. I wonder what will be done about such disloyal conduct.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me readily to accept the sort of language that he has used, even though it might have been in order. I shall simply bring his comments to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Can my right hon. Friend find time during the next two parliamentary weeks to debate early-day motion 910, entitled. "Lady Thatcher's visit to Chile", tabled by 44 left-wing Labour Members of Parliament? It is full of historical falsehoods and vile and malign sentiments towards the Government and people of Chile, which is a good friend and ally.

[*That this House is appalled that in her visit to Chile Lady Thatcher is meeting representatives of the former military junta, including a reported meeting with General Pinochet; recalls that the junta led to the death or disappearance of over 50,000 people and that one million were forced into exile; and further recalls that the Government of Lady Thatcher supplied arms to Chile and used their military support for the Falklands war and that it endorsed the ruinous monetarist economic strategy that destroyed Chile's public services and impoverished millions.*]

When considering that motion, will my right hon. Friend take note of the two amendments that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) tabled to try to set the record straight, not least about the Falklands war and other related matters?

Mr. Newton: As always, I shall take note of the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend and other hon. Members. Lady Thatcher's visit to Chile was a private visit, and we enjoy excellent relations with that country.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at some time next week to make a statement to the House on the fire service? Is he aware that much concern has been expressed by communities and by industry about the limitations imposed on local fire authorities when carrying out their obligations and responsibilities for proper and adequate fire cover?

Mr. Newton: The House may be seeing a fair amount of my right hon. and learned Friend during the next few days, because of the business that I have announced, although I accept that we will not be debating the fire service. However, I shall bring that question to his attention.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Following the point made by hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), can we use the impasse over 23/27 to start a very important debate in Europe about how Europe is governed, in particular; how we can constrain and redirect the powers of the Commission; how we can ensure subsidiarity so that laws that should be made by national Parliaments are made by national Parliaments; how we can ensure a system of legislative certainty so that we know, when we pass laws in this House, that they will not be overwhelmed by European institutions; and how we can deal with the democratic deficit in Europe, for example, this terrible system at the moment—

Madam Speaker: Order. This is not the occasion for a debate on European matters. I am sure that the Leader of the House has got the gist of the question. Am I right?

Mr. Marlow: Can I just finish?

Madam Speaker: No. I am in a position to ask the Leader of the House to answer one question only. He can therefore choose which of those questions he wishes to answer.

Mr. Newton. If I might answer two questions, Madam Speaker, but the first would be yours. Yes, I had got the gist of my hon. Friend's questions. As to his message, I refer him to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Since the Attorney-General had time yesterday to give interviews to the BBC and ITN before giving evidence to the Scott inquiry today, why did the Leader of the House not ensure that any such statements were made in the House, where we could question him? We well understand, however, that the Attorney-General does not want to be made the fall guy by the Cabinet for all the lying to Parliament and the rest that the Scott inquiry is looking into.

Mr. Newton. Since the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends appear to be running in and out of the inquiry giving a running commentary on the proceedings in a way that I find distasteful and deplorable, I am not sure that I want to respond to his direct comments.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Can we have a debate on the interests of manufacturing industry, which is now in recovery but is distinguished from other forms of commercial activity by its capital-intensive nature? If we were to have a debate, could we discuss the one measure that would change the fortunes of small and medium-sized manufacturing businesses—the abolition of capital gains tax?

Mr. Newton. As they say, that is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

As it happens, he will be here to answer questions during the first week back after the Easter recess, and I shall warn him of what is coming.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose—*

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): You're in, sailor.

Mr. Faulds: No thanks to you; you are never off your feet. I am sorry, Madam Speaker.

When will the right hon. Gentleman afford the House the opportunity to debate the massive misjudgments of policy of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Governor of Hong Kong about the future relations between Hong Kong and China in the next two or three years, and the appalling effects these misunderstandings on the part of the Government will have on our relations with that immensely important country, China?

Mr. Newton: I have already said that the Foreign Secretary will be here to answer questions next Wednesday. The hon. Gentleman might care to put that question to him then—but I must make it clear that I do not accept his description of the efforts that the British Government are making to ensure the continuation and advance of democratic institutions in Hong Kong.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Winchester): My right hon. Friend always has the interests of the whole House at heart, so I assume that to keep himself well briefed he has read the current issue of *Tribune*. May I refer him to an excellent article by the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), who suggests an ideal subject for debate on the Opposition day that is not yet full? The article is about economic policy and the Labour party's policy, and the hon. Gentleman simply says, "What is Labour going to do? Nobody knows." May I recommend that as a subject? At least the debate would be short.

Mr. Newton: I am duly grateful to my hon. Friend. I noticed that not a flicker passed across the face of the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), but I hope that at least she has noted the suggestion.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): May I ask the Leader of the House to listen to the growing calls from both sides of the House for increased scrutiny of EC legislation? We do not have adequate scrutiny of matters such as the green paper on social policy, parental leave, part-time workers and now equal pay. Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider his decision to debate all that in Committee rather than on the Floor of the House, where issues of such great importance should properly be debated?

Mr. Newton: Of course I always consider representations, but I would not want to build up too many hopes in the hon. Lady's mind. When she talks about scrutiny of European documents, she might be on a stronger wicket if there was any evidence that the leader of her party read the documents that he signed.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week for an important debate to show that council tax payers are much better off under Conservative than under Labour or Liberal councils? May we debate in particular Castle Point council's latest performance? That Conservative council has cut its council tax by 23 per cent., and at the same time tremendously increased services.

Mr. Newton: I would happily provide time for such a debate were I not somewhat fearful that it might excite demands for debates on all the other highly successful and economical Conservative councils all over the country.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate about the employment practices of multinational corporations such as SmithKline, which take over British companies such as Beecham and sell off part of their products? Without consultation, SmithKline has shut the factory at St. Helens, which has been there for 100 years, and thrown 600 workers on to the dole queues. Surely the House should debate such issues, especially when the company concerned increased its profits by 12 per cent. last year to £1.22 billion.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I could draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) pointed out, an Opposition day is, as it were, vacant at the moment. It has been striking that, ever since unemployment started to fall, the Opposition have shied away from discussing matters relating to employment.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): May I ask my right hon. Friend to arrange an early debate to examine the workings of the Race Relations Act 1976? That would give us an opportunity to understand how, with apparent legality, the London borough of Greenwich can place an advertisement in the press for a black social worker, and to contrast that with the howls of indignation that would come from the Opposition if a Conservative borough council advertised for a white social worker.

Mr. Newton: Probably thanks to the good offices of my hon. Friend, I have the advertisement here. There is something extraordinary about an advertisement that ends by saying that the council is operating an equal opportunities policy, yet is headed with a request for a black social worker. I should have thought that the relevant commission might wish to examine that.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Further to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), may we have a debate on early-day motion 927, which deals with Strathclyde's water referendum in which more than 1.2 million people participated, more than 97 per cent. of whom voted against the Government's proposals to transfer Scotland's water from elected local authorities to non-elected quangos?

[*That this House congratulates Strathclyde Regional Council for holding a referendum on the future of water and sewerage services which was carried out by the Independent Electoral Reform Ballot Services Ltd. and which asked only the simple question 'Do you agree with the Government's proposal for the future of water and sewerage services-Yes or No?'; notes that 1,720,940 ballot papers were issued, 1,230,328 were returned, a rate of participation of 71.5 per cent., of whom an overwhelming 1,194,667 or 97.2 per cent. voted 'No' and only a meagre 33,956 or 2.8 per cent. voted 'Yes'; considers this to have been a fair and democratic ballot; and therefore calls upon the Government to scrap its plans to put appointed quangos in charge of Scotland's water and sewerage services.*]

[Mr. Dennis Canavan]

Will the Government listen for once to the voice of the people and ensure that Scotland's water remains the property of the people, accountable to the people, through the elected representatives of the people?

Mr. Newton: Taking that as a straightforward request for a debate and ignoring the surrounding rhetoric, I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Bill, which deals with such matters, is currently in Committee, and will in due course return to be debated on the Floor of the House; so he will get his debate.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will my right hon. Friend give urgent attention to the need for a debate on sex education in schools? Is he aware of the grave concern felt by parents about the stories that have just emerged about explicit material being foisted on 10 and 11-year-olds? Does he agree that the House should be debating the fact that children's teaching should emphasise morals and family values?

Mr. Newton: I think that many other hon. Members will share the concern recently expressed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. Clearly, he will be giving further consideration to the matter raised by my hon. Friend in light of the findings of the investigation currently being carried out by the local education authority in the area.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As the Home Office seems to be in a condition of shambolic siege over its handling of the hunger strike at Campsfield detention centre—with the refusal to allow me to visit the centre today now being described as "a mistake" and the refusal of Ministers to meet hon. Members to discuss the hunger strikes being denied altogether—will the Leader of the House persuade the Home Secretary to make a full statement about the hunger strikes on Monday, bearing in mind the fact that there is to be a demonstration outside the centre on Saturday, calling for it to be closed?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman has yet had the opportunity to study the very long and full letter sent to him today by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. If he has, I am sure he will accept that the description he gave is not a faithful account of what happened. The hon. Gentleman will know that the problem has been that the situation at Campsfield is rather difficult, with the detainees still refusing food. The officials who would have been involved in the hon. Gentleman's visit are heavily engaged in that situation, and my hon. Friend's judgment was simply that the visit should be postponed until next week.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): May I first congratulate the Leader of the House on arranging debates on housing, which have allowed Conservative Members to draw attention to the number of vacant houses and flats in public ownership, which could be better used by those who live in overcrowded conditions?

Will he, however, arrange for a debate on the Palace of Westminster and the number of its rooms and offices in public ownership which are under-utilised or not used at all? May I draw his attention to five such rooms in Dean's Yard, which have been locked since Christmas and from which hon. Members have been banned by the Serjeant at Arms, who said that any hon. Member using them would be accused of squatting?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has written to me to draw the matter to my attention, and I am making further inquiries.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we please have an early debate on the reported bizarre and wholly unacceptable suggestion that German troops should take part in the VE day parade? Is he aware that ex-service men such as myself and, I think, most of the British people, especially those who would like and are seeking reconciliation, would regard that as the worst possible way of achieving that reconciliation because it would stir up controversy and ill will where none was intended, and cause gross offence?

Mr. Newton: There seems to have been some misunderstanding about these matters in recent days, but I hope that things have now been made clear in a way that the hon. and learned Gentleman has found satisfactory.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate next week, or after the recess, on Post Office practices—particularly on the failure to consult communities such as that in Greenford before closing the facility that allowed people to collect their undelivered mail? Is he aware that, if the facility is closed, people will have to travel two miles to collect their mail, regardless of their age? That is a disgrace. The House should consider the unsatisfactory way in which the Post Office is operating in certain circumstances.

Mr. Newton: It is clear that my hon. Friend has already raised the matter with the Post Office. I am sure that the Post Office will look carefully at what he has said, and I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade sees what he has said as well.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Could the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement about the targets that she intends to put in place for the early treatment of cancer patients throughout the national health service? No targets are being set, and there is no information about why the NHS in its new trust form is not complying with the guidelines of the Council of Oncologists. After the debate last week, will the Leader of the House insist that some answers are given by Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will respond as appropriate to the hon. Lady's representations. The hon. Lady will know, and I certainly know from my experience as the Minister of Health, of the efforts that have been made recently in improving screening for cancer in this country.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May I support the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) for a debate on local council tax? That would give Labour Front-Bench Members the opportunity to explain why it is that, of all the district councils of west Kent, only Labour-controlled Gravesham borough council has not decreased its council tax, why the former Conservative-controlled Gravesham borough council had the lowest council tax last year, and why its council tax has increased to the fifth highest under Labour?

Mr. Newton: I shall try to organise a debate. I do not think that there is a mystery about the matter, as it is a well-established historical experience that that is what happens with Labour councils.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): Is the Lord President aware of early-day motions 940 and 941 on leasehold reform, and the charter launched today by the Association of London Authorities on behalf of the 500,000 leaseholders in London who did not benefit from the recent legislation?

[*That this House calls for the extension of leasehold enfranchisement to leaseholders paying higher ground rent, living over shops or with leases under 21 years; believes changes in legislation are needed to ensure valuations are based on market value of the freehold only and that this should apply to leasehold extensions; further believes that local authorities and housing associations should be able to offer advice and assistance to anyone considering exercising their right to leasehold enfranchisement; considers the Secretary of State should ensure that any code of conduct is based on the principle that the leaseholder should have easy redress against problems they face from freeholders and that that code of conduct is accessible and comprehensible to those without legal or technical knowledge; and demands that the Government provides adequate support to agencies such as the Leasehold Enfranchisement Advisory Service and should make leaseholders aware of their existing rights and simplify the process of enforcing such rights to make them more accessible to more people.*]

Will the Lord President therefore make time next week to debate leasehold reform, and confirm the Government's commitment to move to commonhold, so that those leaseholders may benefit from it?

Mr. Newton: I must fall back on the time-honoured formula that the Government will bring forward legislation to introduce commonhold as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on the subject of Lancashire Enterprise Ltd., the supposedly arm's-length company set up by the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council, and the potential conflict of interest, in as much as I believe that the Labour leader of that council, who is partly responsible for a number of the contracts given to LEL, is a member of the LEL board and a shareholder in the company?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend would not expect me to comment off the cuff from the Dispatch Box on those points; I am sure that they will be examined in the proper quarters.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Does the Leader of the House accept that it is not only my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) who is concerned about the 700 redundancies at the ABB carriage works, but every one of a dwindling band of hon. Members who represent manufacturing constituencies? Because of the delay in franchising, the privatisation blight on railway orders will continue. Unless the Government allow a debate on the need for an emergency investment programme both in British Rail rolling stock and on the London Underground, they will find that, when they are in a position to place orders, there will be no manufacturing industry left, and we will end up importing carriages from abroad.

Mr. Newton: I recognise why the hon. Gentleman has raised that question, but he will recognise that I have already responded to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), and I cannot add to what I said to her.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): In view of the callous and brutal killing of my constituent Jonathan Roberts last year while trying to apprehend a shoplifter at Plymstock Broadway, and in view of the overwhelming outpouring of public concern at the five-year prison sentence which was passed on his killer— [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"]—will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Home Secretary to come to the House next week to make a statement about the Court of Appeal's sentencing guidelines for manslaughter so that a clear message can be sent from the House that five years for that sort of brutal killing is not enough?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's view is undoubtedly widely shared, as was clear from the reaction in the House. My right hon. and learned Friend will be here to discuss criminal justice matters on no fewer than three of the days to which I referred in my business statement.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is the Leader of the House aware that we spent 80 hours, 48 minutes discussing the Coal Industry Bill in the House in all its stages leading up to Third Reading, including Committee and Report? We then spent 27 minutes on Third Reading itself. Should not there be a change in the procedures of the House so that the Third Reading of important items is dealt with separately? Hon. Members would then have time to reflect on the situation, and we could have a full and proper debate. That could apply to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which we are due to consider.

Mr. Newton: It is, of course, possible to make such arrangements, but it has usually been for the convenience of the House—it probably was for most of yesterday—to proceed in a way which allows flexibility, and which allows for time to be devoted to the discussion of specific points and amendments, and also the more general debate on Third Reading. That flexibility is generally valued by hon. Members of all parties.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my right hon. Friend arrange time for a debate next week on transport in London? He will be aware of the considerable anxiety about red routes which are being imposed in London.

While it is of course recognised that parking on red routes is unfortunate, will my right hon. Friend also find time during the same debate to explain to the House how many ladies and gentlemen of the press who are members of the Lobby here have passes and park their cars in the car park below New Palace Yard?

Mr. Newton *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I must remind hon. Members that they have only one bite at the cherry so far as the Leader of the House is concerned.

Mr. Allason: I referred to London transport.

Madam Speaker: Hardly, considering that the matter concerned this House. The hon. Gentleman might think of putting his question to a Committee, rather than to the Leader of the House, because he is thereby taking up the time of the House.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for your helpful steer to my hon. Friend, Madam Speaker. The matter which he has raised is for the Administration Committee. I will bring the first half of my hon. Friend's question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement from the Secretaries of State for Health and for Wales about underfunding in the health service and, in particular, the fact that the 2. 9 per cent. pay award to health workers apparently has not been funded centrally? In my constituency, the local health trust is already warning that that could mean redundancy for 100 health workers. If that were repeated throughout the country, there would be many thousands of redundancies as a result of underfunding.

Mr. Newton: Naturally, I will bring the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, but she might be as resistant to its implications as I am. When I consider that the Government are now spending 65 per cent. more on the NHS in real terms than did the Government that the hon. Gentleman would have supported, I find the suggestion of underfunding a bit stretched.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): During which debate next week will I be able to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the Government's robust defence of Britain's voting rights in the EC? Is not that in sharp contrast to the position of the Labour party, whose leader in the European Parliament says that the blocking minority should be at least 27 votes? Is not it also in contrast to the Leader of the Opposition, who this afternoon proved once again—

Madam Speaker: Order. This is an abuse of business questions.

Mr. Riddick: Why?

Madam Speaker: I will tell the hon. Gentleman why. We are not here to make arguments. Hon. Members are asking the Leader of the House for a certain time next week to debate a matter, and not to put arguments. If the Leader of House allows it—and the hon. Gentleman catches my eye—I will call him next week, provided that there is a debate on those matters.

Mr. Newton: I cannot immediately see an opportunity for such a debate. However, knowing my hon. Friend's ingenuity, he may well find one.

Madam Speaker: He will be very lucky after that.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): May we have a debate on the immediate threat to the jobs of 31,000 civil servants in Wales, and to congratulate the Minister of State, Welsh Office on courageously writing to the President of the Board of Trade, warning him of the danger of the loss of jobs in Wales if the Patent Office, the Account Services Agency and Companies House are privatised? When can we debate those urgent matters?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's congratulations to my right hon. Friend. It seems to me highly unlikely that my right hon. Friend would accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about the likely consequences of privatisation.

Mr. Tony Banks: Did the right hon. Gentleman share my deep concern at the sight of Mrs. Thatcher collapsing in a heap in Chile recently? May we have a debate next week on the way in which old-age pensioners are forced to go abroad from this country to earn a crust?

Mr. Newton: I think that that is one of the hon. Gentleman's better questions, among many good ones. I hope that I may take it as an expression of sympathy and good will to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent statement—indeed, an explanation—from the Secretary of State for the Environment about his setting aside his decision of 2 August 1993 to refuse opencast mining at Birch Coppice in my constituency, which has now plunged thousands of my constituents into the threat of opencast mining? Does he realise that, if the Secretary of State had a job in private industry and displayed such crass incompetence, he would be sacked?

Mr. Newton: That was some more rather overheated language. Leaving that aside, I am not informed about the details, but I will bring the question to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on early-day motion 935?

[*That this House rejects the proposal that Britain should be included in the Central European Time Zone; notes that the research which is being cited in support of this idea includes 20 year old data on road traffic accidents and therefore fails to take account of new circumstances such as the welcome reduction in evening drink driving; further notes that Cm 722 states that fuel savings would be 'very small compared to total energy costs'; would be appalled by a measure which would delay the winter sunrise until after 10 a.m. in much of Scotland and after 9 a.m. in other parts of the United Kingdom; fears that an artificial extension of morning darkness would have a detrimental effect on postal and goods delivery services, the construction industry and agriculture; condemns a proposal which would endanger people who begin work early in the mornings; noting that accidents to postmen and women doubled in the 1968 to 1971 experiment, and which would compel children to travel to school in darkness on icy roads; and calls on the Government to recognise the natural laws of the solar system by keeping the link with Greenwich Mean Time in accordance with the universally recognised World Time Order of 1844.*]

Central European Time would be very damaging for postmen, farm workers and children on their way to school. Can he confirm that the Government have reversed their intention to introduce that change this Session, as reported in *The Scotsman* this morning?

Mr. Newton: I can confirm that there is a difficult balance of argument to weigh, and that the Government are currently continuing to consider future policy towards summer time.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): In view of the Leader of the House's announcement about the debate next week on European matters, will he find time to ensure that we debate the huge difference between the facilities available to people who drive trucks in this country and in Europe? Is he aware that there is a growing number of women truckers, who want the same facilities as in other European countries—especially such things as toilet, washing and shower facilities?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I referred to a debate on European matters next week, although there is one immediately impending that raises some European issues in the agricultural field. I will bring the rest of the question to my right hon. Friend's attention, but of course the Government have been making efforts to improve facilities, especially on motorways.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: In a moment.

Adjournment Debates

4.12pm

Madam Speaker: I need to remind hon. Members that, on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 31 March, up to nine members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning, and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Points of Order

4.13 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware, as is the House, of the interminable interventions of the hon. Member for Newham some-geographical-point-north-somewhere.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Try North-West.

Mr. Faulds: North-West—thank you so much for that information.

Would you not agree, Madam Speaker, that there is a sort of understanding in the House that, when one hon. Member wishes to make reference to another, he gives that other hon. Member notice? It was drawn to my attention a few days ago that, on an earlier occasion, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) made reference to the discomfiture he suffered when I placed my buttocks beside him on this Back Bench.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Another scandal.

Mr. Faulds: Is there nothing sacred to this wanton boy? Is the House not aware that I have the most beautiful statuesque haunches, like carved Greek marble? Should the House not be aware that, when I place myself beside this hon. Gentleman, I get not a whimper of pain but a whinny of pleasure?

Madam Speaker: That was a very amusing comment, but it is hardly a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I apologise to you, Madam Speaker, if my question to the Leader of the House was too long, but, having watched the activities of other hon. Members, I was misled about what we can get away with.

Madam Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's frustration at having to wait for some time before being called. His pent-up feelings may have caused him to continue talking for much too long, but I am sure that he will watch it in future.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will you, Madam Speaker, arrange for an investigation into the use of privilege in this House? While we all greatly prize that power, should we not be reminded that the use of privilege can destroy the careers and ruin the reputations of people outside this building?

May we examine those who have put their names to an amendment to early-day motion 899, which draws attention to the fact that a Member—I warned him that I would draw attention to this matter this afternoon—has alleged that an ex-Member of this House got a job under circumstances that were close to nepotism? In spite of being told personally that that information was incorrect, and being told in a letter from Gwent county council that it does not employ the former Member, that Member has refused to withdraw his allegation. May we take the matter to the Select Committee on Privileges so that the Chamber cannot be used for McCarthyite accusations?

Madam Speaker: To some extent, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that point of order. Although I shall not comment on the individual case, whether in speeches or early-day motions, all hon. Members should

[Madam Speaker]

exercise great care and restraint. We are all enormously privileged in this House; no one outside has our tremendous privileges. But privilege must always be tempered with responsibility, and I hope that all hon. Members will keep that in mind.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: It hardly needs a further point of order, but of course I shall listen to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Winterton: The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) mentioned the Select Committee on Privileges. On a point of information, has that Committee met this Session?

Madam Speaker: No, it has not met. We should be proud of the fact that, in this Parliament, we have not yet had to have a Select Committee on Privileges. I hope that we all conduct ourselves in such a manner that we have no need to establish one under my Speakership.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTION FOR MONDAY 25 APRIL

Members successful in the ballot were:
Sir Michael Neubert
Mr. Michael Stephen
Sir David Steel

Common Agricultural Policy

[Relevant document: European Community Document No. 4251/94, the Court of Auditors Special Report No. 7/93 on fraud in agricultural areas.]

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.17 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4616/94 on agricultural prices for 1994-95 and related measures, and of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food publication 'Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1993'.

The common agricultural policy price proposals this year are relatively modest in their scope. This reflects the impact of CAP reform, which set the price and aid levels for many products for a three-year period starting in 1993. The proposals and the context in which they are set are, nevertheless, of considerable importance to our farmers.

I shall come to the price proposals shortly, but first I will address their context, much of which is described in the publication, "Agriculture in the UK 1993", referred to in the motion.

Since last year's CAP prices debate, many major changes have affected the farming industry. The Agriculture Act 1993 has come into force, paving the way for important changes in the marketing arrangements for milk and potatoes. The CAP reforms introduced in 1992 are settling in and many of the teething problems have been addressed. Farmers have had to cope with difficult new tasks, not least the integrated administration and control system or IACS. Those affected, however—cereals farmers in particular—stand to benefit from a significant £1 billion in direct payments under the arable scheme.

Individual sheep and suckler cow quotas have been introduced for more than 115,000 flocks and herds. The vast majority of producers received their quota allocations automatically, and we are doing everything possible to meet the needs of the minority whose circumstances do not quite fit. As evidence of this, although we have not yet finalised the calculations, I am hopeful that we shall shortly be making a full quota allocation to producers in categories 1 and 2 of the 1993 sheep national reserve, and I am glad to announce that today we opened applications to categories 3 to 7.

Of crucial importance to British farmers is the agreement reached last December on the GATT Uruguay round. That agreement will provide a major boost to the world economy, which can only be good for Britain and British farmers. It also brings specific benefits for our farm industry.

First, it gives greater certainty about the future framework within which the CAP will develop. Secondly, it will help to reduce much of the tension with third countries which the CAP caused, thereby removing, for the time being at least, the threat of challenge to CAP mechanisms. Thirdly, it should lead, in time, to a better allocation of resources and stimulate producers to take a greater interest in improving their competitiveness.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): On the question of the allocation of resources in the CAP, does my right hon. Friend's Department have a copy of the Thompson report which was prepared for the Commission and then suppressed by Jacques Delors because of its

inconvenient implications for French farmers? Does she not think that this document should be made public, because we understand that it demonstrates how we can halve the cost of the CAP over a number of years, improve the efficiency of European farming, and reduce the burden on the British taxpayer?

Mrs. Shephard: I do not have a copy of what is in fact an internal EC study. There is no evidence that it is being suppressed, but according to reports that I have read it contains some very useful ideas, many of which we would support. It examines supply controls and the move towards world market prices, and gives an interesting critique of the CAP.

My hon. Friend asked whether I would press for the report to be made public. It is certainly one of the matters that I shall be raising when I attend the Agriculture Council meeting on Monday and Tuesday. I expect to be told that the report is for internal consumption, but I also expect the ideas that it contains to reach the light of day. They will be of great interest to the Government and, I am sure, to my hon. Friend.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I press the right hon. Lady on this point? She says that she might be told that the report is for internal consumption, but she sits on the Council of Ministers which is discussing these matters. Surely the people who hold the report are European civil servants and the report is the property of the Council of Ministers—although there is a distinction between the Council and the Commission. Could she not insist that the report be made public, and having insisted, could she not make it available in the Library of the House of Commons because many of us would find it very interesting indeed?

Mrs. Shephard: Since I have not seen the report and am not yet aware of its status, I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question directly, but he can be certain that I will raise the matter at the Agriculture Council and with the Commission. Since it was commissioned not by the Council but by the Commission, there might be a slight awkwardness. What is of interest, however, is clearly the information that it contains as well as other reports of the same ilk.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) has raised an important matter. Does the Commission produce many documents to which the Council of Ministers may not necessarily have access? Is that an established position?

Mrs. Shephard: I am happy to answer the question, but I would then like to move on.

The Commission does a great deal of continuing work. If the hon. Gentleman asks the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), who is sitting next to him and who has a great deal of experience of the subject, he will confirm the position. The papers that are commissioned by the Council of Ministers naturally come within its ownership. However, any information that can inform debate within the Agriculture Council is of interest to me, which is why I shall raise the matter next week—on Monday and Tuesday.

I was talking about the implications of GATT. I know that there is some concern among the farming community that further radical policy changes might be needed to meet the requirements of GATT. The National Farmers Union has done detailed work on the subject. I think that its estimates of the impact of GATT err on the gloomy side, particularly in relation to cereals and milk. We are closely in touch with the NFU on the details. Our analysis of the impact of the agreement supports the Commission's conclusion that common agricultural policy reform and the GATT agreement are broadly compatible.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): If the GATT agreement is broadly compatible with CAP reform, why is the Commission proposing a 1 per cent. reduction in milk quota, which would be deeply damaging to milk producers in this country? Will the Minister assure the House that she will resist that proposal at the Council of Ministers next week?

Mrs. Shephard: I shall come in a moment to the way in which I propose to tackle the price proposals next week. I assure my hon. Friend that I shall resist a cut in Britain's milk quota, and I shall explain that later in my remarks.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Shephard: I shall not take any more interventions for the moment if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I am sure that he will be able to contribute later.

The fact that we believe that CAP reform and the GATT agreement are broadly compatible does not mean that there will be no further CAP reform. The need for reform of the Mediterranean and sugar regimes is clear, and the reform of the beef regime is only partly achieved. Those reforms would be required regardless of GATT, but the GATT agreement reinforces them and offers a coherent way forward.

My starting point in considering the price proposals must be my immediate objectives for agriculture, which is a major British industry, occupying almost 80 per cent. of the land area of the United Kingdom. Its importance for the prosperity of the rural economy and the maintenance of an attractive countryside cannot be overstated. It provides the raw materials for our food processing industry. It is the first —and an essential—link in the food chain, extending from the farmer, through the food industry and retailers, to consumers and their families. That chain employs 14 per cent. of the nation's work force and contributes 9 per cent. to the nation's gross domestic product.

The Government recognise the central importance of farming. Our objective is to ensure that British farmers are given every opportunity to compete successfully and to prosper. Provided that the conditions are right, the efficiency and flexibility of British farmers and their ability to respond to changing market developments and technological opportunities will ensure their success. We are taking important steps to ensure that the conditions are right. Central to our approach is my belief that our farmers will best be served by allowing them to compete in a free and open market, unencumbered by over-regulation or distortion and bureaucracy.

A key task is the removal of unnecessary regulation from farmers. That was the prime motive for legislating to change the arrangements for the marketing of milk. I have also announced a timetable for a free market in potatoes to be set up. When parliamentary time permits, I plan to introduce proposals to reform the agricultural holdings

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legislation so that more land will be let, more farms become available and more opportunities created for new entrants to farming.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): My right hon. Friend rightly refers to the steps that she is taking in respect of the potato industry and of milk, but she will also be aware that there is a great deal of concern among farmers in the livestock sector, arising from the fact that the very measures introduced to reform the CAP have brought with them unnecessary bureaucracy. Although many farmers in my constituency welcome the changes announced at the end of the year, can my right hon. Friend tell us whether there are to be further changes to simplify what has become an unnecessarily complex system?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is likely to be referring to the cattle identification documents for beef. We have achieved considerable simplification of those arrangements, as I announced at the annual general meeting of the National Farmers Union. The industry welcomed the simplification, but there is still some way to go. Some regulation is necessary to combat fraud, of course, as I am sure my hon. Friend will understand.

The Government will also need to fight for a level playing field for our farmers. I hope that that will be the only time I use the phrase "level playing field" in this debate, but I fear that it will not be. This sometimes means bringing other European member states up to our level —for example, in animal welfare, an area in which I have been pressing hard for legislation to put others on a par with our own high standards. Elsewhere, I have maintained the pressure on the Commission to ensure that Community legislation is properly enforced in all member states, especially in respect of state aids.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I, too, would like to avoid the phrase "level playing field", but the Minister has referred to regulations in and differing practices between national states in the Community. Should we not first put our own house in order, particularly in respect of regional differences in relation to arable farming? The Minister will be well aware, as I have written to her about this, that Wales is discriminated against by comparison with England. A farmer in a Welsh less-favoured area will receive, at the latest estimate, only £110 per hectare for cereals, while a farmer in England growing cereal in similar conditions will receive £191. How does that square with what I shall describe for the second and last time as a level playing field?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman knows the answer to that as I seem to recall that he asked me the same question at our last oral Question Time. He knows that these matters must be dealt with for the United Kingdom as a whole, with the agreement of territorial Ministers and of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I also told the hon. Gentleman at the time that the arrangements pertaining to Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend give close consideration to the matter of inspection and try to devise a system in which countries do not supervise their own countrymen? It has been proved time and again that other European countries will not condemn their own nationals. If they were examined by nationals from other countries, it would be much easier to get on top of state aids and to reduce the fraud which still disfigures the Community.

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is correct to say that if there are to be higher standards—of animal welfare, or of compliance—the EC needs to pay attention to the policing and enforcement of those standards. At my insistence in a particular instance the Commission has opened proceedings against France in respect of support being given to its pig sector.

An important contribution to British farming's future comes from Government-funded research. My Department will spend about £117 million on agriculture and food research and development in 1994-95. That is a large sum. The benefits to farming of our research and development programmes are also substantial. They have led, for instance, to significant improvements in animal breeding, helping farmers to produce the better quality products that consumers demand.

We are also promoting work on non-food crops and animal welfare. Research into the precision application of farm chemicals has contributed to a better environment as well as improving efficiency. Looking further ahead, there are important benefits to be exploited from advances in plant sciences and molecular genetics. In all these ways and more, our research and development programme is designed to help our farmers and the industries and consumers whom they serve.

The Government also recognise the importance of successful marketing for the future of British agriculture. Here we have given a lead through a range of valuable measures, including refocusing Food From Britain, which we are supporting with more than £15 million over the next three years, the Continental Challenge and the proposed new marketing development scheme. I have asked my hon. Friends the Minister of State and the Parliamentary Secretary to involve themselves personally in specific areas where they have particular expertise.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Before leaving the subject of aid, will my right hon. Friend tell the House and the public exactly what was the purpose of the very substantial and costly area payments that were introduced? According to information that has been provided, they have cost an absolute fortune, but quite a number of people are not terribly sure what they are for.

Mrs. Shephard: I shall be delighted to answer my hon. Friend's question. The new area payments system is part of the reformed common agricultural policy. It is designed to reduce support for the end product—in this case cereals, the reduction being 35 per cent. over three years. Payments are made direct to the producers, as compensation, on condition that they set aside 15 per cent. of their arable land.

It is widely agreed that within the single European market, and with the greatly increased trade in cattle and other livestock, we need to be particularly on our guard against the import of animal disease. That is why I have introduced newly strengthened measures to reinforce our defences. I have also made clear my determination to take whatever additional measures are necessary to safeguard this country's high health status.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the health of our farming industry, the Government are pursuing a sound

economic policy, which has resulted in inflation at consistently low levels not previously achieved for more than 30 years. Interest rates are among the lowest in the European Union, and it is generally agreed that the economy is well on the way to recovery. This provides a sound foundation on which farmers can base their decisions in what is necessarily a long-term business.

Through all these means the Government are supporting British farming. We do so because it is an essential British industry, producing some 73 per cent. of the country's requirements for the food we are able to grow. Our total food and drink exports were worth some £8 billion in 1993—6.6 per cent. of our total exports.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): My right hon. Friend has just given export figures, but our imports are about £13.5 billion, which means that in the food and drinks sector there is a deficit of about £6 billion. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while Food From Britain is doing an excellent job in promoting our exports, additional measures could be taken to encourage import substitution so that we might have more of our own produce, thereby reducing the deficit?

Mrs. Shephard: The efforts of Food From Britain and the group marketing grants are designed to achieve precisely this end. There is some limitation when it comes to achieving a complete wipe-out of the trade gap of £6 billion. This is due to our being unable to grow tangerines in Inverness, and so on. However, we could encourage domestic consumption and more energetic and vigorous export efforts.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): On import substitution, the alleged state aid in relation to pigs and pig meat is a classic example of the way in which United Kingdom producers can satisfy and enhance their section of the United Kingdom market. At present such an outcome is being prevented by alleged dumping, particularly by the French but possibly by others as well, as a consequence of subsidies being given to domestic producers.

Mrs. Shephard: We should certainly take action where we can prove that illegal state aid is being given by other member states. In the case of the illegal aid to the French pig industry, we were greatly aided by the helpful action of the French Government, who issued a press release telling us their intention. It is not always so easy to prove, but where there is proof I will act.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Shephard: I will give way, but I have taken some dozen interventions and after this one I should like to make progress.

Mr. Gill: I am sure that the House accepts that we cannot grow tangerines in Britain, but there are more fundamental problems of which the Minister is aware. In many instances they result from the fact that quotas limit the amount of raw material produced in Britain for our manufacturers. I was thinking particularly of sugar beet and milk. Those who add value to products cannot source raw materials at world prices, but have to pay the enhanced European Union price. That is surely one of the big, fundamental problems that must be addressed if we are to reduce the deficit in our food and drink balance of payments.

Mrs. Shephard: As so often happens, my hon. Friend puts his finger on the problem. The United Kingdom has never supported the use of quotas as a means of supply control because they distort the market, they are a disincentive for new entrants and they work side by side with all the market forces in a most difficult way. However, our argument did not prevail. Quotas were established to limit over-supply of commodities such as milk. Given that they now exist, I certainly do not want our industry disadvantaged by a further quota cut in important commodities such as milk when we are ideally suited to produce milk and certainly want the jobs that can come from additional manufacturing of milk products.

We support British farming because of its vital role in sustaining the most vulnerable and remote areas of our country and conserving the countryside. In that context, because farmers and some hon. Members have expressed concern following the recent cuts in hill livestock compensatory allowances, I should stress that our commitment to support livestock farming in the hills remains. We have no plans to abolish HLCAs, which are a long-standing and integral part of the Government's agricultural policy, but it is worth emphasising that the 67,000 livestock farmers in the hills will receive this year more than £550 million in direct payments. That is a measure of the strength of our commitment. Nevertheless, I am aware of the concern and I shall be undertaking a series of visits to our hill areas in the spring, summer and autumn. At the same time, we are integrating environmental aims more closely in environment policy.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The right hon. Lady has told the House that she intends to visit hill areas. Will that be in all parts of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland?

Mrs. Shephard: I have had an invitation to visit Northern Ireland and I hope that I shall be able to accept it.

Last week, I announced a further six environmentally sensitive areas, two in the south-west, three in the centre of England and one in Essex, taking the total to 22, covering some 10 per cent. of our agricultural land. That will be followed by a series of further new environmental measures that I plan to introduce in the coming months. They will lead to United Kingdom expenditure on agri-environmental schemes rising to £100 million.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Minister has touched on the important issue of agri-environmental payments. Is it now Government policy to shift support from production to environmental payments? If that is a clear shift in Government policy, will she consider simplifying the environmental payments as there are so many schemes with different criteria in different parts of the United Kingdom? A simplified system would be easier to administer and easier for the farmers to understand and would enhance the environment.

Mrs. Shephard: We are introducing an environment component into the support for livestock farming in the hills. That may be what the hon. Gentleman has in mind. I am aware of the problems of livestock farmers in some hill areas, who might have the misfortune to be the subject of several schemes which interlock but do not always quite

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work together and have proper demarcation. That is certainly one of the issues that I shall be examining when I visit our hill areas. We shall shortly also be issuing a consultation paper on how to improve the environmental contribution of the main livestock subsidy schemes.

A further important issue for the farming industry is the future of the Agricultural Wages Board, on which we have consulted widely. As I said earlier, the consultation exercise generated almost 4,000 responses, with the vast majority supporting retention.That consultation exercise has raised a number of important issues which I am considering carefully with my colleagues, and I hope to make a statement before Easter on the way forward. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland plans to make a statement on the future of the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board at the same time.

The past two years have seen farm incomes rise substantially. The information is given in detail in "Agriculture in the UK 1993" and "Farm Incomes in the UK" which have just been published. Total income for farming in the United Kingdom rose in 1993 by 38.6 per cent. in real terms, following an increase of 24.2 per cent. the previous year. That is good news after several years of decline. It has provided an opportunity for farmers to pay off debt and invest in replacement machinery. As I meet groups of farmers, I detect a slightly more buoyant feeling among them, although, as I always say, I would not want anyone to think that farmers have had a good year.

I recognise that not all sectors have fared so well. The pig sector is suffering from a difficult period of low prices, although there have been slight improvements in recent weeks. Parts of the horticultural industry, particularly apple and soft fruit producers, are experiencing difficult times.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): My right hon. Friend is well aware of the difficulties facing the pig industry and the apple growers, and I am sure that she is tackling them as robustly as she can. I must stress that speed is absolutely essential. Unless help comes quickly, or unless the countries which are helping their farmers are prevented from giving that aid, the crucial time will have passed, the damage will have been done and the opportunity will have been missed.

Mrs. Shephard: Clearly, the fruit and vegetable regime is due for reform, which should take place this year. It is sad that the industry is experiencing the current problems after the sterling efforts of English Apples and Pears in promoting a superb product. I have said before that if everybody in Britain ate just one more Cox's apple each week, which is not a hardship, it would go a long way to solving the problem. Nevertheless, reform of that regime is overdue. Those two sectors apart, the industry is in a happier position than for some time.

I have gone into the details of domestic agriculture because that determines my approach to the CAP in general and price fixing in particular.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that dairy farmers, of whom I am not one, are extremely concerned that there should be an early decision about the plans put up by the milk marketing board? Will she always remember that the milk marketing board was set up because the dairy industry had small dairy farmers in remote parts of the country screwed down into a state of helplessness? Does she realise that, even now, those people in the dairy trade will never be satisfied until they have taken the milk industry back to the state of near helplessness that it used to be in and that the sooner she makes a decision to support dairy farmers, on the basis of what the milk marketing board is asking, the better?

Mrs. Shephard: I can reassure my right hon. Friend that the board's proposals on Milk Marque have gone out to consultation and we have asked for replies by 8 April. The vesting day of 1 November—the date proposed by the board, not MAFF—looks achievable, although obviously I cannot prejudge the effects of the consultation. I can reassure my right hon. Friend, however, that I am very aware of the vulnerability of milk producers, particularly those in the most isolated areas of Britain. I know that they want certainty, but equally they do not want a half-baked scheme that will then be prey to criticism from the competition authorities. It is most important that we get it right. I hope that 1 November is achievable.

Our objective is to get a CAP that will encourage a competitive and more market-driven European industry in which our farming industry is bound to succeed. This is the only realistic approach, bearing in mind the budgetary constraints that now exist and the movement towards a more liberal world trading system following the recent GATT agreement. As so often, thinking in the UK is well ahead of that of its partners. The NFU's recent discussion document "Real Choices" shows that it, too, is wisely taking a longer-term perspective. European agriculture will only prosper in the long run on the basis of being competitive in world markets. That is why we pressed so hard for reform of the CAP. The 1992 reforms were a big step forward. They reduced the overall cost of the policy, brought farmers closer to the market and improved the environmental aspects of the CAP. But they were only a first step. We need to take the reform process forward, initially by reforming the unreformed sectors—notably wine, fruit and vegetables, sugar and olive oil.

The beef regime needs further reform because of continuing market imbalance and high costs. The price proposals for beef rightly seek to limit excessive spending on the beef special premium scheme in other member states, but not in the UK. I am, however, disappointed that the prices package contains nothing on further reform for beef or the unreformed sectors, and I shall be pressing the Commission to come forward with early proposals.

We have consistently been concerned at the high cost of the CAP. The introduction of both the budgetary stabilisers and the agricultural guideline resulted from UK pressure, and placed a brake on other member states' spending ambitions. Earlier this week, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor secured agreement on a new budget discipline decision that will reinforce the operation of the guideline in the context of the European Council decisions in Edinburgh. The cost of the CAP to consumers has been brought under control: indeed, the rise in the food price index has been consistently below that in the general retail price index in recent years.

Against that background, as I have already indicated, the price proposals are rather more limited in scope than they have traditionally been. For the most part, they make no adjustment to the price and aid levels set by CAP reform. Support for commodities still awaiting reform is,

in the main, retained at last year's level. It is proposed to cut monthly increments for cereals to reflect lower costs of storage. The monthly storage refund for sugar is to be similarly reduced. The aid to linseed is to be cut. In the milk sector, the Commission has presented two reports to the Council: one on the market situation for dairy products and the other on the implementation of the quota system in Spain, Italy and Greece.

The market situation report concludes that the market for milk and milk products in the Community is currently in better shape than was feared at the time of CAP reform in 1992. But in view of its concerns about the fragility of the situation, the Commission proposes that milk quotas should be cut by 1 per cent. from 1 April. To address the specific problem of continuing structural imbalance in the butter market, it also proposes that the intervention price for butter should be reduced by a further 3 per cent. from 1 July, which would be in addition to the 2 per cent. reduction that has already been agreed.

The price proposals will generate budgetary savings of £26 million in 1994 and £1.3 billion in 1995. The very large saving in 1995 results mainly from the proposal to postpone the payment of olive oil aids so that they fall into the 1996 budget. For 1994, CAP expenditure appears likely to be below the guideline, but it is not clear that the proposed savings are sufficient to ensure that the guideline is respected in 1995. I shall be pressing the Commission for clarification on that, and it will be a key objective to ensure that the outcome of the price fixing respects budget discipline. In any event, I believe that CAP support levels are too high, and I shall be urging the Council—subject to questions of balance between commodities—to adopt reductions.

One of the most controversial sectors in the negotiation will be milk. The Government can support the proposed reduction in the butter intervention price; indeed, we would argue that an even deeper cut is justified. But we are opposed to a reduction in milk quota, for precisely the reasons I explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). We do not have enough quota to meet our needs, and a further reduction in quota would deal a severe blow to the British dairy industry.

We will therefore oppose the proposed quota cut in the strongest possible terms. It is not justified by the Commission's analysis of the market situation and is not necessary to meet the Community's GATT obligation. It would have an adverse impact on the 1995 budget, largely because of the impact on the beef sector and the expensive accompanying compensation package that there would have to be for producers. And it would be indefensible at a time when large allocations of quota have been made to the acceding EFTA countries and when the Commission is proposing to make unjustifiably generous awards of additional quota to Spain, Italy and Greece.

That brings me to the Commission's report on the implementation of the quota system in the southern member states. It is clear from the report that, while all three countries have made progress, none has fully met the conditions on which additional quota was granted provisionally last year. Yet the Commission is proposing that Spain's additional quota should be awarded definitively for 1994-95 and beyond, and that the allocations for Italy and Greece should continue in 1994-95, albeit on a provisional basis and at a reduced level for Italy in view of its failure to meet its target for reducing surplus milk production.

These proposals cause me considerable difficulty. When we agreed last year to the provisional award of additional quota to those countries, we did so on the clear understanding that certain conditions would be met. The Commission's report identifies shortcomings in all three cases. They are perhaps not so serious in the case of Spain as to warrant the withholding of quota, but that quota should be awarded provisionally pending a further review of progress later in the year. The situation in Greece and Italy is more worrying still. There are significant deficiencies in the Greek system for administering quotas, and there are serious doubts as to whether Italy can achieve the target set by the Council for reducing surplus milk production. In the circumstances, the Commission's proposals are too generous and the allocations to both those countries should, at the very least, be reduced. I shall press for that.

I also believe that the Commission has failed to think through its proposals to reduce the aid to linseed. There is a risk, therefore, that it will increase rather than decrease expenditure, because the aid reduction, combined with the new requirement on linseed growers to set aside 15 per cent. of their land, will upset the balance with competing crops and lead to a shift out of linseed. The right approach, which I shall be urging on the Commission, is to cut the aid to flax. That crop is very expensively supported and it will expand significantly if we do not get the balance right.

A further important element of the Government's approach to the CAP is the fight against fraud. Fraud does not just damage the taxpayer's interests; increasingly, as total aid levels are subject to regional ceilings, it damages farmers' interests too. The United Kingdom has led the campaign in Brussels against fraud, and we shall continue to do so.

Yesterday's proposal by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to launch a joint action is just the most recent UK initiative. Our efforts have borne some fruit: the tobacco regime has been changed, largely to deal with its vulnerability to fraud. The Maastricht treaty strengthened the role of the European Court of Auditors, and imposed a requirement on member states to treat fraud against the Community budget no less seriously than fraud against national budgets.

To an extent, CAP reform will help to reduce the scope for fraud in, for instance, export refunds and intervention —aspects that have been subject to much criticism. Direct payments to farmers are easier to control, and the integrated administration and control system, which we strongly supported, will ensure that the rules are the same in all member states.

Mr. Ainger: I must again raise the issue of the way in which Welsh farmers appear to be treated differently from English farmers, especially in regard to delays in payments of sheep and beef premiums. Does the Minister accept that, while we can criticise other nation states in Europe, we really must get to grips with the problems in the United Kingdom before we start criticising other countries?

Mrs. Shephard: I entirely agree. Certainly, where fraud is discovered in this country—we are talking about fraud, rather than implementation of the reformed CAP —it will be firmly and vigorously pursued, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows.

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As for the administration of the arable area payment scheme in Wales, I am sorry to say that that is a matter for the Welsh Office; but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will pursue the issue.

Mr. Ainger *rose—*

Mrs. Shephard: No, I will not give way any more; that is it.

Mr. Ainger: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are debating the implementation of CAP prices in the United Kingdom. I understand it to be Government policy that Wales is part of the United Kingdom. I am asking relevant questions about this point, but I am told by the Minister that they are a matter for someone else. May I have your assistance, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Hon. Members: Bogus.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I can do without sedentary help from hon. Members.

Mr. Ainger: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I have your view on this? I have asked relevant questions, within the terms of the debate, to which I have been unable to obtain answers.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Chair cannot adjudicate on the extent to which Ministers' answers satisfy hon. Members. In other words, that is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mrs. Shephard: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have outlined my objectives for the forthcoming negotiations, and for the longer-term development of the CAP. My policy is rooted in my belief in British farming, which is a major player in the British economy. People tend to criticise farmers, while forgetting the essential fact that they produce food—three quarters of the country's indigenous food requirements. That is a contribution that we literally cannot live without.

British farming is pursuing a more market-oriented approach, with Government help and considerable success. However, the fundamental importance of agriculture to our economy, and the fact that nearly every country in the world provides support for its farmers—some to a far greater extent than us—mean that it does need Government support. Support must fall to more realistic levels, but as long as agriculture needs basic support we shall continue to supply it. Farming is not only the keystone of the rural economy; farmers are the traditional guardians of the environment, and they need support to help them to maintain that role.

Earlier today, the Labour party held a press conference. I think that it was about the CAP; it certainly was not about British agriculture. I am glad to say that Labour was very clear about its support for Government policy—reducing the cost of the CAP, reducing waste in the CAP and reducing fraud in the CAP. Those are all admirable objectives. What the party was not clear about was its support for the British farmer: there was not a word of praise, support or encouragement for him or her. I suppose that that is hardly surprising in a party whose preoccupations are entirely urban.

As for the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), no doubt we can look forward this afternoon to his explanation of how he and his party can square their intention to bring about a federal Europe with a separate agriculture policy for Britain. Perhaps that will not be too difficult for them; they have had a good deal of practice in facing both ways at once. Whatever they come up with, however, will not be good for Britain.

We should dispel the gloom of the faint-hearted. We can and do win in Europe, although we often stand alone. From that originally isolated position, my predecessor overturned the MacSharry proposals, which would have done so much harm to British farmers. What is more, it is the United Kingdom that has placed concern for the environment at the centre of the CAP and changed the emphasis of the CAP, bringing it closer to the market. Those are significant achievements, suggesting that our influence in Europe is greater than some would have us believe.

I shall be fighting to ensure that we continue to influence the CAP, and to ensure equality of treatment for all member states of the European Union. I believe that our farmers are the most efficient in Europe. We support them, but I want them to help themselves as well. This year's general agricultural prosperity gives them a sound foundation on which to build up their own image—to present themselves as the responsible business men that they are.

My intention is clear: to continue to fight for the success of a prosperous and efficient British agriculture. Agriculture is vital to the prosperity of Britain, the economic health of our rural areas and the environmental health of our landscape. It is a cause worth fighting for.

5.6 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to move, at the end of the Question to add:

'commends the contribution which farmers and farm workers make to the economy and supports the maintenance of the agricultural wages boards in their present form in order to prevent an increase in poverty in the countryside; deplores the budget cuts in hill livestock compensatory allowances, in capital grants and in research and development which, coming on top of previous cuts, will inflict long-term damage on the industry; believes that the 1992 changes in the Common Agricultural Policy, including the introduction of set aside, which the then British Agricultural Minister, the Right honourable Member for Suffolk Coastal, described as very much in the United Kingdom's interest do not adequately address the failures of the common agricultural policy including its exorbitant cost to the taxpayer; and is of the view that the Government's claims to be tackling waste, fraud and bureaucracy are hollow as long as the Common Agricultural Policy continues in its present form.'

I welcome the Minister to her first general agriculture debate. As she will probably recall, at one time we used to have a major agriculture debate each year, following the annual price review. After we joined the European Community, the major agriculture debate was held before the crunch decisions were taken on the annual EC prices package. As the Minister herself pointed out, because of the MacSharry reforms the annual price-fixing has become less significant. Therefore, in my view, it is still appropriate to hold the debate before the final decisions are made in the Agriculture Council, because they are important decisions. Nevertheless, the debate is really a general agriculture debate.

The Minister has already criticised the statement that I made this morning on the remarkable ground that I said

nothing in support of Britain's farmers and farm workers. I suggest that the Minister begins by reading the Opposition amendment, whose first words are

"commends the contribution which farmers and farm workers make to the economy".

I note that there is no reference to farmers and farm workers in the Government motion.

When the Minister took on her responsibilities about 10 months ago, we had high hopes. We thought that her appointment would lead to some change—at least some mitigation of the policies pursued by the Conservative party for so many years which have damaged the agriculture industry. As I shall explain, we have been disappointed: the Minister has failed to live up to that early promise. Indeed, I submit that there has been no substantial change in the general thrust of the Government's policy following her accession to her important position.

Let me remind the right hon. Lady that, in what I believe was her first intervention in the final stages of the passage of the Agriculture Bill in 1993, she spoke out about the Government's position on the potato issue. She will already have disappointed not only much of the potato industry but, dare I say it, even some of her own constituents with the outcome. I welcomed the Minister's statement on the potato marketing board during the passage of the legislation as it represented a clear change from the statements made by her predecessor. But the House needs no reminding that, within a few months, on 30 November, she made a definitive statement that

"Having considered all the arguments with great care, we have concluded that the Scheme must come to an end".

Any hopes that there might have been some help for the potato marketing board were dashed within a few months.

I shall not blame the Minister for the disarray in the milk industry because she inherited the 1993 Act when it was too late to amend it. The state of the milk industry is a direct consequence of the irresponsible legislation introduced by her predecessor. If anyone cares to read the statements that we made during the passage of that Act, they will recognise that our line has been vindicated.

I remind the House that we wanted to retain the milk marketing boards, although we wanted to build in greater flexibility. A Labour Government fought with great difficulty to secure amendments to European Community legislation—I remember being in the Council of Ministers at the time—and the continuation of the milk marketing boards. Conservative Governments should have maintained that policy. Rather than confronting industry directly and saying, "Look, as Conservatives, we are against the milk boards because we think they are a form of pragmatic socialism"—a phrase used by a previous Conservative Cabinet Minister—the Minister's predecessor sought to hide behind the Commission's view that the milk marketing board scheme did not encompass skimmed and semi-skimmed milk. Since the legislation was enacted, however, the European Court's adviser, the Advocate General, has come out against the EC Commission and has supported the British industry's view that the scheme encompassed skimmed and semi-skimmed milk.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East) *rose—*

Dr. Strang: I shall not give way as frequently as the right hon. Lady—she is the Minister—but I shall give way on a few occasions and with pleasure to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Paice: The hon. Gentleman fought hard to save or to continue the milk marketing board after our accession to the European Community in the early 1970s. Does he draw any conclusions from the fact that in the past 20 years dairy products from abroad have achieved a massive penetration of the British dairy market—it has suffered as a result—because of the inability of the milk marketing scheme to adapt to the pressures caused by the new marketing systems and the development of new dairy products?

Dr. Strang: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. Part of the answer to his question lies in what the Minister said. She reminded the House that the Government had opposed the introduction of milk quotas, which place a constraint on the expansion of our milk industry. It is a worrying situation. As he may be aware, some multinational companies—I will not name them—are threatening to move their investment elsewhere because they are not satisfied that they will be able to get enough milk to produce the high-value products that he and I want them to produce in this country. We should have built some additional flexibility into the milk marketing boards scheme as it could have helped us to deal with the problem.

The milk marketing boards should have been retained. Once the Government decided that they were to be abolished, however, they should have accepted responsibility for the revised scheme. They should have said that they would consult the industry before deciding on the new arrangements for that hugely important industry. I put it no stronger than this—they might have concluded that the creation of regional, integrated co-operatives was the best way to secure a flexible market and competition with the big dairy companies. If the Government had considered that option—no doubt they would have paid great attention to the submissions of the milk marketing board and the Dairy Trade Federation—they might have reached that conclusion, in which case we would not have the present disgraceful state affairs

The introduction of the new arrangements has been delayed. I am sure that the Minister will correct me if I am misrepresenting the position, but, as I understand it, 1 November is the earliest that the new arrangements can come into force. There is a general belief that it will probably happen then, but I understand that the new revised arrangements are still under consultation. We do not yet know, therefore, whether they will satisfy the Government and come into operation on 1 November.

As the Minister implied this afternoon, the arrangements may be challenged on competition grounds by the United Kingdom or in the longer term—in two years or so—by the Commission. I am happy to give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mrs. Shephard: I am not a gentleman yet, but I may become one. I do not feel like performing like one at the moment.

I did not say that the arrangements would be subject to challenge from the competition authorities. I said that we had to arrange matters so that they would not be subject to early challenge by the competition authorities. I said so in an answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), who wanted to speed up matters. I replied that, while I understood the problem of delay, I

[Mrs. Shephard]

did not want that delay to result in an arrangement that was subject to early challenge by the competition authorities. I think that the hon. Gentleman perhaps misheard.

Dr. Strang: . I am grateful for that clarification. The right hon. Lady will understand that her intervention confirms the substance of my point that the Government are trying to ensure that the new revised arrangements are not subject to a challenge, or an effective challenge, by the Commission in the future.

Mrs. Shephard: Among many other things.

Dr. Strang: We shall accept that clarification as well.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If the Minister had accepted the structure that we proposed in Committee, she would have secured her objective six months ago.

Dr. Strang: . I pay tribute to the valuable work of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who led for the Opposition in the Committee that discussed the matter. I in no way disagree with him, but, whatever the Government do, and whatever the extent to which the Minister squares the position with her authorities, in two years' time, if not earlier, there is a possibility of a challenge from the Commission. Let us not forget that. We faced such a problem when we were in government. Understandably, the Governments of some member states will encourage the Commission to challenge the arrangements in this country.

We were disappointed by the Minister's statement on potatoes following the enactment of the Agriculture Act 1993. We were again disappointed by the outcome of the Minister's deliberations and those of the Government on public expenditure on agriculture. Hon. Members will understand that, in addition to the huge expenditure required under the auspices of the common agricultural policy, a substantial amount of expenditure is in the Government's control.

The Minister started by attacking the farm and conservation grants. The Government like to claim that they support the principle of a more environmentally friendly agriculture, but the Minister cut the grant for investment by farms in waste handling facilities. The Government also cut a range of other environmentally friendly grants, such as the grants for traditional walls—or for "dry stane dyking", as I believe hon. Members usually call it. The grants for the creation of hedgerows were cut too.

The Government have made it clear that when they need cuts in expenditure the environment is one of their first ports of call. So much for all their talk about the agri-environmental package and the need to encourage the building of environmental objectives into British agriculture.

The second target for cuts was, for the second year in a row, the hill livestock compensatory allowances. We listened carefully to what the right hon. Lady said about those. I welcome the fact that she is to visit the hill areas in England, and I am pleased that she will go to Northern Ireland. I hope that the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales will allow her to visit hill farmers in Scotland and Wales as well.

Perhaps the right hon. Lady could learn something if she spent time talking to the hill farmers of this country. She might learn about the contribution that those people make to the natural environment. The beautiful scenery in the hill areas is not natural in that it would not exist if the area were depopulated. It is the hill farmers, their families and the other people who work on the hill farms who make that environment what it is. The hill farming industry provides the basis for the infrastructure and the economic basis for tourism in such areas.

Many of the hill farmers are not well off. Many still earn less than the average industrial wage. As I have said repeatedly, it is all very well for the Minister to talk about increases in incomes. Of course an increase has taken place, but that has to be judged against the very depressed previous level, especially towards the end of the 1980s.

I do not believe that the industry will be encouraged by the Minister's statement that the Government do not intend to abolish the HLCAs. It would have been encouraged by a statement that there would be no further cuts in the allowances while the Government are in office, or even an assurance that there would be no more cuts in the next public expenditure round.

The Labour party strongly supports the principle that farmers in the hill and marginal areas, many of whom run relatively small farms, cannot be expected to compete on the same terms as lowland farmers. That is why we should maintain the differential level of support, to give hill farmers a chance to increase their incomes further so that they can restart the investment that we need in those areas. That is what the HLCAs are all about.

I must mention the cuts in research and development. I listened with interest to what the right hon. Lady said about agricultural science in this country. To listen to her one would not have known that the Government had decimated our scientific base. But when the long-term economic and social history of the Government is written it will probably be found that the greatest damage that they have done to our long-term productive base has been the systematic slashing of publicly funded research and development—and nowhere more so than in British agriculture.

As the House knows, agricultural research and development has been singled out for more swingeing cuts than other areas of scientific endeavour. Scientists are still being made compulsorily redundant from our research stations. Only last week, when I visited Rothamsted, I found out that another seven had been made compulsorily redundant. The people in the research establishments are demoralised. The number of personnel has been slashed by half since the Government came to power, and many of those who are left are on short-term contracts.

I appeal to the Minister to reconsider the Ministry's policy. What sense do short-term contracts make for young scientists who want to do long-term agricultural research? Most agricultural research has to be done over the long term. It sometimes takes about three years for the soil to settle down after what has been applied to it. Almost all the recently recruited scientists in the research establishments are on short-term contracts, and the idea that we should rely on such contracts is undermining morale and making it harder for the establishments to attract and retain the high quality researchers whom we need.

I listened with interest when the right hon. Lady talked about the contribution that our scientists have made to animal breeding. May I remind her of the development of artificial insemination that was carried out at Cambridge, not far from her constituency? That was achieved through what was then the Agricultural Research Council. It was

not encouraged by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at the time, but that is a different story. However, it makes the case for funding agricultural research not only through the Ministry but through the Office of Science and Technology.

I hope that when the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council comes into operation on 1 April the Minister will take the opportunity to call off the nonsense about yet more privatisation. The Government have sold off goodness knows what in research and development, and they are even considering privatising further some of the research establishments. But agricultural research is a long-term business, and much of it has to be done within the framework of the state. Oil companies and fertiliser companies cannot do all the research that we need.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Strang: I shall not give way, because I want to move on now to the two major points that I wish to make, the first of which is about the future of farm workers and their wages boards.

Any hopes that we may have had that the Minister would mitigate the Government's excesses were greatly disappointed when she announced the publication of a consultation document on the future of the agricultural wages boards.

Farm workers earn only 67 per cent. of the average industrial rate. As I told the House at Question Time, even with the increase announced yesterday, they will still earn less than three quarters of the average wage of industrial workers. Taking the average of the Low Pay Unit and the Council of Europe's low pay thresholds, 43 per cent. of full-time male and 68 per cent. of full-time female agricultural workers have earnings below the low pay threshold. They earn £76 less per week than employees in manufacturing. That is a crude figure, but even with the recent increase the gap will still be £70 per week.

When the Government published their consultation document we heard the usual rhetoric. The covering letter with it says:

"On the basis of its view that statutory wage fixing arrangements distort the labour market and destroy jobs, the Government has already taken steps to eliminate statutory wages controls in others sectors where they exist."

The Minister is, of course, knowledgeable on that subject, because as Secretary of State for Employment she presided over the final winding up of the wages councils. And evidence is already coming through that jobs in some of the low wage areas are being advertised at rates below those prescribed previously by the wages councils.

The right hon. Lady has acknowledged that the outcome of the consultation process has been an overwhelming view that the wages boards should be retained, but I fear that as a result the Government will announce a decision to retain the form of the wages boards, but not their substance. It is crucial that the House recognises that it will not be sufficient merely to retain the boards; it will be necessary also to retain the statutory provisions that underpin the wages and conditions of farm workers and their families.

We shall not complain if the announcement is delayed, but if it is made next week that will be all right with us. I hope that when the right hon. Lady makes that announcement she will be able to assure us that the Government will not follow their usual policy on wages councils—as illustrated by their opting out of the social chapter—of trying to compete with our European competitors on the basis of lowering the wages of some of the least well off and, in the case of farm workers, some of the most deserving, and also some of the most skilled, workers in the country.

When the right hon. Lady said that the Secretary of State for Scotland would also be making a statement—I do not know whether the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be doing the same because there is a Northern Ireland wages board—I took it to mean that it would be made on the Floor of the House. I do not know whether the fact that there is to be a separate statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland means that there will be some disparity in the announcements. Whatever the answer, it is an important issue.

The second major aspect that I wish to cover is Europe and the common agricultural policy. By way of introduction, I mention that the right hon. Lady rightly referred to animal welfare. She will be aware of the great concern expressed about the lorry loads of sheep that arrived in Birmingham in a deplorable state. I urge her to redouble her efforts on animal welfare in general and, in particular, to accept that the United Kingdom must take a firm stance and seek the agreement of other member states to reduce the maximum journey time for animals in transit from the current 15 hours to eight hours in the United Kingdom and 24 hours elsewhere in the Community.

In the remaining few minutes, I wish to deal with the Minister's position on the European Community and the common agricultural policy.

Mr. William Ross *rose—*

Dr. Strang: I shall give way to my hon. Friend. I am sorry, I thought that it was an hon. Friend who was trying to intervene, but I give way to the hon. Gentleman with pleasure.

Mr. Ross: Perhaps I am his hon. Friend on this issue. Would not it be better to go further and encourage the slaughter of animals close to the point of production rather than the transporting of live animals?

Dr. Strang: I am not sure whether we can describe ourselves as hon. Friends, but we are in complete agreement on that issue. The Government should be doing precisely what the hon. Gentleman suggests.

The right hon. Lady has today been figuring in the columns of our newspapers in a rather big way. We understand that, on the 23 or 27 European Union blocking vote provision, the right hon. Lady has been arguing that the 27 blocking vote provision—the one which the hardline anti-marketeers, if I may call them that, are determined should not be foisted on the Government—might be quite useful in some spheres, including agriculture.

The Daily Telegraph reports:

"However, on agriculture, the single market and air fare regulation, Britain would be prepared to see the blocking minority increased to 27."

The Daily Telegraph would probably like to regard itself as the Conservative party's best house journal—I do not criticise it for that because it is an excellent newspaper in many respects—but *The Independent* today carries a slightly fuller and more interesting report. It states that the Prime Minister reportedly pointed out at a lunch yesterday that

[Dr. Strang]

"in certain circumstances the higher minority of 27 would be helpful to Britain. For example, while the UK constantly finds itself in a minority on social legislation—often of only one, or in EU terms just 10 votes—it"—

Britain—

"is in a majority in wanting to secure the form of the Common Agriculture Policy, a point emphasised last night by . . . the Minister . . . to the Cabinet."

The *Daily Mail*, the last newspaper from which I shall quote, stated:

"The move has been supported by the Agriculture Minister, who believes that dilution of the veto will undermine the position of the heavily-subsidised 'olive oil' states."

That is very interesting, but I suggest that the right hon. Lady should perhaps not relay that information to Spain, which is still lined up behind, or alongside, Britain on this issue. I am sure that she will be aware that a large amount of olive oil is produced in Spain. I think I am right in saying that last year more than 2,800,000 tonnes of olives were grown in Spain, producing more than 500,000 tonnes of oil.

It is also worth noting that the British Government are apparently again interested in reforming the CAP. Indeed, there was a hint of that today when the Minister said that the 1992 reforms were only the first step. Let us leave aside for the moment her remarks about new sugar and wine regimes because we knew that they were coming, but I presume that she means that the reforms are a first step in relation to what is needed.

The Minister is well aware that her predecessor, the Secretary of State for the Environment, was so enthusiastic about the reforms that he claimed them as his own. He said that they were no longer the MacSharry reforms but the Government's reforms. He strongly supported the reforms at the time and, indeed, exactly a year ago he repeated his statement that the reforms were his. He said:

"That is why we got rid of the MacSharry proposals and replaced them with our own. That is what the CAP reform achieved."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 1228.]

I assume that there is some movement in the Minister's position and that she is gently bringing herself into line with the stance that the Labour party has consistently taken on the issue.

The truth is that the right hon. Lady has not dealt with the reform of the CAP. European taxpayers are now spending more than £30 billion a year on a common agricultural policy that keeps food prices high, builds food mountains and dumps cheap food on world markets. It has been estimated that in 1992 the CAP cost the average family of four about £20 a week in higher taxes and food prices. The Minister of State looks up with interest. I remind him that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred to that figure, although he put the figures in dollars, so the Government are now accepting the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's figure.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: How can the hon. Gentleman square his criticism of the CAP's budget with the European manifesto to which his party signed up and which states that we need further substantial public resources which have been estimated at £77 billion, double the current EC budget?

Dr. Strang: We want a common agricultural policy that will effectively support farmers and farm workers in the rural economy—that is not what we have at present. We also want EC expenditure to be used to encourage industry, research and development, regional policy and social objectives throughout the Community, as well as agriculture. Of course, the Minister—

Mr. Clifton-Brown *rose*—

Dr. Strang: No, I shall not give way again. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that farmers in Europe were paid to leave fallow more than 6 million hectares of set-aside land last year. Meanwhile, the grain mountain last weighed in at more than 19 million tonnes. European taxpayers spend £2.5 million every day on the tobacco regime.

The truth is that the CAP is a disaster. Since 1979, under the Conservatives, the CAP budget has been bloated to one and a half times its size, after allowing for inflation. The Agriculture Commissioner has already had to admit that the CAP will not be kept within its enormous budget for 1994.

I listened with interest to what the right hon. Lady said about fraud. Much of the fraud does not take place in the southern European states, although there is fraud there among the farmers in the sense that they do not properly declare what they are producing or do not produce what they declare. There is massive fraud and British firms are in it as are others, taking advantage of open-ended state intervention, buying and the subsidising of agricultural exports. I am not convinced that the Government have been tackling the problem, not least because they have not taken up all the money allocated by the European Union to chase fraud.

The right hon. Lady has not seen the wood for the trees in respect of her participation in the Council of Agriculture Ministers. Dare I suggest that she has been the voice of the Norfolk grain barons in the Council of Agriculture Ministers. She has secured minor changes to set-aside. I emphasise the fact that we regard set-aside as a scandal. It is an outrage that we are spending hundreds of millions of pounds on objectives that are doing nothing positive for the environment, that we are taking out a disproportionate amount of production in the United Kingdom and, what is more, that we are paying large sums of money, often to wealthy landowners, for no great national benefit.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way as I know that he is just coming to the end of his peroration. All that he has done so far is criticise my right hon. Friend the Minister and say that he does not like set-aside. Will he confirm that that is the sum total of his party's agricultural policy? As he referred to certain cost items in terms of what his party would do, could he also tell us how much a Labour Government would spend in those agricultural areas and on what they would spend it?

Dr. Strang: I shall respond to the Minister of State in the one minute that I feel I can reasonably take.

First, we have made it clear that we want to see the subsidies disconnected from production; we are opposed to the continued use of subsidies to encourage production. The common agricultural policy was originally set up with that objective—it was a laudable objective at the time—in a deal between the French and German Governments. However, that should no longer be the objective. The deal was made before we joined the European Community.

We must break completely with a policy that continues to subsidise production. When we have surpluses, how can the Minister defend open-ended state intervention? For goodness sake, when will the British Government take a stand on these issues? We have a policy that is utterly indefensible and the 1992 MacSharry reforms, of which the right hon. Lady is still not prepared to let go, will not solve the problem; we all know that in our heart of hearts. How can anyone believe that set-aside is a solution to the cereals problems?

The British Government have failed agriculture. We all understand that an increase in farm incomes is the direct result of black Wednesday, the devaluation of sterling and the consequent increase in support prices. The Government are now threatening the incomes of farm workers by suggesting that they might abolish wages boards. They have utterly failed to address the excesses of the common agricultural policy. That is why my hon. Friends and I will vote for our amendment this evening.

5.40 pm

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): It is a great pleasure for me to take part in the debate and to follow so closely after the opening speech from my right hon. Friend the Minister. I welcome her involvement in agriculture. Her speech shows clearly her integrity and her wish for that great industry to do well. She also has a common sense approach to it; she wants to cut through all the complexities and get an industry that can stand on its own feet in the future. I agree that agriculture is one of our central industries and is crucial to the well-being of the countryside.

As my right hon. Friend said, the whole food chain accounts for 9 per cent. of the gross domestic product and employs about 14 per cent. of all people in work. Farming is at the heart of the food chain. However, despite the impressive increase in productivity recently, we still have a deficit of some £6 billion in the trade in food, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) said. Although we cannot grow tangerines, we could grow half of that deficit quite easily, and that is what we must seek to do. That underlines the need to press for efficient production, which we are good at. We must involve all the modern techniques that we can and we must also have better marketing of our products—we all know that farmers can market their products much better—a level playing field and fair competition.

The industry is going through a time of unprecedented change. That has been brought about not only by the surpluses but by the large cost of the common agricultural policy. As a farmer, I welcome the fact that prices are reducing to world levels. That is healthy. None of us is sure what the world level is, but it is good that we should be moving towards it. It means that food is cheaper, contrary to what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) said. As a result of the decline in prices—for example, the decline in the price of wheat by 35 per cent.—over the next few years, food will be cheaper. As a component of price statistics, the declining value of food, combined with the static value of other products, is the reason why our inflation rate is so encouraging.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Can the hon. Gentleman give an assessment of what the possible reduction in the price of food as a result of the cut in cereal prices might be, say, over the next three years?

Mr. Carlisle: Over the past year, there has been a 1 per cent. fall in seasonal food production—the prices came out yesterday. The figure stands for itself; it helps to keep the inflation rate low.

It is healthy for farming that subsidies are no longer disguised in prices. I think that all farmers preferred the old efficiency payment system where the subsidy gained for the farmer was absolutely clear. The common agricultural policy is trying to cope with the surpluses and at the same time lower prices to world levels. In addition, it is trying to provide a transitional period to farmers by making open payments to them. That is much better than hidden subsidies. If we explored, we would probably find that the cost of the CAP is less than the previous cost of the hidden subsidies.

Farmers are proud to be custodians of the countryside. They take great pride when the countryside looks good, is full of vitality and is good for wildlife. The current system provides exciting opportunities for the countryside, and for farmers to meet that role and make much better use of our land. The taxpayer will be prepared to continue subsidies only if he can see benefits to the countryside in a number of ways. Those benefits include proper conservation, the recreation of habitats and better access for the public where suitable. As that matter is so central to the continuation of subsidies to the farmer, I shall concentrate on it.

As we know, there are many special schemes to assist conservation—sometimes, a bewildering number. At the top of the list, we have sites of special scientific interest and environmentally sensitive areas. I welcome the fact that there will be four more ESAs shortly. There are also schemes, such as the countryside stewardship scheme, aimed at restoring habitat and landscape types. There is the interesting Tir Cymen trial in Wales where 28 adjacent farmers on 2,500 acres are getting together whole farm management plans to find a balance between farming and wildlife. There is also the set-aside scheme.

All those schemes are bewildering to those who must work with the land and I ask my right hon. Friend to try to integrate them and make them more understandable. A conflict arises from the schemes. As an example, one need look only at the Breckland ESA between Norfolk and Suffolk, which was set up largely to help the stone-curlew. If a farmer has an environmentally sensitive area under the scheme, he cannot count that against set-aside. However, because set-aside payments are higher than what he would get for the ESA, many farmers are not encouraged to look after their land in the best possible way. Clearly, that is one example of how we can try to sort out some of the conflicts between the schemes, which are admirable in many ways.

The real value of set-aside is not that it is a specialist scheme but that it applies to the wider countryside. It gives farmers who cannot apply for special schemes an opportunity to improve the habitat and create diversity in the wider countryside. Last year—the first year of set-aside—we set aside 15 per cent. of our land. I welcome the possibility this year of having non-rotational set-aside over 18 per cent. of our land. That will give far more options on how best to use our land for set-aside.

However, the announcement came far too late for farmers to plan their operations in a way that would allow them to introduce that this year. Announcements from Brussels and the Council should come early in the year, so that we can make use of them as we plan ahead and purchase our seeds and fertiliser for the coming year.

[Mr. Carlisle]

Using non-rotational set-aside, I am looking forward to creating green veins through the countryside by setting aside 20 m next to my best hedgerows. I am also looking forward to leaving woods along woodland edges, and many farmers will do their best to recreate water meadows along streams, which non-rotational set-aside allows.

We are also learning—thanks to the advice of organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and others—how to manage set-aside better. One of the lessons is that we should avoid early mowing or early cultivation if we are to enable set-aside to provide a proper habitat for all sorts of wildlife.

Progress in the second year of set-aside has been admirable and it enables us to do far better than in the first year, but there is scope for further improvement. I hope that in the second, third and fourth years of set-aside we shall be able to be even more constructive and therefore merit the subsidies more.

I should like to describe some of the changes which would help. I know that my right hon. Friend wanted the planting of woodlands to count against set-aside. At the moment, that cannot happen if one enters the farm woodland premium scheme and I hope that my right hon. Friend presses on that. I can assure her that, if we were allowed that, there would be a tremendous planting of broad-leaved woods, coppices and belts throughout lowland Britain. That would enhance the landscape in 50 or 60 years more than anything else. It is time for the rebirth of Capability Brown.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue to press for the habitats scheme. It is important that it is not only a part of long-term set-aside, but should be allowed to count against set-aside despite the difficulty that she might have in winning that. The argument is simple. In the same way in which people will not plant woods unless that is counted against set-aside, they will be reluctant to go in for long-term set-aside under the habitats scheme unless that counts against set-aside.

We must review and take forward our policy on grazing and hay-making. The time-honoured way to produce good habitats in heathlands and water meadows is to graze lightly in late summer or take a light crop of hay. That has produced richly diversified habitats, but 1 September is too late to provide that.

The case for grazing is shown well by a friend of mine who has a mixed farm in Northumberland. He was keen to go for extensive grazing and yet he cannot put his set-aside land into pastures. If he could put his set-aside land into pastures and yet keep the same number of sheep and cattle, as he would have to do under the quota system, he could graze the totality of his pastures more extensively. At present, he must have a part of his land in set-aside and cram his livestock on to fields that are under grass. That, of course, gives the worst of both worlds, as there is over-grazing in some parts and unmanaged set-aside in others. We should look at the grazing regime if possible.

I would also like to see the green vein idea extended by allowing a 6 m stretch along hedgerows. I could then put those strips around all my fields giving access to the public and a greater variety of habitats for hedgerow plants and wildlife. The problem is that 6 m cannot be seen from a satellite, but 20 m can. I recognise that there are problems, but I hope that my right hon. Friend can do something about that.

I hope also that she will press ahead with the moorland scheme. It is important to reduce stocking densities in less-favoured areas, and I would be grateful if she would let us know when that is to be introduced.

There is also a real role for organic farming which, while it will never be dominant in this country, should be encouraged. Therefore, I welcome the support for new entrants, but I ask my right hon. Friend to remove the skew against existing organic farmers. It takes about two or three years to build up the fertility of a field to go back into cropping if one is an organic farmer.

During that time, the land lies idle but cannot be counted against set-aside. The organic farmer must not only set aside 15 per cent. but nurture those fields where he is putting back fertility. If we take into account that the average yield of wheat on an organic farm is 2 tonnes to the acre, as opposed to 3 tonnes for a normal farm, there is a good argument for trying to be more sympathetic to organic farmers.

The access scheme is admirable, and all or most farmers have land near to villages or communities that could contribute to the quality of life in those communities. I should love to set aside part of my land next to our local village on to which people could take their dogs, and on which they would have greater freedom to roam. I hope that those ideas can be put forward more constructively.

I want to emphasise the need to encourage conservation in the wider countryside and not just the special areas that we have nurtured so far. We should consider what is the best use of the huge sums that sustain the common agricultural policy. Next year, we shall spend some £2.5 billion on the CAP.

There is an argument that we should give greater payments to those farmers who take active measures to increase the diversity and sympathy of their land for wildlife. Some mechanism could well be found for that and, if so, the public will accept that the subsidies are needed during the transition stage and will understand that good constructive work is being done in return.

Just as economic pressures led to surpluses with prices encouraging production during the 1970s and 1980s, so economic incentives should help to bring good conservation practices to the wider countryside. I know the difficulties of negotiating in the EC and this is a good chance for us to make subsidiarity work here. There should be more subsidiarity on how we tackle the reductions in what we produce on the land.

Farming is good for that, because it differs so much in each country and also in each region of the United Kingdom. We know that sheep farming in Sicily is different from sheep farming in the Pennines, but there is also a huge diversity of countryside within the United Kingdom. We must be sensitive in nurturing that diversity and applying slightly different management techniques to each area. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister has a robust attitude to Brussels. She is a good European, but she understands what subsidiarity should deliver, and agriculture is a sector where we could do better.

In conclusion, I think that we all accept that we need healthy farming. We need a strong food industry. Farmers are custodians of the countryside. We need to sustain farming. We need to sustain the industry that relies on it. However, the surpluses that the skills of farmers and

scientists have produced give us a huge opportunity. Set-aside gives us an exciting chance to restore the countryside, to restore habitats and to encourage wildlife.

If I might give a mid-term report on our progress, I think that we have made some progress. I give every praise to my right hon. Friend the Minister and to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for trying hard, but we have to work even harder to develop the remarkable potential that set-aside gives to our land.

6 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I have listened to the Secretary of State and to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) with great admiration for their grasp of detail and their ability to ski round the issues with great skill.

I contrast their expertise and their erudition with what my constituents and, I believe, taxpayers throughout the country perceive as the nub of the issue that we are discussing—how much they pay, and for what, in subsidies and other measures involved with the agriculture industry. By and large, their answer to that question is that they pay too much and they pay it to too few. They perceive that the common agricultural policy forces them to subsidise a vast range of agricultural endeavour in a bewildering variety of ways, determined by incomprehensible formulae.

For example, *The Times* readers among my constituents —I presume that there are a few—will have read, on Monday last, 21 March, the story of Mr. Robert Sherriff, a farmer who has been paid £27,000 a year for growing only grass on more than half of his farm, which he has been doing for five years because he was part of the pilot scheme. It is quite a substantial article, headlined:

"Fields that grow nothing yield lucrative harvest".

One interesting little passage in it is:

"As a master of foxhounds with the Enfield Chase, Mr. Sherriff appreciates more crop-free land for horses and hounds to hunt over. 'All field sports have benefited'"

he says,

"'because one of the few things you are allowed to grow on set-aside land is game cover.'"

Whatever one's views on hunting, the idea that the taxpayer should be inadvertently subsidising that activity is a nonsense that, I am certain, all sides of the argument would deplore.

Occasionally one hears a very sane speech in the Chamber. I think that we have just heard one from the hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle), and there was a great deal with which to agree in what he said. I agreed especially with two important and simple points that he made.

First, the hon. Member for Lincoln said that the taxpayer is only prepared to continue to pay for subsidies when he can understand and see the benefits. He was speaking especially of environmental benefits. I think that that would also apply to the taxpayers' instinctive knowledge of the difficulties faced by less favoured areas such as the hill farmers about whom my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East spoke at some length.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Lincoln said that he would ask the Secretary of State to work towards making the schemes more understandable. I am sure that everyone would agree with that, although I disagreed with his argument about the satellite. I would have thought that, these days, not only could the satellite spot a 6 ft strip, but it could spot the rabbits running along the 6 ft strip.

At one end of the subsidy debate are many of my constituents who are farmers in west Lancashire, which is an exceptionally rich growing area. They tell me, when I meet them, that all they wish to do is to do what they do best—to grow or to raise food. They point out that an area of 15 per cent. set-aside means 15 per cent. less employment, 15 per cent. less farm machinery bought for that activity and 15 per cent. less fertiliser—that might be a good thing—or seed or whatever, and all the multiplier effects of that cut on the general economy. They do not, and cannot, see the sense in it.

In a country that still imports a vast amount of its food —I acknowledge the fact that we cannot grow satsumas, but I would have thought that that was an unfortunate choice of fruit—the taxpayer can be excused for believing that he or she is in a mad world, where he or she is paying for farmers not to farm, and growers not to grow. In a world where half the population is underfed, the equation is even harder for them to bear.

Of course, we are economically sophisticated in this place and we fully understand the economic processes that allow millions of people to starve while we pay food producers not to produce. We know, unlike our electorate, the sheer economic stupidity of trying to square our capacity with other people's need. The people are, after all, silly innocents who think that high production or overproduction should result in lower prices for basic foodstuffs. They imagine that increased efficiency in production for a single European market and for export beyond that market should improve the lot of the farmer and remove his need for so much protection and subsidy. In their innocence, the people of Britain will make great sacrifices so that the economies of countries struggling to find markets and to protect subsistence farming can survive, little appreciating the western need to grind them down through a general agreement on tariffs and trade which seems to me to be neatly arrived at to protect advanced economies.

I am tempted to adapt the famous remark of Bertolt Brecht that the people indeed are so silly in these matters that it is about time Parliament abolished the people and elected another.

I am in danger of getting tragic over this and missing some of the nitty-gritty points that I want to make about the way in which we shuffle money about to preserve producers in this, that and the other sector of European agriculture, and about the way in which we prevent the French or the Spanish getting one over on us, but of course I have to play that game too.

I note from the documents before us that we continue to support tobacco growing with subsidies while we are taxing tobacco consumption heavily on the grounds, I presume, of health protection as well as supporting the Treasury. We support tobacco production to the extent of 3.5 million ecu a day—I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East gave the figure in real money earlier.

I know that the European regime still spends large amounts of money intervening to protect the wine-growing industry. Whereas in north America grape juice, as a fruit juice drink, rivals blackcurrant juice and grapefruit juice on every supermarket shelf, it is very difficult to find it in this country—I am not so sure about other European countries. That is mentioned in the documents and I am grateful for that. It seems to me that that is one major and positive way in which we could move forward.

[Mr. Colin Pickthall]

We read of mountains of fruit destroyed or left to rot in Europe—15 per cent. of peaches and nectarines withdrawn, 1 million tonnes of apples this year, huge mountains of surplus lemons in Spain, Portugal and Italy. You may recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you read the newspaper *The European*, that last year it published a dramatic, huge colour photograph of what appeared to be a sky view of a range of mountains. It was in fact a range of apples being shovelled together by bulldozers to be burnt and destroyed. It was one of the most morally and economically disgusting pictures that one might see.

It would be easy for us to say, "a plague on all this", scrap the system of support and subsidy and ignore all the multifarious problems of the different sectors of the agricultural economy that must be considered while we are waiting for that system to be destroyed. I want to mention one which may seem small, but which is important to my constituency and perhaps others. In my constituency, many growers face ruin in spite of all those eleborate systems of support.

Last night, I received a phone call from a lettuce grower, Mr. Baxter, who has 12,000 dozen lettuces ready for cutting. At this time of year, he would normally cut 500 boxes—6,000 to 8,000 lettuces—a day. He sells through brokers right across the country. At present, he can sell nothing and will probably have to trash his crop because Spanish iceberg lettuces are flooding the market, particularly the Liverpool market in the case of the north west, at £1 a box. They are even being given away before they go off.

As a box costs about 60p and transport, even within the United Kingdom, costs £1.10, Mr. Baxter understandably cannot believe that that is happening to him and his colleagues in the trade without an unofficial subsidy helping the Spanish producers. Because he is losing his crop, he in turn must cancel his orders for the boxes, which are also made in my constituency, in an important factory that employs many people. When he telephoned the factory to say, "I am terribly sorry about this, I am embarrassed but I must cancel my order", the secretary who took the call said that she was not surprised as that had happened time and again recently.

This is the first year in some 20 years that Mr. Baxter has been unable to sell his crop. As the Minister of State represents an agricultural area not far from mine and probably similar in richness, he may have heard similar complaints from growers. Will he undertake to investigate lettuce dumping to see whether allegations of improper subsidy by Spain are true?

Mr. Jack: May I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks straight away? If he can provide me with concrete evidence from Mr. Baxter and other growers in the area, we shall look at that claim and any others raised in this debate about unfair state aids.

Mr. Pickthall: I am grateful to the Minister of State for that intervention and I shall convey what he says to Mr. Baxter immediately.

It is not pleasant to hear, time and again, sectors of the industry complaining bitterly that other Europeans are not obeying the rules and stealing a march on the poor British, who naturally always obey the rules. It is even less pleasant to hear Europhobes in the House converting those complaints into what is sometimes a very saleable xenophobia. Although most of the farmers whom I represent welcome the European Union and the opportunities of the single European market, they have persistent nagging anxieties about the unevenness within the Union in the use and abuse of subsidy.

A consistent complaint in recent years has been about the power of big superstore chains to control prices, constantly driving down farmers' margins while not noticeably lowering prices for consumers. Any attempt by farmers to resist that process is immediately countered by the superstores' ability to switch their buying to elsewhere in Europe. Farmers suspect that that ability, for example on the part of the Dutch in the case of cabbage, to undercut British growers' prices so systematically cannot always be achieved through greater efficiency alone.

Mr. Baxter also tells me that at least one superstore chain, which formerly switched to English lettuce in May, will not do so this year. A simple change in timing of the switch to British produce can cripple the industry. Two years ago, the big stores did the same to tomato growers, immensely damaging them.

In the Select Committee's investigations into sea fisheries and the poultry industry, we have met persistent complaints about the rules being bent or even framed to favour the French or German industries—for example, in the size and make-up of battery hen cages. It is important that such accusations be taken up as swiftly as possible by MAFF and either promptly and clearly disproved or, if proved, rapidly tackled in Europe. It is depressing to hear those accusations, which may sometimes be myths, float around and gather strength and influence.

Yesterday, we were lobbied by the Small Farmers' Association which, in canvassing its interests, asked some of the right questions about the CAP and subsidies. It put forward three basic proposals: first, a ceiling or cap of £50,000 on the total amount of subsidy which a single farming business can receive in a year; secondly, within that, all subsidy payments to be tiered or modulated; and, thirdly, environmental premiums of an extra 10 per cent. for minimum use of pesticides and nitrogen and an extra 30 per cent. for organic farming.

I do not necessarily agree with the figures, which may have been put forward for debate rather than as concrete amounts. I do not even necessarily believe in the precise methods proposed, but I do believe that the association's underlying argument warrants attention. It says that:

"the only JUSTIFICATION for the huge expense of the CAP is that it should keep people on the land. The original purpose of the CAP was to ensure a decent livelihood for farmers, unfortunately no-one foresaw that the price levels necessary to maintain the average farmer were unnecessarily high for the larger ones. Over the years the smallest have dropped out and the ambitious have grown steadily bigger. The point has now been reached where 80 per cent. of subsidies are going to just 20 per cent. of farmers —the largest ones. . .This situation is not sustainable."

The association fears that the impetus of the CAP is to bring about the gobbling up of smaller units by larger ones, with a consequent diminution of farming opportunities and the work force.

I fear that the abolition of minimum terms for tenancies will accelerate the process in the medium and long terms. I urge the Secretary of State to consider carefully before following the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union down that road, which could be catastrophic for many tenant farmers in the future.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): May I offer some comfort to the hon. Gentleman and make it clear that not all farming or country organisations support the Government's proposals on tenancy. The Farmers Union of Wales and the young farmers federation in Wales are strongly opposed to the package proposed by the Government and believe that we still need a minimum term.

Mr. Pickthall: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me of that. I knew that the Farmers Union of Wales and the regional branch of the NFU in the north west were opposed to it. Many farmers in my constituency oppose it and have been here to lobby my hon. Friends and me on the issue.

It must be right gradually to remove subsidy from production and to ease the process by paying farmers as, for want of a better phrase, "environmental managers" responsible for keeping Britain a decent place to inhabit and, hopefully, for reversing the environmental damage created by some aspects of farming. In that respect, the removal of assistance or grant to recreate hedgerows is important in my area and the removal of grant for maintaining dry-stone walls is important to the Lake District, where I spend a great deal of time.

Will the Secretary of State, in her busy schedule, take time to look at the problems being created in areas like mine by the existence of the green belt? I do not complain about its existence—I am delighted that it is there. The Secretary of State may say that, like Wales, it is someone else's job. But when the Government decided to force local authorities to insist on planning permission applications from many small businesses operating in or on the edge of green belt, they caused what is about to become an economic calamity in my area.

Green belt planning regulations have threatened the closure of dozens of small enterprises. Ironically, these small enterprises were set up by members of the farming community who were trying to diversify into other areas, such as horticultural transport—hauliers wanting to garage their wagons, or centre their enterprises on old barns or the backs of houses in the middle of nowhere. That has created huge economic problems in areas where there is no alternative work. In fact, it might lead to a reduction in employment, especially in farming areas.

In closing, I ask the Secretary of State to talk to the Department of the Environment about the problems faced by legitimate agriculture-related industries in and around green belt.

6.20 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): The agricultural chapter of the enlargement agreement with Austria and the Scandinavians has an interesting element of which I believe the House should take notice. It could contain the seeds of something very important for the future, and I urge the Government to build upon it in agricultural negotiations in the years ahead.

Norway, Austria and Finland subsidise their national agriculture to an even greater extent than the common agricultural policy subsidises the agriculture of the Union, and Sweden's agricultural policy has also been relatively highly protected and subsidised. As part of the transitional arrangements for Norwegian, Finnish and Austrian agriculture, it has been agreed that those countries may pay national aids to their farmers for the first four years of their membership of the Union.

There are also special arrangements for areas north of the 62nd parallel which will allow national payments to support farmers, with production ceilings based on historical levels of production. I understand that these arrangements will be reviewed after 10 years, but there is no doubt that the countries with Arctic agriculture will wish them to continue indefinitely.

The Scandinavian and Austrian enlargement thus includes explicit provision for national income aids to farmers linked to controls on output. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) that this is the direction in which we should aim to develop the CAP in general in the years ahead.

The trend is there already, in the arrangements for set-aside with compensation to producers, and in the arrangements which allow national support for environmental measures related to agriculture. But compared with the developments I am advocating, the problem with the set-aside measures is that they are still funded from the Community budget, while the problem with the national environmental measures is that their scope is still far too limited.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend not agree that, if we have national aids, the French will outbid us all the time and so disadvantage our farmers?

Mr. Jackson: I want to develop the argument, and I will return to the perfectly fair point raised by my hon. Friend. Obviously, measures of control will be required in any system of national aids. The fact is that the European Union has not yet faced up to the need to establish a proper regime for national aids to agriculture. I think that is the point that my hon. Friend is making.

This issue has been referred to already in this debate. Brussels seems to be incapable of reacting quickly enough to illegal national aids like those referred to by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), who referred to the pig sector, and the illegal aid which the French have introduced into that area.

It is a highly cyclical industry, as is the case with lettuces, and a permanent advantage can be obtained if an illegal subsidy enables a national group of producers to ride out the bottom of the cycle. It is very important that there be a proper system of control of national aids, both in the existing CAP and under the future arrangements which I am advocating.

The rationale behind the common agricultural policy is the securing of a common market for agricultural products throughout the European Union. That is an important interest for the Union, and it must continue to be safeguarded. But it has long been apparent that the common price support mechanism as the central instrument for a common market in agriculture is becoming increasingly obsolete. The problems of the price support system are notorious. I do not disagree with what has been said by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) or the hon. Member for Lancashire, West in spelling out the problems.

Our food prices to consumers are high by world standards, which helps to undermine general European competitiveness in global markets. We are incurring very

[Mr. Jackson]

high budgetary costs for the storage and disposal of surpluses. The system has created a flow of transfer payments which has long been inequitable in the case of Britain and Germany, and which are becoming increasingly unacceptable to the Germans, if not to us.

Within the Union, these arrangements are coming under increasing budgetary constraints. At the same time, they are also subject to international restrictions through GATT, which I guess will continue to be tightened.

That means that, if the non-commercial or the less commercial sectors of European agriculture are to survive, they will have to do so on the basis of direct subsidies of one kind or another—for which GATT expressly provides. Provided that the output of the sectors is restricted so that they cannot displace genuinely commercial production, there is no reason why such direct payments should not be made from national budgets.

To ensure that the common market in agriculture remains open, there will have to be a closer regulation of such arrangements by the European Union than exists presently. But it would be absolutely in line with the principle of subsidiarity, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln referred, that there should be national aids to non-commercial agriculture reflecting different national priorities and preferences.

Needless to say, such a development would be of great benefit to the United Kingdom, whose vast net contribution to the European budget over many years—amounting to tens of billions of pounds—mainly reflects the imbalance of transfers under the common agricultural policy.

I emphasise that I do not believe that this policy would be disadvantageous to British farmers if—I know that this is a big "if"—it were designed properly. Much of British farming is capable of standing on its own feet commercially, not only in competition with the commercial sectors of continental agriculture but also in competition with commercial producers in other parts of the world.

But Britain also has small farmers, and farmers in areas of natural beauty. In every part of Britain, there is a countryside environment that we wish to protect. A deal which enables us to fund these worthy non-commercial objectives from our national budget, while controlling their output on a European Union basis, is perfectly consistent with the continued progress of British commercial agriculture. I suspect that a change of this kind would not be unwelcome to British farmers. If I have properly understood the discussion paper entitled "Real Choices" recently released by the NFU, that is the conclusion to which the NFU is coming.

But such a change would be greatly feared by many producers on the continent. That is why, in the present dispute about the size of the blocking minority in the Council, it might be worth remembering that, in the European Union, Britain is a revisionist state whose interests will generally be best served if it is easier, rather than more difficult, to outvote recalcitrant minorities.

Some hon. Members may find it surprising, but I believe that, in developing the common agricultural policy in the direction that I am advocating, it may be that we can make common cause with the French. Of course, there is a huge amount of historical baggage of Anglo-French conflict in this area. For some reason that I have never been able to understand properly, small farmers in France have believed that they benefit from European agricultural support arrangements which, as the hon. Member for Lancashire, West said, have really worked to the advantage of France's large commercial producers.

It seems that French small farmers and their political spokesmen have believed that they will get a better deal from a common agricultural policy based on price supports managed from Brussels than from a system of income aids managed from Paris. But I believe that recent developments in the CAP and the GATT are beginning to shift perceptions in la France profonde.

Certainly the Maastricht referendum was largely a vote of no confidence in Brussels by France's rural areas. Meanwhile, the French political leadership is beginning to recognise that it is inevitable that European farm price levels will converge with world markets, and that some system of direct payments is therefore desirable.

The main problem will be to persuade the French leaders that those payments should be funded on a national rather than a Union basis. We may be helped by the fact that, although the Germans want to protect their agriculture —which is not commercial in world terms—they also know that Germany cannot continue to sustain and increase its net liabilities to the Union's budget. We must make it clear, meanwhile, that there can be no question of reducing Britain's budgetary abatement.

The enlargement of the Union to include Austria and Scandinavia will be followed, quite possibly before the end of the decade, by a further enlargement towards the east. Each of the Visegrad four—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia—has substantial and relatively under-developed agricultural sectors. In Poland there is a marked fragmentation into smaller units.

Elsewhere, communism has left a legacy of large-scale, under-capitalised farm structures, such as those which the Union is currently absorbing in the five eastern lander of Germany. It seems inconceivable that the Visegrad countries can be assimilated into a common agricultural policy based on price supports. The only way that we will be able to absorb their important agricultural sectors will be on the basis that I am advocating for the Union as a whole—a low level of Union price support convergent with world prices, combined with the close Union-level regulation of national aids to farmers.

Britain should be encouraging the European Union to face up to the issue of national aids in agriculture. It is often argued that the so-called "repatriation" of the CAP would be inconsistent with a common market in agricultural products. But that is simply not so—there is express provision for national aids in the Community treaty in articles XCII to XCIV, which admit the possibility of national aids in certain circumstances, provided that they should not

"adversely affect trading conditions to an extent contrary to the common interest".

The GATT arrangements also make explicit provision for non-distorting income support measures in agriculture.

The legal framework exists for the policy that I am advocating. Economic common sense has always pointed towards it; and now the balance of social and political forces is pressing us towards it.

6.31 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Debates such as today's are always of special interest, because we achieve some consensus across the Chamber. There have been a number of contributions from both sides with which I have sympathy, particularly those of the hon. Members for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) and for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle). One reason is that, in a sense, we are all in a minority today, because we represent rural districts and are conscious that many other colleagues who represent the majority areas of urban electorate are not sympathetic to our considerations. That may be an important theme running through today's considerations.

I have recently celebrated—if that is the right word—the anniversary of my first appearance in the House 20 years ago—

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): That is no cause for celebration.

Mr. Tyler: I thank the hon. Gentleman.

I first entered the House in 1974. I have been here slightly longer this time than when I previously came, when I entered the House on 1 March 1974 and departed in the autumn. The political landscape has dramatically changed in the countryside in that period.

Some 20 years ago, the Church of England was considered to be the Tory party on its knees, and 20 years ago the National Farmers Union was considered to be the Tory party on its hands and knees. That has all changed, and I suppose that I should pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) for his single-handed efforts in making both those transformations.

Today, large areas of rural Britain are no longer represented by the Conservative party and feel that it has neglected them, as was evident in the county council elections last year. As the House will recall, the Liberal Democrats were left in charge of four county councils, and provided the lead in another 10. The Tories were left with a rump of one. The political landscape reflects an important change of attitude among the people in the countryside. The certainties that have been removed in that period were summed up in the certainty that was previously attached to the common agricultural policy, but has now come tumbling down.

When the then Minister came to the House in July 1992, he told us that he had achieved a great deal in Brussels. He said that he had put the CAP on a secure footing and that it would cut its costs, complexities and surpluses, and yet still leave farmers with improved competitiveness and improved standards of living.

I think that, 18 months later, we have heard evidence in every speech today to show that people recognise that that was not a solution—it was but a transition. It may be necessary to unravel it to a considerable extent if we are to achieve the sort of healthy economic countryside referred to by many hon. Members today. I noticed that the Minister said that the reform package was settling in. The contributions of Conservative Members, let alone those of Opposition Members, show that many of us feel that it is not so much a matter of settling in as of setting out major changes.

It is unsustainable for British agriculture and the British economy as a whole to maintain that deal for any length of time. I am convinced, and have long been convinced—I said so at the time of the then Minister's statement—that a tremendous backlash is developing among the taxpayers of the more urban population to the cost of the ill directed, ill targeted investment in agriculture. That backlash is building up to a such level that the policy simply cannot be sustained.

The elements that are most visible to the public through the media are the set-aside payments. I think that it was the hon. Member for Lincoln who said in a previous debate that the £840 million—the estimate at the time—being invested in set-aside did not bear cheerful comparison with the cuts being made in the modest budgets of the sectors that he mentioned today. If hon. Members were to tell their constituents that they were asking for a 28 per cent. pay rise, but intended to set aside 15 per cent. of their correspondence and leave it unanswered, that would not be considered productive or good value for money.

Today's debate is traditionally the opportunity to review the past year. It is sad that we have not had a major agricultural debate for so long. There is clearly a perception that the way in which the Government are implementing the CAP—quite apart from the CAP itself—is making the more isolated farming and rural communities comparatively less well off over a period. That is nowhere more apparent than in hill farming regions.

I make no bones about the fact that I am not a farmer, but I live in a hill farming area, and the majority of my right hon. and hon. Friends come from hill farming areas. I mentioned that fact in my speech to a lunch of the Guild of Agricultural Journalists today, and said that those areas were less-favoured areas. The audience thought that I was making a political comment—I leave it to the House to judge whether that was so. What I said was factually correct.

The way in which the Government approached the decision has been taken by the industry—not just this sector—as indicative of a false sense of priorities. The original justification for hill livestock compensatory allowances was not to put money in the pockets of specific farmers, but to enable farming to continue in landscapes that would otherwise be uneconomic. The HLCAs were deliberately introduced to bridge a gap, and were precisely the sort of target investment to which the hon. Member for Wantage referred. However, they fell victim to the Chancellor's axe, whereas other ill targeted general expenditure in other sectors did not.

Without question, the less-favoured areas account for some of the most important landscapes and ecological and environmental habitats in the United Kingdom. The public, even the urban majority, want to invest in just such a scheme. Not only do the vulnerable rural communities in our country deserve that support, but the nation wants to give it. That is why many of us feel that the policy adopted showed that the Government have their priorities wrong. Any dispassionate study would soon show that the true position in the hills is not one of massive increases in income over recent years. Of course it is true that LFA farmers' incomes have risen, but they started from a very low point and are only now returning to the levels of 1988-89. In 1992-93, nearly a third of the full-time LFA hill farmers with livestock in England had a net income of less than £5,000 a year.

In Scotland, the situation is just as bad. I was given the figures by the National Farmers Union of Scotland, representatives of which met some of my right hon. and

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hon. Friends today. If anything, the situation is more critical in Scotland, where hill farming accounts for about 90 per cent. of the agricultural land. Even after increases this year, however, Scottish hill farm incomes still averaged only £13,000. That is insufficient for reinvestment in farm businesses and for maintaining the economy of the LFAs. What is more, the extra money that is coming in is having to be used both to service debt and to replace aging machinery.

We know that there have been some improvements in the past 12 months, principally because of the one-off change in the green currency, not because of the HLCAs or because of any targeted investment in hill areas. Black Wednesday was directly responsible for the change; unless the Minister can announce today that there will be a regular black Wednesday each year—that would cause some consternation if the City were still operating at this time of night—we cannot expect it to happen again.

Other factors have also affected the hill farming economy in the United Kingdom. The fall in the value of sterling meant that sales of light-weight lambs to France and Spain rose and inflated stock prices well above the norm. But since last August, an increase in sterling has meant that lamb prices have dropped again.

Then there was the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in some parts of eastern Europe; that meant that the Italians started purchasing bull beef from other European Union states, especially this country. That too had a considerable effect, mitigating some of the difficulties confronting our farmers. We cannot expect that to happen all the time, either—it would be very depressing if it did.

Given those special factors, we cannot expect hill farmers to be able to benefit again as they have done in recent months.

My principal concern is not just this decision itself but the fact that it seems to be indicative of how the Government approach the whole future direction of the CAP: not the more effective direction of investment, to which the hon. Member for Lincoln and other hon. Members have referred. This seems to be a Treasury-driven policy to get its hands on what it is easy to get them on—farm conservation grants, HLCAs, waste water grants and the Agricultural Development Advisory Service. All these cuts have the Treasury's fingerprints on them.

I hope that Conservative Members will be stroppy in this debate. If they are, they will be helping the Minister, who wants more muscle in her discussions with the Treasury. We, the minority who represent rural areas, must ensure that, when the Minister indulges in her arm wrestling with the Chancellor, we are behind her telling her to be stroppy.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I do not propose to be stroppy, either with the hon. Gentleman or with my right hon. Friend. He will recall that I intervened in his speech a year ago on this same point. He, I and, I believe, my right hon. Friend will all agree that farming in the upland areas needs continued support, so that it can be done in an environmentally sensitive way. The hon. Gentleman is paying due regard to the complexities of this matter, but I ask him to bear in mind the many, and increasingly environment-related, subsidies that are available to farmers.

Mr. Tyler: I understand that point, and I welcome the hon. Gentleman's general support. A study of the budgets available for what I call selective help of that sort shows that they are minute—they are chickenfeed—compared with the huge sums put into area aid and the set-aside scheme. The danger is that, if there is a backlash, it will be against all forms of support, and that would be extremely dangerous to the whole industry.

Hon. Members have already referred, rightly, to the compatibility of the CAP with GATT. I listened with great interest to Sir Leon Brittan when he spoke via a television link to the NFU AGM recently. In his first few sentences, he said that he was convinced that the general outline of the CAP package was entirely compatible with GATT, but the whole of the rest of his talk was devoted to identifying areas in which the CAP needed further reform if it was to be compatible with GATT and to achieve the sort of objectives that Sir Leon felt European taxpayers wanted.

This is of critical importance to us all. If the main driving force in Brussels, where I have been for the past 48 hours, is to continue improving the CAP far beyond the state reached in 1992, it will be disastrous if we talk about the status quo settling in. The last thing we want is that it should settle in. We must improve on it.

I do not know the contents of the report prepared for the Commission, to which the Minister referred earlier. She apparently does not know the contents either, although it is extraordinary that such a document could be produced at such a high level for the Commission with no input from the British Ministry of Agriculture—or, indeed, from Britain. Someone, somewhere, must know what is in the document. I hope that the Minister will be able to produce it soon.

In any event, if the document says that the answer is repatriation, I must point out that there are major dangers in that. Fulll repatriation of farming policy may be politically seductive in the short term, but in the longer term it could be damaging and dangerous to British agriculture, to the environment of our countryside and to the economy.

Under repatriation, who would be responsible for ensuring that member states did not move even further the boundaries that they have been asked to adopt for their subsidiarity? Who would be responsible for future GATT negotiations? It was difficult enough to stand up to the Americans in the last GATT talks, but if there is no central European Union strategy in future, what will happen? Would we have to have a whole army of Euro-snoopers to make sure that the increased subsidiarity did not wholly undermine the rules of the single market?

British farmers in particular might find themselves in extreme difficulties. Our holdings are generally larger—hence, proportionate to the electorate, the farming community is smaller in our country than it is in most member states. As our farmers know to their cost, that could mean their having a much reduced political impact. Secondly—this would have a lot to do with public opinion—subsidiarity could easily push up the costs of regulation and control. This has happened in the past. There might be a corresponding reduction in the costs of other member states which take these matters much less seriously, however.

I suspect that all hon. Members receive a great deal of correspondence about animal welfare issues. I suggested to the Minister a few weeks ago that the pressure from the

—chiefly urban—public to increase standards in this area would increase costs, thus making the competitive position of British producers even more difficult.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the consequences of repatriating our agricultural policy would be the ensuing damaging effect on animal welfare? We would then have little influence over our EC partners, whose standards are much lower than our own.

Mr. Tyler: That is a fair point, and a useful warning, of which I hope the Minister will take note.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Mr. Tyler: I want to make progress, and I am conscious that other Members want to speak.

Other countries of the European Union are investing to a very considerable extent on the border of support systems: in marketing, in forms of assistance of all sorts —this has been particularly true of horticulture, to which several references have been made—in pigs and, indeed, in potatoes. Those forms of support at the national level and at the regional level in most other member states reflect yet again the importance that these states already attach to the promotion of agriculture.

They do so in a way that I doubt would be found easy by our Minister, who has to deal with a more urban country. There is a grave danger that, if subsidiarity is pushed to its logical position—if we totally repatriate whole elements of the policy—the uneven playing field will be made a great deal more uneven, that it will be tilted even further to the advantage of our competitors.

Where do we go from here? This direction is something that I and my party have made very clear. I was interested in the Minister's comments. Clearly she has not been briefed by Conservative central office. Our party documents contain great detail on these matters. We have so much policy that it seems that central office has a whole team permanently poring through it. I am delighted with this interest—and I say so as someone who was a Member of the House at a time when such views were not taken nearly so seriously.

I have very little doubt that, when the Agriculture Ministers get round the table again, as they will have to do within the next two or three years, to review the success of the common agricultural policy package and its compatibility with the general agreement on tariffs and trade, the points that have been raised in this debate will have to be uppermost in their minds. That being the case, those of us who come from rural areas must try to indicate the criteria by which we shall assess the proposals.

It is clear that there will have to be a strong element of decoupling, as most hon. Members will recognise. But the decoupling must be used to promote a sustainable, richly diverse, viable rural economy. Indeed, we must recognise that diversities within the United Kingdom, and not just in relation to other member states, will have to be sustained. I hope that, as a result of the National Farmers Union initiatives of this week and, indeed, of our having a different Minister, it will be possible to achieve more consensus with regard to these objectives.

Many people are now talking about a common rural policy. This is something that my party and I were promoting many moons ago. Now, it is a truism that such a policy is desirable. Clearly the objective must be the protection and enhancement of rural communities, as well as food production. Agriculture will, of course, play a core, but not an overwhelming, role. In these circumstances, we must ensure that the public can see clearly what they are getting for their money, in terms of environmental, social and employment benefits, as well as of production.

In debates such as this one, contributions from farmers are always welcome. We have heard from that quarter today that help might take the form of the provision of access or the replacement and renovation of landscape detail—stone walls, hedgerows, Cornish banks, and so on —or full extensification. I share the view of the hon. Member for Lincoln about help for those who are already promoting organic husbandry. Such people may even be propagating rare breeds. All such projects are entitled to support.

But the essential point is that the farmer must be given an element of choice. It is not right that he should be forced into a particular type of husbandry. There should be a menu approach, as in the pilot Baden Wurtemberg scheme in Germany—the MEKA system. That system has the huge advantage that it provides a degree of continuity at the regional as well as the national level, and relative security for the industry.

I should like to refer briefly to the unsung issue of the afternoon—milk marketing. It is very significant that not until the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), a former Minister of Agriculture, raised this issue did the Minister spend any time on it. It is quite extraordinary that it has taken so long to digest the milk marketing boards' proposals—to the extent, it seems, that the proposals for the residuary body were not prepared and ready at the time of the original submission.

Setting that matter to one side for a moment, I have to say that it is quite extraordinary that we should now be told that those producers who have signed up with Milk Marque will have a cooling-off period—they will have time to break the contract—whereas those who have signed up with anybody else will find that they are locked in, or, according to the Minister, that legislation may be brought forward to allow them to break contract. Either way, it is an extraordinary situation. This seems to my hon. Friends and me to be yet another attempt to hamper what could be the last real chance of achieving a power block of producers in the market, with a real producer co-operative.

I should like to give voice to a new concern—a matter that has been drawn to my attention within the last 24 hours. Representatives of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service seem to be entering the fray, taking up a position between the competitors for the new contracts. ADAS is an executive agency, but the buck must stop with someone, and presumably that person is the Minister, who is responsible to the House of Commons.

I have been told that ADAS officials have appeared on the same platform as people setting up milk selling groups. It seems to me that this constitutes a withdrawal from the position that ADAS has always adopted—the provision of unbiased advice on a non-commercial basis. I hope very much that, at the end of the debate, the Minister will be able to assure us that there is no new question mark over the impartiality of ADAS officials. This matter is causing great concern in milk producing areas all around the country, and especially in my area of Devon and Cornwall.

It is clear that there will be drastic changes in the CAP. It was clear during my discussions in Brussels, and it is clear every time the Minister comes to the House, as it is

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clear in the contributions of hon. Members on all sides. But reorientation of this huge investment in rural areas, to ensure that in future it is selectively targeted to support the most vulnerable sectors, communities and landscapes, will require the attention of all of us. I hope that, to this end, the Minister will build on consensus, and not simply occupy the position of a puppet on a Treasury string.

6.56 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): I apologise to the House for having missed the opening speeches, especially that of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I should like to take this opportunity of recording my admiration for the very robust way in which my right hon. Friend is leading British agricultural policy, and I thank the Minister of State for the robust way in which he has been helping the fruit industry.

I am very glad that I did not miss the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), although he—sensible chap—is missing mine as he is temporarily out of the Chamber. His eloquent presentation of the argument for the repatriation of much of agricultural policy was music to my ears. For many years such a speech in this House would have been regarded as sheer heresy when uttered by someone like my hon. Friend who is supposed to be a passionate believer in the European cause. How refreshing it is that, these days, we can have a sensible, open debate without people being accused of being anti-marketeers or pro-marketeers.

My hon. Friend is clearly right to say that the price support mechanism and the intervention system are obsolete and need to be replaced. He is clearly right to suggest that as the Community enlarges and other nations such as Norway and the Visegrad Four are brought in, no one in their right mind would refuse regions in those countries with very special needs the right to sustain agriculture in those regions.

If that argument is to be upheld, however, we shall have to move to different form of support. I think that my hon. Friend suggested that we should have to move to a proper regime for national aids. This answers the point made by the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler). Already we are seeing real threats to many sectors of agriculture —particularly horticulture, with which I shall deal in a moment. It is clear that the system is not working. In a European Union of perhaps 20 nations we shall have to have mechanisms to prevent distortions of intra-Community trade.

The Minister of State, admirably, leapt to his feet to say that of course he would vigorously challenge any evidence of unfair state subsidies. But very often the distortions of the market are not caused by overt state subsidies or even by covert state subsidies. Very often, dumping can be carried out by commercial organisations trading simply for cash flow. If they do it at a particularly vulnerable moment, when another country is marketing its product, it can be extremely damaging.

The European Community, or Brussels itself, will have to move away from being a great machine for recirculating money; it will have to become a more sensitive organisation, trying to monitor trade distortions within the Community and operating an orderly marketing system. It will not be only the British who will suffer if that does not happen; the Spanish and other nations whom we sometime accuse of damaging the markets will also be affected.

The points made so far in the debate about the philosophy of the CAP underline the importance of the report that has been much mentioned today—the famous report that appears to have been suppressed by Brussels bureaucrats. The publication of such a report would contribute to a healthy debate about the future of agriculture. We need that report, and presumably we have paid for it, or part of it, so we are entitled to have it.

I have some of the press releases of the time. The defence in Brussels of its non-publication was:

"There could be as many as 100 studies going on at the moment . . . These reports are ten a penny."

I bet that they are not 10 a penny; this one took two years, was produced by 10 leading agricultural economists and must have cost a great deal of money. It seems to be an important report.

I will also quote some of the comments in the newspapers:

"The two-year study concluded that the CAP could no longer be justified, and said farm prices should be left to fall to world market levels, with subsidies, import barriers and production quotas all abolished. The result would be cheaper food in the shops, with every British family saving at least £530 as artificially high prices tumbled.".

Another article stated:

"According to Professor Kenneth Thomson . . . one of the report's authors, it would also save British and other European consumers about £37.5 billion per year in food prices".

The report proposes renationalising agriculture and passing back to nation states the obligation—an important condition—to pay farmers direct income support and other national supports. That is extremely important and is music to our ears. Many of us have been calling for the repatriation of most agricultural policy for a long time. We may be right or wrong, but we should be debating the issue. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will ensure that that report is out in the open and published very soon.

I shall be brief as I know other hon. Members wish to speak. I shall concentrate my remarks on horticulture. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) talked about one of his constituents having to destroy a large quantity of lettuces. I speak not for lettuces, but for apples in particular, and other horticultural production from Kent. We might be talking about lettuces—or apples, as we do in my part of the world and other parts of United Kingdom —but many horticultural products are equally vulnerable. Something has to be done in the near future, not just in the interests of the British horticultural industry, but ultimately for other horticultural interests throughout the European Community.

I particularly welcome the report that my hon. Friend the Minister of State instituted—the survey of horticulture. I understand that it is very wide ranging and will cover all aspects of horticulture. I hope that my hon Friend will beef up the report, because it comes at a crucial time and is of tremendous importance. We have very high expectations of it. I hope that my hon. Friend is aware of that and will deliver an analysis of the problem and a range of answers.

One of the key criteria on which that report works is "market co-ordination, matching volume and continuity of supply to requirements".

That is a magnificent objective, but what on earth is the point of having a British study trying to match continuity of supply to requirements if virtually every horticultural product from Britain can be challenged and its marketing

distorted overnight by floods of imports from overseas, whether from other members of the European Community or from outside Europe?

We need to deal with excessive imports into the United Kingdom. It is no good saying that we must improve our marketing arrangements, as has happened with apples, improve our research and development to the point of perfection and do everything possible to sell our lettuces, blackcurrants, apples or pears, if we cannot prevent a sudden flood of imports into the market just when we are trying to market those products. That is the crucial point.

I return to apples—the product that concerns us most in Kent at the moment. As hon. Members will know, a few weeks ago we had a splendid lobby of apple growers at the House of Commons. They did a wonderful job and put a very strong case. The price of quality Cox's apples has dropped by nearly a third since last year and they are facing a serious threat to their livelihood. We tabled an early-day motion and hon. Members from all parts of the House signed it enthusiastically.

There is tremendous understanding and support for the English apple grower. The English apple is a super high quality product—one of the best apples in the world, if not the best. Everyone knows that the industry has done everything it can to help itself. It has paid for much of its own research and development and improved its marketing to a high level, but what is the point of all that if there is a structural surplus in the European Community, a growing world surplus and freedom to dump products on the market where our product is on sale? It requires only a small volume to kill a price.

On the other side of Westminster bridge there is an enormous advertisement for every variety of French apples, all with good Anglo-Saxon names. It is surprising how the French abandon their passionate belief in their language when it comes to marketing their apples in the United Kingdom.

In Sittingbourne in my constituency—the heart of the apple country—there is an advertisement for United States apples. At this time of year, when our apples are still coming out of store—many have been stored for a long time—we need high prices, but just at this very moment in come floods of foreign apples.

Some 20 years ago, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State who is in the business will know better than I, there used to be a sensible marketing arrangement with countries in the southern hemisphere. They did not market in our season but came in when English apples were no longer available. In the interests of all producers—they all have an interest in an orderly market, leaving markets intact and not destroying a market or their competitors—it must surely be possible, within the European Community and with our main importers from abroad, to try to engineer an agreement such as the one that applied many years ago to the southern hemisphere. If we can do it for apples, we can also do it for a range of other commodities. It will never be perfect, but orderly marketing arrangements—perhaps operated throughout the European Community—are vital.

People might say that I am concerned about apples because I am from Kent or that I am concerned only with my own backyard, but it is important that the House of Commons and the nation should understand the importance of horticulture. Today we have a debate on agriculture. We seldom have a debate on horticulture; yet its contribution to the national economy is enormous. It is one of the Britain's major industries. We are told that agriculture contributes 1.2 per cent. of gross domestic product, but all the industries looked after by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food represent some 9 per cent. of GDP. That shows how far reaching are the implications of the agriculture industry.

Agriculture accounts for 14 per cent. of all employment. I understand that horticulture accounts for about one third of that in production terms and, I suspect, much more in employment terms. It is hard to get figures. Perhaps I can make a plea to my hon. Friend that a serious effort be made to have a proper analysis of just how many people are dependent on horticulture, because if we can understand that factor, we might get a regular and more robust defence of British interests whenever they are threatened. In my constituency alone, in which some 2,000 people are dependent on agriculture, during the summer season, some farms will each employ several hundred pickers. One can multiply that figure quite dramatically. They are employed for a few months—and pay their national insurance, just in case anybody doubts that. That income is very important for those families.

Horticulture is of tremendous importance and that is not fully understood. Some £2 billion in production comes from horticulture.

Mr. Tyler: I have listened with great interest to the hon. Gentleman's argument, but having made an eloquent plea for the repatriation of the CAP he now seems to be developing a case for a common horticultural policy negotiated right through the Union. It is a good case, but one needs both.

Sir Roger Moate: Perhaps I did not express myself as clearly as I should, but in fact I am saying exactly the opposite. I do not believe in the CAP: I believe that we should have national agriculture policies controlled by the European Community within a free trading area to try to prevent market distortions. That is what we are moving to anyway and I welcome it very much. It is not easy to operate, but the present system is failing in any event. No system of protection operates efficiently. We are moving away from centralised price support systems and we should do the same in horticulure.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I presume that the hon. Gentleman means within European budgetary limits. That is, national or member state expenditure would have to be within budgetary limits set by the European Union.

Sir Roger Moate: I believe that nations could administer these policies, as they are nationally sensitive matters and are best done nationally. That is the theme that is emerging. What I am trying to say is that, in horticulture matters, there is a great international and national interest in trying to protect each sector of the market. It is easy to say, "Well, it is only £50 million or £100 million, and it might be tomatoes today or lettuces tomorrow," but every one of those sectors is important. It is all too easy to sacrifice any one of those to a competitor one day—Spain, for instance. That is a dangerous road to go down.

Mr. Ainger *rose—*

Sir Roger Moate: I will not give way. I apologise, but I have spoken for longer than I intended.

It is important to emphasise the importance of horticulture and to take legitimate steps to protect our

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interests, not just because of the employment factor or its high gross product, but because it is one of the highest added value factors in agriculture. We argue about the value of wheat or cereals. An acre of wheat might produce £200 or £300 while an acre of strawberries might produce £5,000, £7,000, £8,000 or £10,000 of product for UK Ltd. and generate a lot of employment. The same applies to top fruit, and right across the board. We should be wary of allowing sectors of horticulture to be undermined or destroyed. That is a good message for every member of the European Community. We should take steps to protect our home markets and home industries at the sensitive time of the season.

With regard to apples, what we are asking for will not cost money; indeed, it will save money. In my view, the intervention system must be changed. It is a great distortion and must be modified and, ultimately, eliminated. That in itself will save money. Europe has a large structural surplus. A number of varieties of apple are in serious surplus and need to be grubbed out. We are asking the Government to support a European-wide grubbing-out scheme. That is being proposed in the European Community and I hope that it will come to pass. It will pay for itself in a very short time because it will save a great deal of fruit from being wasted or taken into intervention.

I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench for the support that they have given so far. I urge the strongest possible support for structural change, especially for apples, but also that we give a great deal of backing in future to studying new regimes within the European Community to prevent marketing distortions, particularly with minimum import prices for products coming into the United Kingdom.

7.14 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I strongly sympathise and agree with the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate), particularly on the first half of his comments about the need to repatriate part of the CAP. I like the word "subsidiarity" in the Europe-wide context and within Britain, too, in terms of the regions. It is important that we move towards devolving as much power as we can, especially concerning the CAP.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) made quite a scathing attack on the whole of the CAP. I have had similar views, as have the general public, for decades. Indeed, when we joined the European Community, the cost of the CAP was one of the big problems. The policy was devised for France, Germany and Italy, not for British farms, which are larger and more economic and efficient than French or Italian farms.

The nonsense of the CAP seems to carry on and on in terms of its cost, the support mechanism, surpluses, the dumping of those surpluses and their effects on third world trade, and high food prices for the consumer. Its environmental effect is very damaging, because the whole thrust is on production and that has encouraged more and more intensive agriculture.

I have sat through debates in the House on reform. We talked about stabilisers in 1988. We talked about the MacSharry plan and its variations. We debated GATT and the influence that it might have on the CAP. We are on some kind of roller coaster, in that no matter what we try to do, it seems to get more expensive by the year. I notice that, in the current reforms, the CAP will cost us £30 billion this year—£4 billion more than it did last year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East talked about set-aside and the absurdity of it. The general public cannot understand why we need to put away 5, 10 or 15 per cent. of our land and not grow anything. Environmentally, it does not help in any way. It is even questionable whether it reduces production substantially. I notice that, in the United States, which has had set-aside for decades, only some 13 per cent. of the land is efficient, because the land that is set aside is usually the poorest land and therefore the farmer will grow even more intensively to maintain his output on the rest of his land. So that for every hectare that is set aside, only one third is effective in reducing production.

The compensation amounts that are available to cereal growers for set-aside fill the general public with fury. I read a few weeks ago of subsidy payments for set-aside as high as £1 million. I presume that those farmers are millionaires. We need to find some alternative to the whole idea of set-aside.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Having made a study of the subject, I believe that only one body in the country is paid £1 million under the IACS—the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

Mr. Williams: I do not have access to my sources of information now, but about a month ago *The Sunday Times* quoted several people to that effect. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that a £50,000 maximum, in terms of income derived from agricultural support for any one holding, makes good sense. As was suggested earlier, that should apply to all farmers, whatever their source of subsidy—set-aside or otherwise.

Like the Government and farmers' unions, my party realises that the CAP is not appropriate to British agriculture, but we are not clear about what should replace it over five, 10 or 15 years. We know that the replacement system should sustain the rural economy and maintain farmers on their land, given the current size of holdings: we have already been through a massive amalgamation phase. The system should also contribute to the environment, helping to bring about less intensive farming and maintaining the landscape. I wish that the Government had spelt our more clearly their long-term vision of a replacement. There is probably a fair consensus that the present support mechanisms are based too much on production, and need to be based more on people and the environment.

I am no expert, but I have seen how New Zealand has moved to a free market. I am amazed that a Conservative Government should be so supportive of what must be the most rigged market in the world. Every country has its agricultural support mechanisms; the arrangements become curiouser and curiouser, and more and more complicated, with every twist and turn of every new agreement that is worked out.

A recent television feature seemed to suggest that, despite terrific fears before the introduction of the free market and real problems of adjustment to it, New Zealand's agricultural system has become attuned to the new arrangements. It is producing its food more cheaply

and efficiently than any other part of the world, developing its exports and becoming environmentally friendly by using less fertiliser and similar products.

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): Is the hon. Gentleman really suggesting that we should follow New Zealand's example? He must realise that one of the effects of moving in that direction was the devastation of hundreds of farms, and the driving of hundreds of farmers off the land. Is that what the hon. Gentleman proposes for this country?

Mr. Williams: I have already confessed that I am no expert. I understand, however, that those were exactly the fears that New Zealand farmers expressed before the move to a free market. There were enormous demonstrations—the kind organised by French farmers—before the changes were introduced. According to my most recent information, however, those fears have not been realised. I do not explicitly advocate such action; I am merely suggesting that we should work towards a long-term, concrete replacement for the absurd common agricultural policy. We should think about the position in 10 or 15 years' time. The CAP is unsuitable for us; it is unpopular with consumers because it means high food prices, and it is not good for the environment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The House should not shut its eyes to the New Zealand experience. We can learn lessons from it without entirely dismantling the present policy.

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting the matter in context. Let me suggest a possible long-term alternative. A free-market mechanism could be backed up by a form of income support, or similar social payments, to maintain the rural population; but the largest contribution should come from farmers, whose role should be to maintain the environment. That involves an enormous amount of work.

Given the present framework in the European Community, however, I cannot see how such an arrangement is possible. That brings me back to the question of subsidiarity. The CAP needs to be devolved as far as possible to individual component states, and to the regions: Wales, for instance, should be treated differently from Scotland, and the same should apply to the various agricultural areas of Wales—horticultural, cereal-growing and grassland.

One of the major long-term alternatives to the CAP must involve the role of farmers in environmental protection. Last summer I wrote to the Welsh Office asking for a breakdown of the environmental grants now available to farmers in Wales: what were the individual schemes, and how much did they provide altogether? In the current financial year, total planned expenditure was £16.6 million; total support for the CAP in Wales is £197 million. I was surprised and pleased to learn—I could not quite believe it—that some 8 per cent. of support for agriculture in Wales is now environmental.

The Welsh Office administers a plethora of schemes—far too many, in fact. There is a range of them, involving environmentally sensitive areas such as Tir Cymen, sites of special scientific interest, management schemes and so forth. I think that it would be much wiser to amalgamate them into a single scheme as was suggested by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis).

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): The hon. Gentleman has made an important point. May I amplify it? He said that he was surprised at the amount being spent on such policies. He should know that there is no doubt that the United Kingdom leads all the European countries in the progress that it has made within environmental farming. United Kingdom farmers and the Government can be very proud of that.

Mr. Williams: I wish that I could agree with the Parliamentary Secretary; unfortunately, I cannot.

I am pleased that the Welsh Office is showing the way to the rest of the country. According to figures from the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Government have provided a total of £43 million in environmental grants. In her opening speech, the Minister mentioned a total of £100 million in a budget of about £5 billion for agricultural support. That means that only about 2 per cent. is provided in environmental grants across the country. As I have said, I was pleased to learn that the figure in Wales was 8 per cent.

Hill farmers in my constituency have a particular problem. Their morale has been generally knocked by a second successive year of cuts in hill livestock compensatory allowances, and there is an air of despondency about the future. Farm incomes have risen, and Welsh farmers have shared in that increase—although there is a problem with the statistics; we do not know which figures to believe. The NFU tells me that the average for less-favoured areas throughout England and Wales is between £13,000 and £14,000, and quotes the Ministry as its source; ministerial statements, however, mention £19,000 a year.

The NFU branch in Llandovery, in my constituency, has 127 members, 51 of whom are on family credit—a staggering 40 per cent. of farmers in the area. The average age of hill farmers in Wales is 57, and young people see no future in hill farming. They drift from the land to other professions and to the towns because of a lack of confidence in the future of hill farming. I hate to think who will be managing the rich landscape of Snowdonia, the Brecon Beacons, Carmarthen and Ceredigion in 10 or 20 years' time. The hill farmers' role in maintaining that landscape should be recognised.

I read a briefing earlier today about the Lake District which stated that in 1991 3 million people visited Cumbria, generating £470 million for the local economy. The rich landscape that those people come to see and admire has not come naturally but has been created and maintained by farmers in the region.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Many people go to the Sellafield visitors centre.

Mr. Williams: I do not think that that industrial plant helps the landscape.

Hill farmers work in the tourist regions of Snowdonia and mid Wales and we should maintain them in their profession.

I have been certain for the past 20 years that the common agricultural policy is the wrong way to support agriculture and I think that 90 per cent. of the British public agree with me. As a society we need to develop a clearer vision of the future—that goes for the political parties and farmers' union—and of where farming should be at in 10 or 15 years. Support for agriculture should be based not on production but on people and the environment.

7.31 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I declare an interest. As stated in the Register of Members' Interests, I am a director of a farmers' co-operative and I have a very small farming interest that, even in Portugal, would be recognised as such.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) responded earlier to my intervention about the milk marketing board and the penetration of the British produce market by imported dairy produce. He laid the blame for that penetration on the quotas, which were introduced in 1994, and on the fact that we do not have enough quota for our production. He is shaking his head, but that was clearly his answer. That penetration was already taking place during the 10 years before the introduction of the quotas. Since their introduction, we are continuing to put butter into intervention because of the rigidity of the milk marketing scheme, which prevented our dairy industries from facing up to the challenges of the market place.

Dr. Strang: The hon. Gentleman makes an intelligent contribution to our discussions. There is common ground between us in that we both want more production of high-value products. The milk marketing scheme encouraged the consumption of milk in liquid form because the Labour party supported, and still strongly supports, the doorstep delivery scheme and the idea that preference and priority should be given to the liquid market. Since the statutory arrangements were abandoned, that has changed, but I hope that the hon. Member will acknowledge that point and give us support for the doorstep delivery service.

Mr. Paice: Like the hon. Gentleman, I do not want to engage in cross-party bickering over the matter. Like him, I have followed these debates for many years. When he was in Government, I watched his performance from outside or from other parts of this Chamber and I am aware of his knowledge and genuine understanding of the issues. The penetration of the British dairy market resulted from the rigidity of our system, which meant that changes had to be made. I agree that we concentrated on the liquid milk market and the doorstep delivery service and I want that to continue wherever possible, but we have to face the fact that many people prefer to buy milk in supermarkets or elsewhere.

When the hon. Gentleman was a member of the Council of Ministers, there were only nine member states. Even then—as he will have experienced—it was difficult for the nine member nations to reach genuine decisions and to speed up those decisions. There are now 12 member states and we are moving towards 20 in a few years. By castigating the Government for failing to destroy the CAP, he fails to recognise the reality of power, as opposed to the desires of the Government in power.

I was interested in the hon. Member's kind comments about my contributions to debates on agriculture. It is five years since I spoke in an agriculture debate, having spent four and a half of those years as a Parliamentary Private Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, when I was prohibited from participating. Never in my lifetime, which has been spent in or close to the agricultural industry, has farming and agricultural policy been so unpopular.

That unpopularity has been brought about by many factors. Memories of the shortages during and immediately after the war have become dim and do not exist in many people's minds, including those of my generation. I believe that £28 per family per week—the alleged cost of the CAP—is a spurious figure. It is based on the assumption that Britain could meet all its requirements on the world market at today's world market prices. We all know, however, that the world market price is not a true, free market price—it is achieved by the competitive dumping of surpluses, as each major trading bloc seek to out-subsidise each other's dumped exports.

The current dissatisfaction is caused by the supposed desecration of the countryside by agricultural policy. That has been massively exaggerated, but none of us can deny that that concern has some foundation. The policy of set-aside is another reason for the unpopularity of agricultural policy, as are the health scares caused by pesticides, nitrates and other chemicals in food, which are of particular interest to my hon. Friend the Minister of State. Often those concerns are based purely on emotion and the fact that modern technology can detect almost anything in anything rather than on genuine scientific evidence.

It must be recognised that farmers have shown in some cases an unwillingness to change. That is changing dramatically, but they have shown themselves unwilling to face the free market. It cannot be denied that the cost of the CAP—£21 billion a year—to the European Community taxpayer is excessive. There have been successive efforts to adapt a system that was designed to deal with shortages to one that will deal with surpluses. There have been co-responsibility levies, the advent of quotas, and set-aside. Under the latest system, we are faced with the spectre of politicians and bureaucrats deciding how many acres of each crop should be grown and how many cows or sheep should be kept. It is a system of supply management gone completely mad. It is little different from the planned economies of the former Soviet Union, where politicians decided how many cars, tanks or widgets should be produced.

With every turn of the screw as we have tried to reform the common agricultural policy to reduce production, it has become more and more complex, with more and more bureaucrats and paperwork. Hon. Members have already mentioned the mountain of paperwork that landed on farmers' doorsteps a year ago, and I join in the congratulations that some of my hon. Friends have already offered the Government on having dramatically reduced the paperwork in this year's integrated administration and control system—IACS—round.

The more complex the system has become, the more open it has been to fraud. We have all heard the stories of olive groves that apparently moved, or did not exist at all, and of the Italian milk quota farce, whereby the quotas have not existed since the system started 10 years ago.

We have a system of intervention, and it is difficult to justify intervention with perishable commodities such as apples, which have already been mentioned, and, even worse, cauliflowers. I cannot help thinking that if my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) were here he would say that not the scheme but the people who designed it were the real cauliflowers—or Janice might tell him to say that. Already this evening, the question has been asked, how can we justify a system that supports tobacco growing at a cost of £1 billion a year when at the same time the Community wants to ban tobacco advertising altogether?

While I am in destructive mode, I shall add that the events of the past two years, since the alleged reform of the common agricultural policy, have demonstrated the nonsense of the whole shooting match, the nonsense of the idea that politicians and bureaucrats should try to manage an agricultural industry. In 1993-94, expenditure on agricultural support in the United Kingdom alone, through both the CAP and the Treasury, has risen by £1 billion —that is, by one third. That is another £40,000 for each holding in the country. That is crazy. No farmer would say that he is £40,000 better off than he was last year. The system is designed to lose the money within it, yet there have been extremely small reductions in our production levels.

The reforms agreed on the back of the original MacSharry proposals were designed to reduce production, but they ignored two factors. The first was that agricultural production relies as much on mother nature and the weather in any particular season as on any other factor. The first year after the reforms were introduced there was a substantial increase in yields in much of the country, and that completely got rid of any suggestion of a reduction in yields. Coming as it did on the back of the devaluation resulting from our leaving the exchange rate mechanism, it meant that farmers' incomes rose dramatically.

Opposition Members will not be surprised to hear that I do not criticise our Ministers for what has happened. Within the present framework, British Ministers have fought hard for British interests. My right hon. Friend the previous Minister, now the Secretary of State for the Environment, fought hard against the original MacSharry proposals to get rid of the discrimination against large-scale farmers that would have ensured that virtually all the support went to the smaller-scale farmers in mainland Europe, with very little coming to this country.

Our present Minister has worked hard on the issue of pigs, as we have heard, on trying to encourage the Commission to allow woodland to be planted on set-aside and on dealing with unfair national aids in other resources. For example, the proposed limits on nitrate residue levels in vegetables have hit the lettuce growers in my constituency hard.

I do not blame farmers either. Of course there are rogues in every fraternity, and one cannot deny that a few farmers have probably over-exploited the system. But the vast majority have done exactly what both successive British Governments and the Community have encouraged them to do. They have made the right business decisions based on the situation that faced them at any one time. They have now had 47 years' experience of varying systems of market support and they have responded to the challenges.

The hon. Members for Edinburgh, East and for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) criticised the Government for not laying out their policy clearly. Those two hon. Gentlemen cannot have listened to some of the speeches and comments that my right hon. Friend the Minister has made. She has rightly said that we must move towards world prices. Judging by the speeches in the debate so far, that view seems to be shared almost universally throughout the Chamber.

I want not only to support that view but to emphasise the fact that prices should not be supported either directly or indirectly—it is important to mention indirect support, too. The Commission cannot be allowed to decide acreage payments—not simply the principle that we should have such payments, but whether we should receive X for oil seed, Y for cereals or Z for something else. That is going back to the policy of the madhouse. How can people in Brussels decide on such issues, given the scale of even the present Europe, let alone of a future Europe that I hope will stretch from Trondheim to Athens, and from Dublin to Gdansk? It is a system of the madhouse.

Every time that we try to do something about the problem the system becomes more complicated and more absurd. How are we to make progress? I came to the debate thinking that I had a good idea—I am somewhat chastened to learn that everybody else seems to have had the same idea. We must not only get rid of price and market support but bring into play the concept of subsidiarity. We must get rid of market and price support and all the paraphernalia that goes with it—intervention, acreage payments based on crops, headage payments, export restitution, and so on. Those are all part of product support.

All that must be done quickly. The longer we allow the system to wither on the vine the more time there will be for the weak-willed among politicians to lose their resolve and to back-track. We saw the first example of that over the GATT negotiations, with the need to buy off France.

However, I do not believe that British farmers can survive just like that, without an alternative form of support. There must be alternative measures, otherwise the massive bankruptcies that would result from the destruction of the asset base that would inevitably follow would devastate our rural communities. As several hon. Members have already said, that would also destroy the British landscape as we know it and as it is maintained and nurtured by our farmers.

The concept of subsidiarity should be brought to bear on the CAP. I do not believe in the wholesale repatriation that some of my hon. Friends have suggested; I believe that there is a halfway house, and I shall return to that idea in a moment. There is one sound reason why I do not wish for total repatriation, and it is a point on which the hon. Member for North Cornwall sought to chide the Government. As any Government have always known and always will know, ultimately the Treasury wields the whip. We all know that it is unrealistic to expect the British Treasury, with an agricultural industry very small in comparison with that of the rest of the Community, to pour in the resources that many of us believe are necessary to support agriculture. That is why I do not want total repatriation of the CAP.

At the Brussels level we should stick to setting up a framework of support, with budgetary controls and an allocation of resources to individual countries, for each nation. Common standards should be set for pesticide levels, animal welfare criteria and many other matters relating to common trading and production terms. After that, each member nation should be allowed to decide how to use its allocation of resources within the criteria set by the GATT green box. That is the most important thing.

In the United Kingdom, as has been said so many times, the system would have to be based on environmental matters and on the enhancement of our environmentally sensitive areas. My hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) made a most sensitive speech on that subject, reflecting his genuine concern and knowledge of such matters. We must make the whole country, not just those parts of the country that we seek especially to protect, a conservation and environmentally sensitive area. The countryside stewardship scheme has considerable potential to be extended to deal with such matters. There would

[Mr. Paice]

obviously have to be substantial enhancement for the upland areas, the less-favoured and the severely disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Tyler: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Paice: I shall give way but only briefly because I know that I am taking a long time.

Mr. Tyler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am sympathetic to what he is saying, but does he support the cuts in HLCAs?

Mr. Paice: Yes, I do, and I shall quickly explain why. First, they are an annual payment which, as the hon. Gentleman said earlier, is made to compensate for whatever else has happened to affect the income of the producers in that particular year. The matter is reviewed every year and the payment depends on what has happened. Secondly, because the payments are related to headage, which is a pity, they are production linked, and I do not believe that that is the way to proceed in the long term.

An ever-increasing number of farmers now recognise that we can and should move towards a free market. Let us consider the wheat crop, which is the most important in my constituency. Economists believe that, contrary to the present low levels of world markets for wheat, the price will rise, probably to about £90 a tonne. Most wheat producers can survive at that level, provided that they are operating on reasonable land. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) referred to support levels for cereal growing in Wales. Many of us wonder why anyone in Wales grows cereals as the land there is not appropriate. *[Interruption.]* Most of it is not. One of the results of the CAP has been that much of the land that has been put into cereal production is not appropriate for it.

Mr. Ainger: I do not know when the hon. Gentleman last visited Pembroke, if, indeed, he has ever done so. Perhaps he does not realise that parts of Pembrokeshire are traditional grain-growing areas. I have here information which, if I have the opportunity to make my own contribution to the debate, will show that 8 tonnes is the average in certain areas, even in our LFAs. The hon. Gentleman should not run away with the wrong idea. I am sure that the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) can also tell the hon. Gentleman that there are significant yields in Wales, some of which are certainly comparable with those of many parts of England.

Mr. Paice: I am delighted to hear it, but the principle still applies—most of the cereal growing in the marginal areas has come about because of the development of the CAP. That is not to the long-term advantage of those areas.

A free market would enable us to compete and not only to increase our self-sufficiency in products that we are good at—cereal, livestock products, particularly where they are grassland based, and sugar beet—but to fight back on the export market. I know that that point is of particular interest to my hon. Friend the Minister of State. We would be able to fight back against the countries that have taken our markets and start to penetrate theirs. I use an example from my own constituency.

Celery is grown on a massive scale in the Fens near Ely and much is now exported to the mainland of Europe, for example, to Italy. That product is entirely within the free market but it shows that even in the horticultural sector, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) said, is often under considerable pressure, it is possible to fight back successfully. However, I believe that a small proportion of the money released by the ending of price and market support should be used to encourage further the development of export markets and marketing groups.

Another advantage of the move to the free market is that there would be much less room for fraud because the system would be so much simpler, and it would therefore be harder for fraud to be hidden. I now differ from some of my colleagues because I believe that it would also do away with much of the opportunity for national aid. The amount of money spent by each country would be clearly ring fenced and allocated from the Community. Any national aid that might arise would be clearly identifiable. At this point, I announce my support for what the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) said about iceberg lettuces about which the Minister knows I am concerned.

My right hon. Friend the Minister also referred to regulation and bureaucracy. Farmers in my constituency complain about the ever-increasing bureaucracy more than anything else. They not only complain about the total amount but believe that other countries do not face the same level of bureaucracy. They do not believe that other countries are adhering to, or enforcing, their regulations. The problem, of course, is that of proof.

When officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food talk to their opposite numbers in Paris, Rome, Madrid or anywhere else, they are reassured that regulations exist and are being enforced. That is understandable but the evidence on the ground is that they are not being enforced. We have to examine ways to find out more clearly what precisely is happening in other countries.

Most important, a free market would correct the bias against alternative production. In terms of livestock, there are deer, goats and even horses in the free market, but in arable terms, many potential new crops for industrial purposes—oil-seeds, sugar as an industrial feedstock, coppice and energy and pharmaceutical crops—currently have to compete against subsidy, and they cannot but fail.

Britain has a high population density and an increasingly urban population who regard the countryside as their place of recreation. I do not believe that they would stand for long for what would result from a complete abolition of all support for agriculture, although some hon. Members may think otherwise. The devastation of part of the countryside as marginal land was left derelict and as better land was farmed even more intensively would eventually cause a public outcry. Therefore, it is essential that we produce an alternative system based on environment factors so that the farmers can face the public with their heads held high and say that they are providing tangible benefits for the public's money, benefits that the public can recognise and respect, such as access to woodland areas for recreation and other purposes. Otherwise, we shall continue as we are.

The proposals that we are discussing today merely tinker with the reforms that we have already introduced and the CAP will continue like some Frankenstein monster, still charging on while every attempt to shackle it

fails and we have to keep trying. It is time that it was demolished and rebuilt in a completely new form. To do that would be to the advantage not only of farmers but of taxpayers, consumers and the countryside.

7.57 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) and, when he spoke about the change to the present system of support, I thought that I was listening to a faint echo of my own words in the Chamber from nearly 20 years ago. At that time, not all the countries of Europe had reached their present level of production per acre, or per hectare. Those of us who knew farming and knew the quality of land in Europe wondered what on earth would happen if there were surpluses and food mountains, which duly arrived. That could not possibly have caught Members of either Front Bench by surprise because they had only to look across the Atlantic and examine the long experience of the United States. However, we followed the same route with set-aside and so on. Having said that, I do not propose to follow the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East any further other than to say that some of what he said, and some of what other hon. Members have said, will be of general interest.

We have a mass of paper to wade through but the bottom line for farmers is the money in their pocket or money in the bank. Many farming sectors have had a hard time in Northern Ireland. Pigs have been mentioned in the context of the United Kingdom as a whole but, in Northern Ireland, the price of pigs is currently about 94p per kilogramme whereas the production cost is 98p per kilogramme—one does not have to be much of an economist to realise that farmers will not make a fortune at that rate.

Weather conditions led to problems for the potato crop last year, which was the second consecutive bad year. In the less-favoured areas of the Province, we find that the net average income is less than £5,000 per annum, ranging from a top income of some £12,000 down to £900. The reduction in compensation levels in Northern Ireland cost £4 million out of a total cut of £25 million. If people in that area of the Kingdom think that they have been harshly treated, they have good reason. We should note that it is the areas with the harshest climate and environment that suffered the most.

If the bottom line for farmers is money in their bank accounts in profits, the bottom line for the taxpayer is the cost of agricultural support. I can remember the searchlights over Belfast and the fires burning when I was a small child. I still believe in security of the food supply. We would be wrong to run down our farming industry to the point where we could not feed our people. Farming is a long-term business. There is a long lead time to increase production if it goes down, and we do not want that to happen.

Having said that, I am sure that no farmer could possibly be happy with an economic structure in which subsidies in one form or another can sometimes amount to more than the net farm income in certain parts of the country. I understand that that is not only happening in some areas but it will be the consequence in many more areas because of the CAP reform package that was agreed in May 1992.

On top of that, we have a desire to keep a pretty countryside through which people can wander—hedges, stone walls, and attractive, viable villages. Hedges and walls were not planted or built simply to be pretty; they were planted and built to fulfil the need for shelter for stock, marking field boundaries and farms and making life easier for the farmer. Villages were built as a result of the economic need of the day.

Enough has been said in the debate to show that people who have an interest in the matter have all been driven to the same conclusion: those things can be kept in the long term, if they are not an economic necessity for the farmer—farmers will not spend money on them—for tourists or our own people only if there is some system of subsidy or grant to landowners to keep them in existence. If society wants to keep such things, society will have to pay for them by a grant in some form or another; they are not cheap to keep.

Machines do much of the work that used to be done by hand. However, laying a hedge, building a stone wall or monitoring stock can eventually be done only by hands, eyes and feet on the ground, and all farmers know that. The question then arises whether the rest of the population—the taxpayer—will continue to finance them. Even if the taxpayer is prepared to continue to put large sums of money in the agricultural industry, for so much of farmers' spendable income to come out of the taxpayers' pocket is unhealthy. I am concerned about that, as is every farmer in the country. The question is, how will our agricultural production and food production generate the necessary money to provide an income for farmers throughout the United Kingdom?

Earlier this year, I asked a number of questions about farm incomes in Northern Ireland. Hon. Members who are interested in the precise details can look them up in *Hansard* from 24 to 28 February. I shall run through one or two of them; they will be of interest to many people because they show what the real income in agriculture has been. Between 1964 and 1993, the number of farmers and partners in Northern Ireland fell from 42,600 to 32,400—a decrease of 10,000 people. The number of full-time hired workers fell from 7,300 to 1,900—in other words, there is about only one quarter of the number in 1964. The number of all regularly employed family workers fell from 24,700 to 6,000—just under one-quarter of the work force in 1964—and the total agricultural labour force fell from 100,600 to 56,500. Those are considerable decreases.

I then asked a number of questions about the total income from farming in the same years. The total income rose in cash terms from £45.5 million to £272 million—a multiple of nearly six. The number of farm businesses decreased from 37,000 to 28,000, and the income for farm business in cash terms rose from £1,228 to £9,483—a multiple of 7.2. I hope that hon. Members will keep that figure in mind. The annual wage per full-time hired male over 20 rose from £14 per week, or £728 per annum, to an annual salary of £8,306—a multiple of 11.4. In other words, during that long period, the agricultural paid worker improved his position much faster than the income per farm business or, for that matter, the income of the farmer.

The total income from farming in real terms—taking 1993 as 100—was 126 in 1970, 119 in 1971, 120 in 1972 and 133 in 1973. In 1980, it went down to 39.79, and at one time it was 53. At no other time during that long period did it pass the present level in real terms. It was almost the same story for the income for farm business, and the annual wage per hired male rose overall by 50 per cent. in real

[Mr. William Ross]

terms. The average gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in manufacturing industry in the Province during that time went from £29 in 1971 to £279—a multiple of 9.5—with a present salary of some £14,500 per year. That is £6,000 more than the salary for an agricultural wage earner.

If one thinks that that will attract people to farming and help them to stay in farming, one is living in a dream world. The reality is that young people in farming are voting with their feet. Throughout my lifetime, they have continued to get out of farming; farmers are an aging population, and the farming industry in this country simply cannot afford that. Unless we raise the level of farm income for farmers and farm workers, farmers will literally die on their feet.

Several other interesting statistics came out of those figures and I hope that hon. Members will listen to them. In 1984, the total amount for farm buildings and works was £134 million in Northern Ireland. The provisional amount for 1993 is £55.79 million. Total plant and machinery rose from £44 million to £68 million, but that is only keeping pace with inflation. People were not putting money into long-term investment in buildings and works; they could not afford it. However, they had to continue to replace plant and machinery, and they did so as best they could.

Farming is not doing well despite the rise in the past year or so. The farming industry has long been one of decline, low income, low investment, low spendable income and a drift of people out of farming. In those circumstances, we must think seriously about what we are doing and how we will increase farm income in the years ahead. That must not take a long time—it must be done swiftly.

There will not be a big increase in the amount of food which we need and which we produce, and we are probably producing a fair percentage of what we can produce. The costs of production are unlikely to fall by much more, while the costs of transport will probably increase. That leaves only an increase in farm gate prices, an increase in consumer prices or a shift in profit from the middle men and food retailers back to the farmer. In her opening speech, the Minister mentioned the retail cost of food over the counter at the supermarket and at the farm gate.

Of course, there is the possibility of restructuring farm sizes. That is not an unmixed blessing, and it has been going on for years. If we want it to continue, we need to make up our minds about to what extent we want it to continue and how swiftly we want it to come about. If we want it to come about quickly and easily, we must look urgently at a farm early retirement scheme.

The economic background which I detailed for farming during the past 25 years has left little scope for the farming community—either the workers on farms or the farmers themselves—to provide for their retirement. So far as the rural scene generally is concerned, we must keep more people in rural areas and, preferably, those who were born there because they know what to expect. It is not always a happy experience when urban dwellers move into the country.

I believe that the planners have a part to play to encourage work other than agriculture in rural areas, and to encourage people to stay there. Schools and viable shopping should exist and there should be a measure of social life.

I want to finish as quickly as I can, and I will mention just two short items. First, environmental improvement has been dwelt upon by a number of hon. Members. I say to those on the Government Front Bench that if they could solve the problem of silage effluent and render the stuff harmless, they would probably do more for the environment and for the agricultural scene than anything else which they can think of.

Secondly, I want to mention salmon cages to the Minister because he was on the Front Bench when I asked him a question about that subject today. There is a pollution problem, as the Minister knows. This may be the only fishing matter which has been mentioned today. There is a problem with lice on sea trout which has been ruinous. Most people believe that that has to do with sea cages for salmon. I am just trying to save a stamp, because the Minister asked me to write to him on the matter.

The hon. Gentleman will understand that most salmon cages are in sheltered lochs, but there is one off the coast of Antrim at Larne which is in the open sea. I understand that it has stood up fairly well and there is no problem with lice there. That is probably because the stronger tides and the more open water allow them to dissipate. Will the Minister please look at the matter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I must point out respectfully that there are eight hon. Members who wish to catch my eye. We have 70 minutes before the wind-up, and if hon. Members show a degree of modesty about the length of their speeches, everyone can be called.

8.13 pm

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I shall try to be brief, and I will certainly not follow the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) down the line of fishing, as a number of hon. Members will understand.

I have listened with enormous interest to all of the speeches today, and they have encompassed practically every issue involved with the common agricultural policy. There seems to be an agreement that the CAP is not perhaps the most appropriate policy for this day and age. Probably all of us who have been involved in politics during the past 20 years are conscious that the United Kingdom has never found the CAP an easy policy to live with.

I am equally concerned that some of the suggestions which are being made to improve the CAP would not help the problem greatly in terms of over-production and under-production. Those of us who remember the system of deficiency payments will equally remember that there would be far too much of one thing one year, and then everybody would switch to something else. There were great peaks and troughs, and to bring back national aids to each member country would, I suspect, exacerbate that problem. Hon. Members may multiply that problem by 12 at the moment, by 16 soon and by 20 in a few years.

I wish to refer to the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate). During the past few years, there have been screams of agony and pain from the farming community, and those are beginning to become muted—I would put it no higher than that.

However, there are great screams of pain within the horticultural industry, particularly in Kent, east Sussex and my own constituency.

I am delighted to say that my constituency has a mixed farming base, so we have a one-constituency common agricultural policy. Every inch is covered by environmentally sensitive areas, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest. One particular farm, which has rediscovered the 18th century seed bed, is becoming a European SSSI. We are all proud of that.

To diversify, a number of farmers have rightly and historically turned to fruit growing. I endorse everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham said about the need to sort out surplus production, particularly of apples and even more particularly of Cox's. We need grubbing grants and a reduction in intervention prices.

We also need to encourage as far as possible—I am delighted that the Ministry is doing this—the further development of marketing grants and the encouragement of collaborative and co-operative efforts. The screams of pain in my constituency are coming most clearly from those who grow blackcurrants. That may seem to be a tiny part of the market, but it is an exceedingly valuable part —or it was a few years ago.

The problem is that there has been increased planting throughout the EC. Germany is now the largest producer, while there have been planting grants in France which, I am happy to acknowledge, are soon to end. There is a particular problem in eastern Europe. Probably all of us remember when the iron curtain existed, and one of the great imports from Poland then was soft fruit.

Increased planting has meant that United Kingdom prices have tumbled during the past few years. Last year, growers were able to get £250 a tonne, but now it is £200 a tonne. One of the criticisms which has been voiced tonight is how slowly the Commission reacts to setting minimum intervention prices. I believe that the Commission is likely to set minimum intervention prices in May, but that is of no help to my constituents who are fixing their contracts now, at a time when there is no floor to the market. It is possible that they will not make a profit, but will make significant losses.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State and my right hon. Friend the Minister should bear that in mind when they come to talk in Brussels about the reform of the fruit and vegetable package. We must ensure that the minimum intervention prices come in at a time when they are crucial.

The other issue which is of enormous concern is the fruit which is being produced in eastern Europe. I am not for one moment suggesting that we do anything to reduce trade, access to hard currency or any of the other benefits which have flowed from the ending of communism in eastern Europe. I want to see the markets strengthened. However, one of the problems with which we have to deal is that there is no knowledge in eastern Europe of what a market is.

The countries had centrally controlled and directed economies, so nobody knows what profit, loss, costs or everything else are and blackcurrants grown in eastern Europe are coming into the EC at giveaway prices. One of the suggestions which I would like to put to the Minister —I would be grateful if he would pass it on to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—is that we use the know-how fund to bolster the economic knowledge of growers in Poland, Hungary, the Czech republic and Slovakia.

One of my constituents, who is a blackcurrant grower, is going out to eastern Europe next week and will inquire directly into that problem. I have asked him to produce a report, which I shall ensure that the Minister of State receives, containing his recommendations to try to establish a knowledge of markets in eastern Europe.

The other part of the policy that needs reforming is that in relation to the wine market. England is not, shall we say, one of the great wine-growing nations, but over the years we have improved English wine enormously. We are facing problems in the European Community, especially with France, in terms of recognition of the vines that are being used, hybridity and many technical areas that I do not want to pursue. I urge the Minister of State to bear in mind that that high-quality product should be encouraged as part of the continuing diversification in farming. If we can encourage farmers to broaden their production and to ensure that, one way or another, they receive an adequate return, we shall continue to have the mixed and varied countryside that is so important to us all.

8.20 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I have to declare an interest—the ownership of 32 acres of agricultural land, no more than that. What I have to say, by and large, will be in tune with the general theme of the debate, but I need to start with a few words of criticism.

The Government's position on these price proposals seems to be characterised by the fact that the Government are especially enthusiastic in support of cuts, except insofar as they are not sufficient in the area of milk, sheep, and beef—crucial sectors for my constituency and for Wales. The Government support cuts or call for deeper cuts. That cutting theme is of a piece with other measures that have aroused the ire of the agricultural community in Wales, and which I want to mention.

The reduction in hill livestock compensatory allowances has been justified by the Government in terms of the increase in incomes since 1990. However, those increases were from a very low level—still lower than they were in 1988-89, and attributable largely to the devaluation of the pound. Those increases are already being eroded by the increase in the value of the pound. Will the Government undertake to increase the value of HLCAs if the pound continues to gain in strength and less-favoured area incomes decrease?

The reduction from 50 per cent. to 20 per cent. in the farm and conservation grant scheme for the disposal of silage effluent, slurry, dirty water and so on is most unsatisfactory. In my constituency the effect will be that many small farmers, especially middle-aged ones, will be unable to meet the capital costs of works, will find themselves facing the possibility of heavy fines for pollution, will leave milk production, will sell their quotas and will thus eliminate a farm as a viable unit. That process has very damaging social and cultural effects in rural areas.

That is the opposite of what we should be trying to achieve nowadays. We need measures to strengthen and maintain small family farms. I endorse the suggestion of the Farmers Union of Wales that if we are to have a milk quota cut—I notice the Government's undertaking not to support such a cut—the first 240,000 litres, for example, should be exempt from any such cut.

Even more fury has been aroused in Wales by the way in which the arable aid scheme discriminates against cereal

[Mr. Cynog Dafis]

growers in the way that has been mentioned. The basic injustice of the lower level compensation in Wales has been compounded by the Government's efforts to get out of difficulty. First there was a carve-up in Wales on parish lines, with some farmers gaining at the expense of even lower levels of payment for their neighbours on identical land just the other side of the parish boundary. That was followed by the less illogical, but still unsatisfactory, LFA/non-LFA division.

Welsh farmers want parity—no more and no less—with their English counterparts. I am asking for an undertaking from the Secretary of State for Wales that he will fight for that parity until we get it, but of course the Secretary of State for Wales is not in the Chamber. His absence is astonishing. I cannot believe that when we are debating such a vital industry in Wales—an industry that in mid-Wales, for example, employs about 20 per cent. of the work force—the Secretary of State for Wales, who is the Minister of Agriculture for Wales, is not present, especially in view of the many grievances that Welsh farmers have these days.

The rest of my remarks are based on the relationship between agricultural policy and the environment and on environmental sustainability. I express my great pleasure at the emerging consensus of the importance of bringing those two themes together. Environmental sustainability must henceforth be the guiding principle of all policies, not simply in agriculture. All development henceforth must be based on the principle of sustainability. That is recognised by the international community in new international conventions, by the European Union in very important policy documents, and by the British Government in documents published a month ago. The Government have declared that they will work for

"a higher proportion of EC expenditure on direct payments to farmers to be applied to encouraging more environmentally sensitive farming".

It is good to read that type of commitment. We have to wait and see whether it amounts to anything substantial. The Government also speak about

"the application of environmental conditions to support payments"

— interesting stuff.

We have the beginnings of such a trend in many initiatives in Wales—useful and praiseworthy enough, but their number, as has been suggested, constitutes a problem.

Agri-environmental schemes for Wales under EC directive 2078/92 include, on the Wales-wide level, the farm woodland premium scheme, the farm and conservation grant scheme, the hedgerow renovation scheme and the habitat improvement schemes. They also include the organic farming scheme, which is a scandal and needs to be rectified because of its very unfair treatment of organic farmers. Also there is the moorland extensification scheme. Those are on an all-Wales level.

On a territorial basis we have Tir Cymen, we have sites of special scientific interest management agreements, and of course we have environmentally sensitive areas. Those are administered by the Welsh Office Agricultural Department and the Countryside Council for Wales. In addition, other schemes are available in and through national parks, by local authorities, and by the Forest Authority. We thus have a plethora of schemes, some overlapping—two, for example, concerning woodland, one obviously inferior to the other and therefore never taken up —administered by three national organisations, plus the national parks and local authorities.

Countryside and agricultural organisations are at one in lobbying for rapid progress towards a single consolidated scheme for the whole of Wales. Such a scheme would be more cost-effective than the existing ones; it would avoid the danger of double funding; it would be easier to evaluate and to modify to improve performance; it would be much more comprehensible to farmers and their advisers and so would be more readily taken up, because currently people are no doubt confused by the multiplicity of schemes and organisations. A single scheme would provide the one-stop shop where users would deal with one organisation—one officer.

The Countryside Council for Wales reckons that the net additional costs of an all-Wales agri-environment scheme at 1993 prices would be about £26 million per annum. Simply on economic grounds, that would be an excellent investment, in my view. It would provide an element of stability for farm incomes. It would be good for tourism. Midmore and Jenkins of the university of Wales, Aberystwyth, have calculated that there would be significant employment gains in rural areas. There would be a certain amount of loss of employment through reduced inputs and so on, but there would be a significant net increase in employment through increased demand for labour and materials in relation to environmental tasks such as fencing, hedge restoration and tree planting.

The environmental benefits would considerable, obviously in terms of the visual attraction of the countryside but also, and more importantly, in the crucial area of biodiversity. It is impossible to over-emphasise that consideration. Biodiversity is the subject of an important Government document published a month ago, along with the sustainable development strategy. Socially and culturally, such a scheme would be extremely advantageous to rural areas. Unfortunately, the Welsh Office failed to set in train a process of creating such an all-Wales integrated scheme a year ago. The possibility existed but was not taken up.

However, the Secretary of State for Wales set up a working group to consider the issue in October and I understand that the working group is about to report to him. This debate should concentrate his mind on what he should do with that report. I trust that it will not turn out to be a mechanism for postponement and that the Secretary of State for Wales will see the opportunity for Wales to play a pioneering role in the area. I was delighted to hear the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) say that the percentage of support in Wales was higher than in the rest of the UK.

I strongly believe that agri-environmental payments should occupy an increasingly central role in agricultural support on a European level. Currently, they constitute no more than 5 per cent. of the European Union or British agricultural budget. There is every reason to believe that they could and should become the primary mechanism for agricultural support, rather than continue to occupy their present marginal position. They would encourage an extension in production, a way of reducing over-production infinitely preferable to the set-aside scheme and its inevitable corollary of intensified production on the remaining acreage.

Agri-environmental payments would work through management agreements on environmentally-sensitive

farming systems in return for direct, annual, area-based payments plus capital payments for specific environmental enhancement. Good husbandry, skilful crop management and efficiency would be rewarded in the market place and in profit margins. There is ample evidence, including from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, that direct area-based payments are easily the most cost-efficient means of providing agricultural support. In the interests of maintaining small-scale family farms and a living countryside, those area-based payments would have to be modulated. I know that that was once a dirty word for the Government, but they would have to be modulated or tapered on an acreage basis. The scandalous state of affairs whereby 20 per cent. of farmers receive 80 per cent. of the subsidy is unsustainable morally, socially or in public relations terms. There is little doubt that such agricultural support would be legal under GATT and would come within the green box.

With CAP reform due in 1996, now is the time to explore in detail the mechanisms and implications of such a switch. If we merely limp and lurch from cut to cut, as is currently happening, we shall end up with environmentally damaging agricultural business and a devastated countryside, neither of which we can afford. What we need is not cuts but a pro-active approach to environmentally sustainable farming applied flexibly throughout the European Union according to local circumstances. That requires a radical redirection of support aimed, at the very least, at maintaining the agricultural population at its present level. There is no justification for continuing to reduce the agricultural population.

Agri-environmental payments would provide greater stability and confidence in forward planning and would probably provide economic security for greater numbers of people at a significantly reduced cost to the taxpayer. That is the way ahead.

8.33 pm

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): I am grateful for being called to speak. I hope that the House does not consider it a discourtesy that I have been absent for much of the debate, but I am serving on the First Scottish Standing Committee, from which there is no parole. I represent a constituency in which agriculture is still the largest industry. Much of it is in less-favoured areas and I shall concentrate my brief remarks on hill farming.

The reform of the CAP coupled with a reduction in the value of the pound has brought considerable benefits to farmers in my constituency whose incomes plunged to disastrous levels in 1990-91, when they dropped by several thousands pounds to an average of £5,000.

The Government should be congratulated on changing, in the CAP negotiations, the method of paying premium on lamb. The switch from a variable premium has given a considerable boost to the market for exporting live lamb. In my constituency, some 30 to 40 per cent. of lambs are exported. The measure has been particularly valuable for hill farmers because the small, hardy hill ewes produce small carcasses that are popular in southern France and Spain, while the bigger carcasses now go to the rest of France. Although that is good news for hill farmers, it is bad news for English consumers who must now pay continental prices for their lamb.

Nevertheless, hill farmers still face problems. One of the reasons why there was such an outcry when hill livestock farming allowances were cut was that they were based on average incomes. For every farmer on average or above-average incomes, many more are on below-average incomes and they have suffered because of the HLCA cut. I understand the logic of cutting the payment, which is meant to go up when incomes go down and go down when incomes go up. The difficulty is that farmers on small incomes see it simply as a reduction in their income, which can be crucial if their earnings are very low.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) that one of the disadvantages of the HLCA payment is that it is paid on headage. I hope that the Government will move away from a headage-based support to switching at least some of the premium payments to area payments in the hills. I know that such a way forward has been pushed by the National Farmers Union and the Moorland Association, but it would improve the guarantee of an income for upland farmers without forcing them continually to increase stocking.

The time for hill farmers has come. I appreciate the fact that agricultural Ministers have been busy with the CAP reform, GATT and other important negotiations like the reform of the milk marketing board system, but the problems facing hill farmers should now move up the agenda. One or two things can reasonably be done to help them. Apart from de-coupling premium payments and replacing them with area payments at no extra cost to the taxpayer, another great help would be to pay all the special premium on beef in a lump sum to producers. The idea of paying it in two parts after eight and 24 months is fine but it is unsuitable for hill farmers, who cannot keep beasts that long.

It would be a great boost to such farmers if the money could be paid to the producer as it would simplify much of the administration. It would also have the benefit of improving the marketing of beef. At present, much of the beef is going on the market because of the payment of the second part of the premium rather than because it is the optimum size for slaughter, so the measure would improve the quality of the carcass at the same time.

The Government could also continue to resist pressure by animal welfare groups to reduce the hours that animals can spend in transportation. As I said, 30 to 40 per cent. of the lambs produced in my constituency are exported. A restriction to eight hours would instantly wipe out that market. If those regulations are to be changed, they must not disadvantage farmers in hill areas.

The Government could also consider improving relationships between farmers and MAFF. With all those forms in the past two or three years, the relationship between the Ministry and farmers has deteriorated because of farmers' difficulties in filling in forms and the advice on them that they receive. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister understands that, as a result of quotas and IACS forms, some farmers in my constituency who have no quota have been fined for filling in forms incorrectly, in that they have not received their premium. I think that this has caused an unhappy relationship between MAFF officials and some farmers. When a farmer simply fills in the wrong box on a fairly innocent form, having spoken to the regional office, he can suddenly discover that he is short of his quota by 100 sheep. That is unfortunate. MAFF was a friend, but it is becoming less friendly and that is a pity.

These are some of the things that can be done to help hill farmers. I think the time has come to consider the hill

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farmer. We do not want to see our upland areas turned into television sets for series such as "All Creatures Great and Small". We want a continuing, viable hill farming community where people can live and work.

8.40 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I am very conscious of your strictures about time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and therefore I will be brief. I had wanted to go further down the road of the debate about potatoes and milk that we had last year when the Agriculture Bill was going through the House, but I will raise just two issues in this debate.

We heard two very interesting contributions this evening from the Government Benches. One of them came from the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) and the other from the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice). I thought those contributions were significant because those hon. Members are obviously peering through a window that is of interest to a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I served briefly on the Front Bench, and know that one is constrained to some extent as to how freely and openly one can discuss what is going through one's mind about agricultural reform. Perhaps I am now able to express a view or two on those matters a little more freely.

Having examined the brief for a year, I believe that there is an argument for patriating agricultural policy. I do not think that it is a problem in the way that the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) suggested. He seemed to think that we were talking simply of repatriating the policy in terms of regulation and standards. That is not the issue.

Everyone who takes a sane approach to these issues accepts that there must be a level playing field throughout the Community in terms of regulatory arrangement, whereby there are common standards and whereby a producer in Italy, Germany, France and the United Kingdom complies with broadly the same rules.

However, I think there is room for increased patriation of the budget. The proposition is that one necessarily has to have a level playing field on the budget throughout the Community. We can survive within the Community without that level playing field. I will give an example from the United Kingdom. The arrangements for area payments in Wales are different from those in England. While there may be those who would object to that, it shows that we can run two regimes side by side that do not provide for a level playing field. There might be a need to recalibrate, but that establishes a principle.

It is quite insane that the financial mechanisms that apply in the United Kingdom in terms of subsidy should necessarily apply in the Mediterranean countries of Europe. They produce different products in different circumstances and it might be that their climates are more favourable to one product as against another, just as our climate is more favourable to a particular product. It is really a question of accepting that there may be conditions in which a level playing field may not apply but countries are not necessarily placed at a competitive disadvantage.

The National Farmers Union should consider those matters, as there is a very good case to be made. I do not want to go too far down this route tonight, but I see budget funding in that light. Brussels advocating money for a specific purpose is not an ideal arrangement. One could establish a system whereby moneys are allocated to individual nation states based upon a mathematical formula. Once those moneys have been allocated, within an agricultural budget—some people might even say outside it—they could be spent in whatever areas national Governments decide will be their priority.

In other words, if the Italians want to resist spending money on environmental improvement—as I understand it, various countries within the Community do not want to spend money in particular areas and one is always negotiating to find a standard arrangement for allocation—let them have their money, and if they want to spend it in certain ways they should be allowed to do so.

However, why not then allow other countries to spend their money by way of area payments as against headage or promoting particular forms of production? This is how I was thinking privately during the time when I had some responsibility in such matters.

An extremely important subject is not being addressed in the debate, and there must be wide support across the House for the principles that I am about to enunciate. We have failed persistently—for decades—to deal with the problem of fraud in the Community. The problem is far greater than we are led to believe because our information sources are limited. The reasons why they are very limited can be found in the reports that were placed in the Vote Office for hon. Members to read. I do not want to go into the details today, but they suggest to me that we are only sampling what may be a much bigger problem.

Some interesting work on those matters has been done in the House of Lords. The other place has produced three reports: one released in 1988 entitled "Fraud Against the Community", another in 1992 entitled "The Fight Against Fraud", and, from the Select Committee on the European Communities, a very interesting report of 14 March this year entitled "Fraud and Mismanagement in the Community's Finances". I shall quote from that report some sections that are particularly relevant to our debate. It refers to the first two reports that I have alluded to and says:

"we noted that some of these proposals"—

the proposals in the reports—

"have been implemented to varying extents. However, we concluded that there was still a lack of strong political will in the Council of Ministers to bring fraud to an end and put the management of the Community's finances on a firmer footing".

In reference to a statement in one of the auditor's reports attacking failure to act, the Committee then goes on to say:

"This statement is depressing enough, but our concerns are heightened by the fact that the Court feels that there has been 'little or no improvement' in the financial management of the Community, despite repeated criticisms made in its annual reports. The Court considers that the Commission has had sufficient time to act or to launch any necessary legislative initiative, but has failed to do so. The Court's report also issues the warning that, unless there are radical changes, it may not be able in future reports to provide the statement of assurance about the reliability of the Community accounts and the legality of its underlying operations which is required by the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty."

They are heavy criticisms, but it is interesting that, before producing the report, Committee members wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The paper to the Chancellor sets out what the Committee believed to be the alternative approach. It proposed that a task force should be set up. The paper stated that it was

"suggested that a high level Task Force should be set up by the Heads of Community Governments to inquire into the financial

organisation of the Commission and also of the Member States, insofar as Community funds are involved and to make specific recommendations . . . We propose that the Task Force should be established as a temporary measure for, say, five years. It should not be a new institution and should not be seen as in any way usurping the functions of the Court of Auditors . . . we suggest that it be a small independent group comprised of, say, 4-6 persons with wide experience in the administration of large concerns".

I believe that on Monday this week the new Commissioner responsible for such matters was supposed to report to ECOFIN on his proposals for dealing with fraud in the Community. I understand that there has been some delay—the proposals should have been published this afternoon.

I keep asking myself whether, despite the fact that the Commissioner has been appointed specifically to deal with fraud, we are once again going to dodge the issue and not face up to our responsibilities. The fact that has always worried me is that the existence of the rebate to some extent compromises us in negotiations and prevents us from laying down the law by demanding major reform.

I understand that there has been some change and that the Home Secretary's proposals will be considered by the Community. I hope that some action is taken to deal with this important sector of Community finance.

8.51 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye at this time of the evening. I am glad to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

Our purpose is to consider European Community document No. 4616/94, which I have with me and which is a bulky document—who says that the EC is not bureaucratic? We also have to consider the excellent booklet prepared by my right hon. Friend the Minister entitled "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1993", which is a much better document. It is clearer and more informative.

Today's important debate on agriculture comes at a critical time following the 1992 CAP reform and, particularly, the 1993 GATT Uruguay round, concluded so successfully in December by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It brings 116 countries within the GATT mechanism and means that, for the first time, the GATT will cover agriculture. It puts us on the road to reforming the excesses of the CAP—to a certain extent, we have the Americans to thank for that.

There are advantages in the GATT because direct export subsidies would be reduced by 36 per cent. over six years and subsidised exports would be reduced by 21 per cent. over the same period. Unfortunately, the French introduced a last minute stopgap in the Breydel agreement and extended the period to nine years. Nevertheless, at the Edinburgh summit we undertook to restrict the budget to 1.27 per cent. of our resources. The French again introduced a rider stating that if additional measures proved necessary, the requisite steps would be taken. In other words, there is a get-out clause. Despite the fact that my right hon. Friend the Minister said earlier that the Chancellor had agreed this week that the ceiling would not be breached, a get-out clause exists. We must watch carefully if expenditure within the CAP is not to go on and on mounting.

The Blair House agreement introduced a new scheme of subsidising the land rather than production. Many hon. Members have called for the ending of subsidised production, which simply extends the system of ever-increasing subsidies. The integrated administration and control system—IACS—introduced last April brought about that welcome change. We shall now gradually be able to tie subsidies to the land and perhaps, which would be even better, to the person involved.

Under IACS we set aside 15 per cent. of land throughout the EC. That amounts to about 666,000 hectares—about 1.5 million acres—in this country. That is not the correct policy for the long term. We have seen what has happened this year—farmers have taken out their best land and employed better crop husbandry techniques and better techniques generally. Although we have taken out 15 per cent. of our land, the EC as a whole has reduced its production by only 2 per cent. A scheme costing many billions of pounds in the EC that reduces production by only 2 per cent. cannot be sensible. In the long term, it will be unsustainable.

The set-aside regime did not originate in IACS, but had been operating earlier. There was a five-year set-aside scheme and, thanks to my right hon. Friend's efforts at the last Council meeting, there is now an environmental scheme over 20 years. That has enabled us to introduce more environmentally friendly farming, of which much has been said today. My hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) mentioned the subject in great detail. In the time available to me I cannot develop the subject in such detail. I agreed with a number of the points made by my hon. Friend.

I have been urging on my right hon. Friend the Minister that we should include forestry in the set-aside regime. England has a forestry cover of only 8 per cent.—the lowest cover of any country in Europe. I know the problem facing my right hon. Friend within Europe where there is a much higher percentage of forestry cover. But it must make sense to plant more trees—I believe that many farmers would wish to do so—on land that will not come into production again in the near future, if ever. It would make sense to put some of that land into forestry.

I also urge my right hon. Friend to consider the management regime for set-aside. Last year we introduced a system whereby farmers were obliged to cut the weeds from their land to prevent it from becoming too untidy prior to July. Many nests and much wildlife were disturbed. I should like a regime, particularly on non-rotational set-aside, that allowed a moratorium between April and July so that the land could be left alone.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln mentioned the 20-year environmental set-aside scheme. The problem is that no one will implement it at present. It is not in IACS and is financially unattractive. It would be sensible for us to have an environmental set-aside scheme, and I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to consider that.

As well as EC environmental schemes there are domestic environmental schemes. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on creating six new environmentally sensitive areas—I am particularly grateful for the two which affect my constituents and which will be welcomed by them—the upper Thames tributaries and the Cotswolds. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for helping my constituents and I hope that, in turn, farmers in my constituency will take up the policy with alacrity and farm in a more sympathetic way. That is exactly what the public want. I hope that, as

[Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown]

provided for under the ESA scheme, the public will have greater access to the beautiful regions of the Cotswolds and the upper Thames tributaries, which are well worth a visit.

I should like to move to the question of how we should deal with the common agricultural policy budget. We should be grateful to the Americans. A system that encouraged ever more subsidy and the dumping of exports on the third world at prices way below those of its indigenous products was crazy. That did the poorest countries no good at all, because their own farmers could not possibly compete, so they went out of business or—even worse—started producing drugs, tobacco or other undesirable crops.

I welcome the fact that we will reduce the subsidising of exports dumped on the poorer countries, but it is incumbent on all politicians to find a solution to the problem of starvation in the third world. World population must surely be the key to the solution. There are five billion people on this earth. That number is set to double in the next 30 or 40 years, and it will double again to 20 billion by the end of the 21st century. Neither my right hon. Friend nor I will live to see that, but my children's children certainly will. It is a sobering thought that in 100 years' time there will be four times as many people on earth—an horrific prospect for this country, too.

That is one reason why we must sort out the CAP. But there is a much more pertinent reason for doing so—to benefit our taxpayers, our farmers, and above all our consumers. We spend roughly £3 billion on our agriculture every year. The Minister's excellently produced booklet tells us that fact. Given our population of 56 million, that works out at about £60 per person per year. That is certainly a large figure, but it is not huge in the context of the Government's other expenditure. I would not claim that the public are getting value for money, but they are getting something for their money—cheaper food than they would get if we had a free market. They are also getting the sort of countryside that they want. Increasingly, the countryside will be run on environmentally friendly lines, and the public expect to have to pay for that.

There has been some discussion of repatriating our agriculture policy. As long as we are members of the Common Market, that simply is not possible. If we repatriated our agriculture policy, the French and perhaps others would continue to subsidise their farmers. That is exactly the problem for our pig farmers at the moment. The French are subsidising theirs, but we are not subsidising ours—with the result that they have to sell pigs at between 10p and 20p a kilo below the cost of production. Under repatriation, how would we control that sort of problem?

We need an agreement between the 12, the 16, the 20 or whatever the EC becomes. Perhaps we can repatriate some financial policy, but we need carefully to consider the regulatory side. Regulation must be done EC wide, so that we prevent increasing numbers of subsidies.

An interesting letter appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* the other day, under the title "Stalking farm subsidies":

> "We want to bring down support prices to the point where supply and demand are brought into balance. This would enable supply controls such as production quotas to be dismantled. Where compensation for price cuts is provided in the form of direct aids, this should be progressively reduced."

My right hon. Friend may recognise those words—they appeared in her letter of 5 February. I agree with every word of it.

It would be wrong to follow the example of New Zealand in this matter as long as we remain in the EC. An excellent article in *The Daily Telegraph* of 17 March described how New Zealand has completely deregulated its agriculture. Despite predictions of doom and gloom that many of New Zealand's 60,000 farmers would go out of business, in the event only 1,500 went out of business. Perhaps many years from now we will be able to deregulate our agriculture, but it will never be possible to do so completely while we are a member of the European Union.

I should like to correct a wrong fact adduced earlier in the debate. Four countries are about to enter the EC. One of them, Sweden, has to a large extent deregulated its agriculture already. It will be a large net contributor to the EC—it will contribute about £1 billion, despite having a population of only seven or eight million. That compares with our contribution of £2 billion and our population of 56 million. Let us hope that these large net contributors join soon and bring some of their glasnost to the common agricultural policy so that we can progressively move towards deregulation and the repatriation of some budgetary mechanisms while retaining the regulatory mechanisms.

Let us ensure that GATT really works, and that we do not end up having to set aside more and more land just to accommodate the Americans, who would then increase their production and take our markets.

9.4 pm

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I should like to begin by expressing agreement with the comment of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that this debate must be viewed in context. Its context is the reform of the common agricultural policy. The right hon. Lady was right to say that the farmers are to be commended. We should, indeed, commend the workers and all those who live in increasingly difficult circumstances in rural communities, which cannot, of course, be divorced from agriculture.

In the short time that is available, I shall concentrate on the issue of costs and what has happened since the introduction of the reforms. Clearly there is among hon. Members, including myself, a feeling that the reforms that have been introduced since 1992 have taken on all the attributes of a mirage. A person is in the desert and is desperate. He thinks that he has found something to meet his needs, but then it disappears. The CAP reforms of 1992 have taken on those attributes.

One means of establishing the truth of this assertion is to consider costs. The Minister told us that the reforms would keep costs within agricultural guidelines. Nothing of the sort has happened. In the time available I cannot go into great detail, but I can say that since 1992 expenditure on CAP guarantees has increased by no less than £4.2 billion—not bad going. According to the European Commission, the guidelines will not be breached next year—the figure is about 37 billion ecu, which I reckon is about £33 billion—provided that no account is taken of the cost of devaluation and of the monetary changes, which is about £1.16 billion; that we transfer £900 million of olive oil support to 1996 and take no account of it; and that we start to spend the monetary reserve even before the budget is

agreed. I should remind the House that the monetary reserve was created outside the guidelines to meet fluctuations in exchange rates. Thus, unless the Minister, when she is battling for us, can change the situation, we shall have to spend money outside the guidelines to keep us within. That is absolutely crazy.

Those costs will not disappear, so they will have to be met. I estimate that between 1992 and next year we shall have increased agricultural expenditure by approximately £6 billion. These are not my figures or the Labour party's; they were produced by the Commission.

Are right hon. and hon. Members satisfied that simply noting such a horrendous situation—which is what the motion we are debating asks us to do—is good enough? Opposition Members think not. We believe that it is necessary to take a far stronger line in respect of these things. It is for that reason that we think it important to point out exactly what has happened since 1992.

What does the situation demonstrate? It demonstrates that CAP expenditure is as much out of control today as it has ever been. In fact, it is accelerating. The increase that I have mentioned amounts to about 30 per cent. The consumer and the taxpayer are being clobbered. We are pouring increasing resources into the black hole that is called the CAP. The 1993-94 budget is bogus, as is accepted by the Commission, and I have demonstrated as briefly as possible that the 1995 budget is a cruel illusion.

The CAP has a voracious appetite. We hear a great deal of Euro-sceptic jargon—"We're battling for Britain", and so on—but none of this would have happened, and there would have been none of these horrendous increases, if the Government had not agreed. That point can fairly be put to the Minister. Why, over this period, have Ministers, on behalf of the Government, gone to Brussels saying "We're fighting our corner. We're going to control costs"? Next year the Government, if they agree to this arrangement —and I hope that they will not—will have presided over an increase of about £6 billion.

I have one or two questions to which I hope the Minister will reply in his winding-up speech. Where will the Minister find the £1.2 billion that, according to the Commission, represents the cost of the monetary alignments of black Wednesday? Will the Minister agree that the £900 million of olive oil payments that, according to the Commission, should be deferred until October 1995 should be transferred into the 1996 budget? If so, what justification can the Minister give us this evening to agree to defer nearly £1 billion of expenditure simply to remain within the guidelines?

Will the Government agree to spend the money in reserve? It was never intended to bolster up a crisis within the CAP but only to meet changes in the exchange rate. It was never intended for that purpose and it is outside the guidelines.

In the last few minutes of my speech I shall make one or two observations on specific issues. On cereals, the Commission stated that cereal stocks were 43 million tonnes at the beginning of 1994. It estimates that, even with the reforms in place, by 1998 we shall have 175 million tonnes of production and, if everything goes right this year, we may end up with 33 million tonnes of cereals in store. I remember the halcyon days before the reforms when we had only 18 million tonnes of cereal in store. What progress have we made when the reforms bite into the regimes yet we end up with twice the amount of cereals in store?

On milk, the Secretary of State is quite right not to agree to quota cuts in the present circumstances, but logically, if we do not press for a quota cut, we shall remain in structural surplus because the quota is 12 per cent. more than consumption. In addition, the disadvantages to the United Kingdom because we are not self-sufficient will continue. That is not good enough; we need something more positive from the Minister. Although she is right in the circumstances, we cannot tolerate continued structural surpluses because of the quotas while the United Kingdom continues to be disadvantaged.

On beef, clearly there have to be some changes because of the 1992 reference year. The regional quotas that qualify for the special premium are now out of control—something like 30 per cent. more than was anticipated. However, there is great danger in agreeing to a reduction in the density from three to 2.5 livestock units per hectare. That will hit the United Kingdom harder than elsewhere.

The Select Committee report stated that the CAP price proposals

"constitute an issue of considerable political importance".

The Select Committee is right. The issues that are of considerable political importance demand that tonight we do something more than simply note the United Kingdom's horrendous and critical position.

I hope that the Minister is right. I hope that she can get across her view that the 1992 reforms were the first step. In the light of the agricultural crisis in our rural communities, what is the next step?

9.13 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I take issue with the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), who criticised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales for not being present this evening. That was rather cheap, considering the efforts made by my right hon. Friend, of which the hon. Gentleman must have been aware, to secure equal treatment for cereal farmers in England and Wales. Despite his efforts, he was unsuccessful, but at least we have a scheme that takes account of the high yield produced by cereal farmers in constituencies such as mine in the Vale of Glamorgan. I certainly welcome half a loaf as better than none.

Mr. Ainger: But does not the hon. Gentleman accept that his farmers in the Vale of Glamorgan, and mine in Pembrokeshire, are discriminated against—if they were getting the same yields as their English counterparts, they would receive significantly more, whether they are in less-favoured areas or non-LFA areas? Does he accept that the Minister of State may well have done his best, but that it was not good enough?

Mr. Sweeney: I have already accepted that my hon. Friend was unsuccessful, but the point that I am making is that he has tried on behalf of farmers in Wales. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the background to the discrimination between Welsh and English farmers is based on the fact that, by and large, because of the nature of the terrain, yields in Wales can be expected to be substantially lower than those in England. Clearly, in parts of Wales, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the yield is comparable in every way with parts of England. That is why I feel that the solution, although less than ideal, is certainly better than the original proposal.

[Mr. Sweeney]

A remarkable feature about the debate has been the range of views expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, which seem to have favoured radical reform of the CAP, and the considerable support for repatriation of agricultural policies. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister and her predecessor on their efforts to reform and improve the CAP. I am sure that all hon. Members know full well the difficulties that the Government face in securing improvements. I wish my right hon. Friend well. If I may use an agricultural metaphor, I hope that she will take the bull by the horns and urge substantial reform.

Personally, I would like to see the CAP in its present form abolished. On the need for reform, a few statistics will make my point for me. The average family of four in the UK pays more than £18 per week extra for its food as a result of the CAP in its present form. No other industry enjoys that level of subsidy. In 1992, consumers in the European Union paid an extra 40 per cent. for agricultural products. In 1992, the average value of subsidy to European Union farmers was equivalent to 47 per cent. of their income. With the prospect of four new members joining the European Union, the level of subsidy may become even worse. The average value of subsidies to Finnish farmers is 68 per cent.; to Norwegian farmers it is 77 per cent.

I found myself agreeing with the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) when he pointed out that our constituents might not know very much about the detail, but they know instinctively that they are paying too much for their food as a result of the existing CAP. Naturally, I disagreed with him when he went on to say that he favoured the abolition of set-aside because he felt that it was encouraging hunting. As a hunting supporter, I disagree, although I agree with his underlying sentiment that set-aside has been a failure. Although I start from the Conservative premise that subsidy is a bad thing and should be eradicated, I realise that suddenly to abolish subsidies would harm British farmers and farm workers. Instead of advocating the abolition of subsidies, I therefore suggest that, on an interim basis, farmers should be paid direct payments linked solely to farm income. That would be less market-distorting than subsidies tied to price intervention or production levels.

A system of direct payments would be better in a number of ways. First, the true level of support would be visible through taxes rather than food prices. Secondly, it would be more efficient. Only 40 per cent. of the existing CAP budget goes to farmers, while 60 per cent.—£27.6 billion a year—is spent on administration, the cost of exporting intervention surpluses, storage costs and fraud: in Italy alone, fraud cost £64 million last year.

The link between direct payments and area under-cultivation should be dropped. As I have said, set-aside has not worked; leaving 15 per cent. of arable land to one side reduced last year's cereal harvest by only 1.4 per cent.

Agricultural subsidies in Europe are designed to keep inefficient producers working: the same applies to steel and other problem industries. Politicians in each member state should consult their constituents, and decide how much subsidy is appropriate. The legitimate desire to protect the countryside might be served better by the establishment of national parks than by subsidies for inefficient farmers.

According to a recent report from the Centre for Economic Policy Research, agriculture is a major area to which the principle of subsidiarity should be extended. The European Union should have no role in the payment of incomes, as conditions and practices vary throughout the Union. That point was made very well by the Opposition earlier. Conditions in England may be very different from those in Greece, for example.

The role of the European Union should be confined to the creation of a statutory framework for national income support, to limit market distortions. National Governments would specify income thresholds below which subsidies should be claimed; the European Union would impose a cap limiting the maximum subsidy available. Within the new framework, each national Government would be free to decide how large their nationally financed direct income support should be. No longer would British citizens have to subsidise French farmers indirectly by paying a much higher net contribution to the European Union budget.

The ultimate objective should be the abolition of agricultural subsidies throughout the European Union. Meanwhile, the new framework would be a great step forward for the EU—a step away from the common agricultural policy and towards cheaper food, lower subsidies and more competitive markets.

9.22 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): As I have already been fortunate enough to make a couple of interventions about some of the issues with which I wished to deal, my speech will be brief.

Today's debate has confirmed that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree on one thing: the common agricultural policy as a whole is a failure. Moreover, as is suggested by the figures cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson), the reforms have not produced the result that the Minister claimed they would produce a year or so ago.

There is an additional measure of the success or failure of the CAP. Not only is the budget growing and growing; those who were supposed ultimately to benefit from the system—consumer and producers—are not doing so. Farmers—especially those in less-favoured areas who should be receiving reasonable hill livestock compensatory allowances and the like—are feeling the pinch.

The Minister tells us regularly, in various press releases, that hill farmers have received significant increases—up to 30 per cent. year on year, which was the figure between 1991-92 and 1992-93. Sadly, however, the base year to which the Minister refers—1991-92—was the worst year for nearly a decade in terms of farmers' net incomes. Using that as a base year was totally and, in my view, deliberately misleading, and did not warrant the cuts that were made last year and this year.

Our rural areas have a serious problem. Because of the CAP's failure, we are not encouraging young people into farming; the age profile in the industry is rising every year. The latest figures, based on the past 15 years, show that, on average, 26 people leave farming every day. That is catastrophic for rural regions, which many hon. Members represent.

There seems to be a consensus—if one can use that term these days—among hon. Members on both sides of the House that we must move away from a CAP that deals only with price and product support towards a CAP that

involves the environment and people rather than products. If we do that, we shall be moving in the right direction. It is nice to see Conservative Members moving in that direction because I fought the 1992 general election on the basis of such a policy. The Conservative party is at last starting to listen to what not only the Labour party, but people who represent rural communities' interests have been saying for some years.

Sadly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) said, people in rural communities depend not only on CAP subsidies, but on family credit. Many small hill farmers, dairy farmers and sheep farmers, particularly those in Wales, but also those in Cumbria and south-west England, depend on state handouts to support their families. That is further proof of the failure of the CAP.

We have to get to grips with fraud, although that is not such a problem in this country. I am willing to accept that, in the main, the British farmer is honest and tries to earn an honest crust, but there is massive scandal and fraud throughout Europe, which is not being properly tackled.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have mentioned the need to return to national aids, yet, sadly, the one national aid over which we had some control—the hill livestock compensatory allowance—has been cut again and again. I accept Conservative Members' comments that the HLCA is not necessarily a good national aid because it is a headage payment, but at least it was there in principle and the Government had a great deal of control over it. They should have considered applying the HLCA not on a headage basis, but on the basis of environmentally sensitive farming, lower inputs and lower outputs.

I shall finish because my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) has just given me a dirty look. We in Wales expect the Secretary of State for Wales to be involved in debates such as today's. It is rare that we have a full day's debate on agriculture. I should have thought that the Secretary of State or the Minister of State could have attended part of the debate. Every time I intervened to ask about a Welsh issue I was told by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that it was not her concern, but a matter for the Secretary of State for Wales. When we debate agriculture in the whole of the United Kingdom, the Secretary of State for Wales should be present for some of the time.

9.28 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I welcome the opportunity to debate agriculture and to examine the effectiveness of CAP reform and how it operates in the United Kingdom. The Labour party has always expressed doubt about the CAP reforms and whether they would work. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) made that clear in moving the amendment, and demonstrated the weaknesses of the scheme.

The set-aside scheme, which is at the heart of the reforms, wastes resources. We are also not convinced that it will meet its objectives. Agra Europe wrote on 29 October last year:

> "The problem for the Community is . . . that the new support system and current agricultural technology is encouraging farmers to minimise the impact of set-aside on cereals and, in particular, to maximise their output of high yielding wheats."

The report also contains some good news, however. It went on to say that, because of the new technology, United Kingdom farmers would be far more competitive in a world market than some of them seem to believe. Recent figures appear to bear that out.

The 1993 provisional figures for wheat, for example, show that, although the area for wheat production is down —from 2,067 million hectares last year to 1,759 million this year—the yield increased from 6.82 tonnes per hectare in 1992 to 7.31 tonnes in 1993. I know that yields can be influenced by the weather, but the yield in 1993 was the highest since 1989, and it was higher than average yields between 1982 and 1984, which were 6.81 tonnes.

European agriculture is still a heavily subsidised sector. Measurements of producer subsidy equivalents, produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, show that European Community farmers obtain 47 per cent. of their income from agricultural support, compared with 28 per cent. for farmers in the United States.

When considering the United States, it is also worth considering the implications of the general agreement on tariffs and trade. Not much has been said about GATT, apart from the fact that there is a linkage between it and the CAP reforms. However, some serious issues have yet to be resolved in relation to the GATT agreement.

The first is the question of opening EC markets to food imports, amounting to 5 per cent. of domestic consumption. I am not clear whether that figure is for the Community or whether it is an aggregate figure. It could mean that the United Kingdom, which has traditionally imported a high percentage of its food, could be taking more than its fair share of that 5 per cent. penetration.

The second problem is that of food additives and drugs in animals, which is very serious. In many cases, drugs are used abroad, but their sale is banned in the European Community. Hormones in beef are one example, and bovine somatrophin—BST—which is being legalised in the United States, is banned in this country at least until the end of the year. We must deal with those problems within GATT.

Many third countries with poor animal welfare standards and almost non-existent enforcement procedures will export meat products to this country. We need to ensure that our producers, who have invested in high welfare standards, are protected from what I regard as unfair competition. Ways of doing so might include clearer labelling, which will allow consumers to ensure that they are choosing foods that have been produced to the highest standards. Another way is to put minimum standards into place through the GATT agreements and negotiations.

Animal welfare standards are a cost to the industry, but it is a cost that many within it are prepared to accept. Such high standards can be a marketing aid, and I was pleased that the Parliamentary Secretary endorsed that view in Agriculture questions today, when he recognised that it can be an advantage to market food that is produced in this country to the highest standards.

What is the sense in exporting low-value live sheep to the continent, where farmers simply add value to the carcasses? Apart from exporting live animals, that is exporting British jobs, and it does not help the food deficit in this country.

I was appalled to hear the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) say that he hoped that the Minister would resist improvements in animal transportation times, because it would affect his farmers and the live export of sheep. The French must be laughing all the way to the bank

[Mr. Elliot Morley]

at the attitude of the hon. Member for Hexham. We should ensure that we are adding value, rather than simply exporting live animals, which is not good economically or in animal welfare terms.

Sheep exports increased from 81,000 in 1985 to between 2 million and 3 million in 1993, and that concerns me. We should be proud of the quality of British lamb, as well as that of our beef and pork, which are also mainly a carcass trade. We should vigorously market British lamb as chilled carcasses—marketing on the hook, rather than on the hoof.

It is a pity that Food From Britain has to operate with one hand tied behind its back, due to the way in which the Government have frozen its budget and restricted its activities. If we are to tackle the deficit in food imports, we must have a stronger marketing system.

The problem is that the CAP is still hugely expensive and wasteful. The original scheme proposed some modulation of support, as has been mentioned by the hon. Members who spoke on behalf of small farmers. It is fair to ask whether a limit should be imposed on the people who receive their highest income from agricultural support.

In response to a written question, we learned that the highest individual payment to a farmer was £1.25 million —*[Interruption.]* Indeed, that was the Co-op. The Co-op manages farms; that is a growing part of its business. So it is not fair to suggest that one individual farmer received that money. Nevertheless, the written answer also informed us that other people were receiving payments of more than £1 million, and that many farmers were in receipt of payments running into hundreds of thousands of pounds. We should give some consideration to people who are in a less fortunate position in terms of agricultural support.

The detail of the CAP figures shows that there are still a number of substantial increases, although expenditure is supposed to be decreasing. Cereal compensatory payments are increasing by 40 per cent., although admittedly as part of the agreed reforms. Potato starch compensation is also being increased by 40 per cent. That does not apply to the United Kingdom, but it still adds to the overall costs.

Olive oil production aid is up by 44.7 per cent. Again, that is not a United Kingdom matter. The beef annual premium is increasing by 25 per cent. and the suckler cow premium by 36 per cent. That represents unfair competition with the unsubsidised pig and poultry sectors which, as we have heard, are going through a difficult period.

The total EC agricultural support budget for the current year will increase by 23 billion ecu. We want the overall budget to decrease, not to increase in that way. A CAP budget currently running at about £30 billion is obviously open to fraud, as has been described by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

There are more interesting issues buried in the papers that the Government must examine, and must press firmly in the Council of Ministers. Tobacco is certainly one such issue. Some hon. Members have already said what nonsense the tobacco subsidy is. According to the figures, tobacco prices have been frozen for this year and will not be reviewed until 1996. I see no reason why the review should be put off for so long. Alternatives must be sought for people who depend on tobacco crops, but at present tobacco is the most heavily subsidised crop per hectare in the European Community.

Protein plants, too, are subsidised, in the form of dried fodder payments, which have been identified as costly and inefficient. Fibre plant subsidies, which include silkworm subsidy, constitute another costly scheme identified by the Court of Auditors as open to fraud. Linseed, a big United Kingdom crop, still receives a £438 per hectare subsidy, which represents an extremely small reduction.

I am concerned about the proposals to raise the minimum alcoholic strength of wine—although I imagine that some hon. Members will not be too worried about that. The strength is being raised not for the benefit of the consumer, but to reduce current wine surpluses.

Many hon. Members have said that what we need in the CAP is a major shift to decouple subsidy from production. Farmers and the industry as a whole already recognise that. The Labour party wants existing CAP funds to be better used, for the benefit of farmers, farm workers and the wider rural economy.

There are alternatives. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington and others have mentioned repatriation and subsidiarity—interesting concepts, which need to be examined. However, when we discuss repatriation, we must always bear in mind the need for equality in subsidies between the different agricultural sectors. The market would be distorted without the equality that can come about only through a common policy.

The Labour party welcomes the shift towards environmental support payments. We welcome the increase in environmentally sensitive areas recently announced—something that we have long advocated and for which we have long campaigned. However, the total of all the various schemes for environmental support is only about £100 million, which pales into insignificance when compared with more than £2 billion of subsidy in the arable aid programme and set-aside.

The Government's commitment to the environmental programmes is also in doubt. They have recently cut the farm conservation scheme, and research and development programmes.

In addition, there have been changes to the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, which means that it is no longer regarded as supporting farmers but is evolving into a private consultancy whose services many farmers can no longer afford. The Government have an important role to play in providing such support.

The Government's green credibility has also been damaged by their failure to honour their promise on hedgerow protection. Indeed, the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) and his pal the hon. Member for Hexham were involved in hedge-killing activities. Labour Members will not forget their role in destroying a Bill to protect hedgerows, and will remind their constituents of it when the time comes.

There are alternative methods of support through green premium payments, which the Labour party has been advocating. We could promote alternatives, such as the restoration of traditional wetlands, which is advocated in a recent excellent report by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Wetlands can also help to control floods and provide sea defences by the creation of radical habitat creation schemes of salt marsh and reed-beds.

A connected issue, which I hope the Minister will take into account in future negotiations, is that, if we are to use

long-term set-aside for environmental reasons—especially for wet pasture and flood defence—there is a need for grazing on that long-term set-aside. At the moment, such grazing is prohibited under the set-aside regulations. There is a need to negotiate a way of licensing grazing as part of conservation and long-term set-aside management. I hope that the Minister will take that into account.

Diversification can be encouraged through access agreements, and rural planning policies can encourage the use of farm buildings. We also need to encourage more organic farming, which involves an integrated approach. There is a little support for conversion, but in fact organic farming is second only to environmentally sensitive areas in providing an alternative to farmers.

We want to encourage alternative crops—non-food crops, such as linseed for oil, wheat and sugar beet for ethanol, rape for bio-diesel and biomass schemes. There is still a long way to go, but there are niche markets where a biodegradable fuel would be useful, such as in waterways and sensitive areas.

Lord Carter recently gave an excellent paper in which he identified other markets for bio-oils, such as lubricants, technical oils and chemical feedstock. All these, of course, need support for research and development, and marketing, in partnership with industry. That is something of which the Labour party is not afraid, and we pledge to undertake such research. The money is available. There is a total of £30 billion of CAP funding, which we believe needs a change of direction and application. Only the Labour party can achieve that, because the Government have isolated themselves. They are currently involved in a row and, through their new-found attraction to the block vote, are supporting measures that will make it more difficult to reform the CAP—they are supporting a smaller vote in countries which will, of course, be only too pleased to try to delay it.

Tonight, I had to attend a meeting of Steel Action, a group comprising steelworkers from all over the country. They are asking why the Government are not taking up a real issue in Europe and fighting against unfair steel subsidies, for example, instead of being involved in the nonsense of qualified majority voting. The truth is that someone has recently grabbed the Prime Minister's arm and explained to him that such voting will never lead to reform of the CAP, so we now have a further nonsense of a two-tier approach to qualified majority voting—23 for everything else but 27 for agriculture where it suits the Government.

That approach makes the Government a laughing stock, and alienates support in Europe. It puts at risk the membership of countries that will be net contributors to the CAP and which should be natural allies of this country —or, should I say, of the Labour party, in this instance. There will never be changes unless we work towards co-operation rather than alienation, unless we work for a common position rather than one that cannot stand up to examination but brings the Government into disrepute.

9.44 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): Before I address this excellent-quality debate, I should say that we have just heard a speech from the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) which convinced us that the Labour party is bereft of any sensible and positive ideas for agriculture and food in this country. I shall develop that theme in my remarks.

This has been an interesting debate; I genuinely congratulate all hon. Members who took part in it. We had some remarkably thoughtful contributions. In particular, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) on an excellent speech on environmental matters. Clearly, he has carefully thought through his position about the development of the new challenges for agriculture and the environment, and I look forward to him contributing to the work that will be undertaken to assess the environmental impact of set-aside.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) made an extremely well-thought-out and thought-provoking speech, taking into account the expansion of the Community, the challenges it will face and some of the real long-term challenges as it comes to terms with large-scale expenditure on agriculture. That was the theme of many other speeches.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) and for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) raised issues connected with horticulture and the food industry. They did so with compassion, conviction and knowledge, and I shall deal with some of their detailed points in a moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) dealt with his constituency knowledge about the problems of hill farmers and animal welfare—key issues in a debate on agriculture.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) took us to a central issue that underpins much of our consideration of the common agricultural policy—the context in which we see the CAP in terms of the general agreement on tariffs and trade. If the United Kingdom had not worked tirelessly behind the scenes, we would not have reached a GATT agreement; we would be living in a world facing protectionism. Sadly, that is something that has been lost by Labour Members.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) talked about the cost of the common agricultural policy.

I shall speak in more detail about the speeches by Opposition Members, especially the hon. Members for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) and for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler). I was taken by the comments of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) who talked about a subject that I know well—horticulture. I was grateful for his contribution.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) talked about the change in the common agricultural policy; the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) took us through his view of the environment; and the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) gave us perhaps a cautionary tale about what change in agriculture means in terms of the effect on employment.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East perhaps omitted a very important point, which has been missing from the debate—the fact that agriculture is the start of the food chain. Agriculture is the process which provides food manufacturers, food producers, and ultimately the consumer, with the food we eat. As the number involved in primary production has declined, we may see more people entering other parts of the food chain.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) surprised me, because he did not mention his marvellous early potatoes. I thought that he might at least take the

[Mr. Michael Jack]

opportunity of a little light advertising, but he failed to do so. However, he joined in the wider debate on the reform of the common agricultural policy.

This debate is of considerable importance, because it touches the lives of those who form 2 per cent. of our work force. As I said, it is important because it is the starting point for our food chain. It is also important because the issues that we have discussed touch on the whole question of the well-being of our rural communities.

In a year in which we will see an increase in farm incomes, and other matters which I shall refer to in a moment, we can see a strengthening of the rural economy. The work that we have done—for example, in campaigning for funding under things such as objective 5b status—is a clear sign of the coherence of our policies in terms of the rural economy. The debate has demonstrated that it is in the Conservative party that some of the best thinking is going on about the future of the common agricultural policy in terms of its impact on our rural communities.

I must say that I trembled slightly in preparing for this debate, because I had understood that the Opposition were to make an announcement on the CAP. I stood by the Press Association printout expecting to see a long list of quite devastating new thinking; to my absolute relief, I got a copy of the Labour party press release on the CAP.

I have here a £5 note. I am not offering it to anybody this evening, but I was offering it earlier to anybody who could find a vestige of an agricultural policy from the Opposition. This is safe money, because nobody has managed to find that missing policy. I searched the Opposition's manifesto for a reference to agriculture, but I could not find one. I searched today's document for some new policy. It says that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East condemns 14 years of Tory Euro-waste. All I can say is that this document is a waste of the paper it is printed on.

It is the Conservative party which can take the credit for being the driving force behind the reform of the CAP. It is this party which is conscious of cost and which has tried hard, within the overall budgetary limits which my right hon. Friend mentioned, to drive down EC expenditure on the CAP. It is this party which has been taking the lead on integration of, for example, environmental policies with the reform of the CAP. It is this party which understands about free trade and its importance to agriculture.

That is why we have been pioneering in terms of the GATT. This party understands that the success of our food and agriculture industry is determined by consumers buying the excellence of its output, as good wholesome food. I looked to see if the Labour party had any ideas on the subject, and I saw what it said when its former leader was in office. The Labour party said that dismantling the CAP would provide money which—believe or not—could be spent on the cohesion fund, which transfers money to poorer European Union nations.

This evening, we have heard nothing to rebut that position. I can only assume that that largesse from Walworth road—

Mr. Morley: Who said that?

Mr. Jack: It was the former leader of the hon. Gentleman's party. He may not be in touch with what his party's former leader used to say.

The Opposition have also said quite clearly in other documents that the savings which they see coming from changes in the CAP should go towards financing other Community projects. We have heard nothing this evening to rebut that, and I can only assume that that is their objective.

I was interested that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East entertained us with some of his notions about social policy and his view of agriculture. One thing which the Labour party would like to sign up to is the social chapter. I have noticed recent reports in the press which have suggested that the hon. Gentleman's party might want to introduce some social benefits for part-time workers. Perhaps he has not costed that, but if his proposals were applied to part-time workers in agriculture, he would simply add about £11 million to the cost of UK agriculture. That is how much the Labour party cares about the cost base of our agricultural production.

The hon. Gentleman told us that, in some way, the Government had left agriculture in a disastrous position.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Hear, hear.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman should wait until I give him the facts.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East said that we had done nothing to strengthen agriculture. Our economic policies in fact reduced interest rates to farmers in 1992 by £743 million and in 1993 by £506 million. There was an increase in tractor sales in 1993 of 19,000. Those are tangible examples of the better state of agriculture that the Government have assisted in bringing about.

The hon. Gentleman also challenged the Conservative party, as did several Opposition Members, about our general policies on the way forward for the common agricultural policy. I want to remind the hon. Gentleman of what my right hon. Friend the Minister said on 7 January. I think that that will be of interest to the whole House, because it maps out succinctly and clearly the Government's view of the way forward. She said:

"Over time we want to see a further reduction in support prices to levels which bring supply and demand into balance. If we succeed in this, artificial production controls will become redundant. However, I will not pretend that reforming the CAP in the way that we want will be an easy task. Most of our Community partners will take a good deal of persuading."

I have listened to the voices from the Opposition Benches attacking the Government and Conservative Members as though we were the villains of the piece, when it was we who introduced help to the campaign for financial stabilisers; we who fought for legally binding ceilings on the Community expenditure on the budget; we who campaigned for the reform of the common agricultural policy; we who campaigned for the GATT reform; and we who achieved the latest breakthrough in terms of budgetary discipline and control of fraud.

I suggest that Opposition Members spend some of their energy and time speaking to their counterparts in France, Italy, Spain and Germany—the countries that have been the bulwarks against the positive reform of the common agricultural policy that we want.

My right hon. Friend is not only wedded to those excellent words of general policy, but supports the next stage of change in the common agricultural policy—the reforms of the regime of sugar, of olive oil, wine, fruit and vegetables. There is much more to be done. Beef will have to be considered. Those things are on our agenda, but we

are but one of 12 nations in the Community, and we have a powerful job persuading them of the case. Nevertheless, it is a task that we shall not shirk.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East attacked us for delaying the reform of the milk marketing scheme. I refer him to the report of the Select Committee, in which the blame for that was clearly put on the cavalier attitude of the milk marketing board.

The hon. Members for Edinburgh, East, for North Cornwall, Carmarthen and for Pembroke, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), all mentioned the reductions in hill livestock compensatory allowances.

My right hon. Friend had a difficult balancing job in reaching her decision, but she realised that about £550 million of income would be available to farmers in the hills. She considered the situation in which, in 1991-92, the income of farmers—especially sheep farmers—in the severely disadvantaged areas was £19,000, of which £7,000 came from HLCAs. She found that the amount of subsidy that they received had increased in 1993-94 to £27,000, of which £5,500 would come from HLCAs. She realised that more income was coming from the increases in sheep annual premium and other sources of income, —for example, environmental programmes—and took a sensible decision to balance the difficulties of the hills with the need for budgetary constraint. She achieved a sensible position, which has allowed the incomes of farmers in the hills to increase, but which has made sense in terms of our United Kingdom Budget.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East mentioned research and development grants. He was perhaps unfair to say that, in spite of minimal cuts—£6 million in the agricultural sector—we shall spend £125 million on agricultural research and development. I refer him to my right hon. Friend's latest announcement, on 23 March, about new research fellowships in food process engineering. That is a clear example of the way in which we envisage things progressing in research.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall is a member of the Liberal party, which produces a thing called "The Farmers' Charter." That charter tells us that his party supports the reform of the CAP so that farmers are paid "proper prices". What on earth does he mean by "proper prices"? He told us nothing of that. He says that his policy is to support small and family farms, but at the same time he does not want Britain's large farms to be disadvantaged, because the average size of our farms is greater. The hon. Member's policies are utterly, totally and completely inconsistent. He says in a document that he wants to reform the price structure of the CAP, but he does not want Britain's farmers to be exposed to unfettered world competition. The best he can find is local management agreements administered by councillors.

My hon. Friends the Members for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) and for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) mentioned important matters connected with the fruit and vegetable regime. I assure them that we shall campaign strongly for a reform of the intervention regime. If that is accepted by other Community countries, it opens the way for the grubbing-up grants which they seek.

This has been an extremely good debate on agriculture, but it has clearly shown that it is the Conservative party that understands food and farming, and that we go forward with strength, from seed to supermarket.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 298.

Division No. 180] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*

Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'ld'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*

Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put and agreed to.
Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4616/94 on agricultural prices for 1994-95 and related measures, and of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food publication 'Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1993'.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts and Measure:

Consolidated Fund Act 1994.
New Towns (Amendment) Act 1994.
Mental Health (Amendment) Act 1994.
Insolvency Act 1994.
Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Act 1994.
British Railways (Order Confirmation) Act 1994.
British Railways (No. 2) (Order Confirmation) Act 1994.
British Railways (No. 3) (Order Confirmation) Act 1994.
Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994.

Parliamentary Commissioner Bill

[*Money*]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Parliamentary Commissioner Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am not against this money resolution, but I believe that when money resolutions come before the House—except when there is an open and shut case for supporting them, and we know how much finance the House is committing—the Minister responsible ought to give the House an explanation of them.

The Bill allows the Parliamentary Commissioner to investigate administrative actions taken by administrative staff of certain tribunals, which are listed in new schedule 4. The relevant tribunals, for the purposes of section 5(7), are:

"Tribunals constituted in Great Britain under regulations made under section 4 of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979. Child support appeal tribunals constituted under section 21 of the Child Support Act 1991. Social security appeal tribunals constituted under section 41 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992. Disability appeal tribunals constituted under section 43 of that Act. Medical appeal tribunals constituted under section 50 of that Act."

All these are clearly defined areas in which the Parliamentary Commissioner is to have his powers extended, and I welcome that.

This money resolution is not like the one attached to the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. All hon. Members recognise that as a Bill that will not need similar examination. This Bill, however, is rather more vague in its application. I am sure that the Minister will be able to give us some idea of the amount of money that Parliament will provide—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What does the Bill say?

Mr. Cryer: Private Members' Bills do not offer the same detail as the Government can provide. Government Bills always include information about their financial effects. It provides Parliament with a helpful guide if we are told about those effects. With private Members' Bills, therefore, it is all the more relevant that the Minister should outline the sort of expenditure that he anticipates. I do not think that it will be very much, but it is useful to obtain such information from Ministers.

Before I began speaking on money resolutions, they often went through on the nod and Ministers sometimes did not even bother to turn up. They were certainly not briefed. Now they are briefed and are here to answer questions that hon. Members want to ask them.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The hon. Gentleman flatters himself.

Mr. Cryer: I probably have more experience than most hon. Members in discussing money resolutions. When I started, Ministers were not here, or they were not briefed, but now they are—that is a welcome development. I assure the Minister that I am not attempting to be hostile to his

[Mr. Cryer]

Bill, but I assume that if he had had the financial information before now he would have put it in an explanatory memorandum to the Bill—there is no reason not to do that.

Private Members who promote legislation in this place do so willingly, to serve some useful purpose. We realise that only legislation of this sort will get through private Members' time on a Friday in any case. Thus it seems to me that money resolution debates serve a very useful purpose. I assume that the fact that the motion stands on the Order Paper in the name of a member of the Government indicates Government support for the Bill. No doubt the Minister will be able to confirm that. It is helpful to have a look at these matters. The Minister will be able to use the information that his Department provides, and it will appear in the record.

Private Members' Bills that are enacted have exactly the same force as the most important Government legislation. In the case of their own Bill, Ministers provide some sort of estimate—alas, frequently inaccurate. In this case too there ought to be some sort of estimate so that when the Bill becomes law, as I hope it will, we shall not find that, with soaring expenses, the money provided by Parliament is virtually open ended. I realise that the various votes that Parliament approves each year constitute one of the limiting factors in public expenditure. None the less, we need some idea of the proportion of funds that will be taken up by the implementation of this legislation.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend plays a very useful role by speaking in debates on money resolutions. There is no doubt that this helps the Government in some respects. It makes them study more closely the financial implications of legislation, and it ensures that Whips are here to sort things out at the end of the day. I do not know whether my hon. Friend is aware that during the last parliamentary Session the House spent 11 hours debating money resolutions. I believe that my hon. Friend was involved in every debate. I always think that my hon. Friend's contributions at the end of the day are like the epilogues that one used to see on television.

My hon. Friend plays a useful role also by ensuring that members of staff are provided with taxis to take them home. *[Interruption.]* I think that this is important, as does my hon. Friend. It has to be remembered that in this building there are workers—real workers—who do not have a taxi paid for by the state until after 10.30 pm. In this respect my hon. Friend does an important job.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend, in his brief intervention, has refuted a rather cheap sneer from the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), who suggested that money resolution debates are not useful. I have always maintained that they are very useful. The time allowed is 45 minutes, but there are some people who want to abolish them. That would be wrong. For many years during my membership of the House money resolutions simply were not discussed.

On occasions, during the course of such a debate, it has been discovered that the money resolution did not cover the authority provided by the Bill. Firearms legislation is an example. In one case, two additional money resolutions were required. There is no doubt that some of the omissions that had to be dealt with by the additional money resolutions were discovered during debate on the first one.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that, as indicated by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), his only reason for keeping us here at this hour is to enable staff members to be provided with taxis home? Can he give us an estimate of the cost to the taxpayer?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I advise the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) not to do so. He must return to the money resolution.

Mr. Cryer: I would not go down that road in any case, as I am very concerned about the expenditure of money. I have listed the relevant tribunals for the purposes of section 5(7) of the original Act and have related them to this money resolution, which says that

"it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967."

The Bill must exist to remedy a defect. Can the Minister tell us how many cases the Government expect in an average year? Private Members' Bills—which are very useful, and are debated on Fridays—and money resolutions, are sometimes regarded as a bit of a nuisance, as are the 10 or so Fridays when private Members' Bills are taken. I suspect that we are dealing with a money resolution to implement a private Member's Bill which was taken on a Friday and which, if the Jopling report is implemented, hon. Members would be denied.

I shall not go further down that road, but merely point out the great use of those Bills. Sometimes, because the Government do not have enough time, they provide an hon. Member with legislation to discuss on a Friday, if he is lucky enough to come in the first 10 or so in the ballot. I do not know whether the Bill is an example of that, but if it is, the Minister should have a good knowledge of the background to and reason for the legislation.

The various appeal tribunals are listed in five specific areas, so that the Parliamentary Commissioner can take action where there is cause for concern or complaint about any irregularity.

The complex nature of the Bill, in that it is Government inspired—it is none the worse for that, nor is it any less valuable or important—means that the Government may well have more detailed information than would be available to the ordinary private Member about how the financial effects of the Bill have been calculated, and the number of cases and incidents in each of the five sections listed in schedule 4 that occur each year.

I understand that the Bill was introduced to plug a legislative gap, not a loophole. As a result of demand, the Parliamentary Commissioner should have the opportunity to examine those cases, because of irregularities and complaints, yet his powers do not extend to them. It would be interesting to know from the Minister whether one, two, three, four or a dozen cases are involved. As a result, the extra expenses—which I do not expect will be very much—in which the Parliamentary Commissioner will be involved can be calculated fairly accurately. He or she serves a useful purpose and I am all in favour of that expenditure.

It is worth noting that Labour legislation introduced the Parliamentary Commissioner in the first place, based on the Swedish concept known as the ombudsman, and it has been extended widely. The existence of the Parliamentary

Commissioner shows how even the present ideologically-driven Government recognise that they have to maintain and supplement some means of ensuring that there is some application of justice to administrative corners which affect only a tiny number of people, but which should be sustained because it was a good idea. It stemmed from the infamous Crichel Down case where a great injustice was determined by administrative fiat.

The money resolution provides additional finance of a minor nature to enliven and illuminate administrative loopholes which may be mundane but which are extremely important to the persons involved. I welcome the money resolution. I hope that the Minister will say that a money resolution indicates endorsement of the purpose of the Bill. I hope that he can give me the information that I have requested.

Although another money resolution is on the Order Paper, I do not intend to debate it, because I feel that in that instance it is such an open and shut case that debate is not required. I am satisfied in my own mind that the amount of expenditure on that legislation is well curtailed and prescribed. That is not so in this case. Therefore, I hope very much that the Minister will respond with the modest amount of information that I have requested.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): I shall endeavour to help the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in all his interests this evening, to the best of my ability.

This resolution is a standard money resolution, drafted to give Parliament authority to provide money under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967. The hon. Gentleman is quite right: it is a private Member's Bill and it has Government support. That answers his first point.

The resolution has been framed to enable funds to be made available to allow the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to discharge his additional responsibilities under the Bill. These are in respect of investigating the administrative actions of staff in certain tribunals, which the hon. Gentleman has already listed and which are not currently within the Parliamentary Commissioner's jurisdiction.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether I could estimate the extent of the costs implicit in the resolution. It is not clear at this stage whether any additional resources would be necessary. It is also not possible to estimate at this stage how many additional complaints would arise, forwarded by hon. Members, as a result of the Bill being passed. I am sure, however, that the Parliamentary Commissioner will endeavour to keep additional costs to a minimum.

It is therefore not possible to make an assessment of the full extent of the costs, but the resolution has been put forward on a contingency basis.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Parliamentary Commissioner Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967.

CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) BILL [*MONEY*]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of the Act; and

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Ebbsfleet (International Station)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

10.32 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I am delighted to have been given the opportunity by Madam Speaker to raise the case for an international station at Ebbsfleet. I do so because such a debate is timely and because, in my view, the Ebbsfleet site represents the best location for an intermediate international and domestic station on the channel tunnel rail link. Ebbsfleet as a site is also significant because of its position and proximity to the M25, M20, A2, A20 and the Dartford river crossings.

I welcome the presence of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, and my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), who I know hopes to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a little later in the debate. I am delighted to welcome also my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), who is here tonight to show support for the project. I am grateful to him for the support that he has given me on this occasion, and on a number of challenges that we jointly face in north-west Kent.

To set the debate in context, I quote the words of County Councillor Alexandra Oldfield, Conservative spokesman on transportation. At a meeting of Kent county council's environment planning and transportation committee on 22 March last, she said:

"A station at Ebbsfleet is critical to Kent's economy, to its commuters and to the Government's efforts to regenerate the East Thames Corridor."

Exactly so.

I deal now with the need for an intermediate station at Ebbsfleet, and will develop arguments for it on three levels. First, there are the national implications of such a project; secondly, there are the regional implications and the resulting advantages to commuters; finally, there is the impact of the rail link on the communities that I represent in Swanscombe, Southfleet, Betsham and Bean.

In the context of the local communities, I shall refer later to compensation problems and the implications for local roads when construction works on the Ebbsfleet site affect the A2 and associated roads and villages. In the national context—that of Britain plc—the opening of the channel tunnel creates an opportunity and climate for economic and commercial change; that is not in dispute. It will undoubtedly give our manufacturers and traders easier access to the markets of Europe. Equally, in a free-trade context, it will open up our markets to European suppliers.

The site at Ebbsfleet comes within the northern end of the European Dorsale, which comprises 40 per cent. of the population of the European Community. The Dorsale runs from Milan through Frankfurt and Brussels to Dartford and London, and makes up the greatest concentration of cities and economic activity in the Community.

On a regional basis, the Government have promoted, and continue to promote vigorously, a policy of regenerating the east Thames corridor. Apart from being the right policy, the placing of an international station at Ebbsfleet underscores that policy of regeneration by opening up the immediate areas of Swanscombe and Northfleet, as well as north-west Kent in general. Without the station at Ebbsfleet, the channel tunnel rail link offers nothing whatever to north-west Kent.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Is there not a particularly positive opportunity for both the railway and Britain, given that the local authority—which takes a very positive attitude to achieving growth in the area—wants the station at Ebbsfleet? The two fit very well together.

Mr. Dunn: Indeed, there is total amity of support and interest among all local authorities whose areas border the site of the project. They see it as a major contribution to the work flow and employment prospects of our region. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I also welcome the presence of our hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), who entered the Chamber and was struck by the force of the argument being presented in favour of the station at Ebbsfleet.

The existence of the station would move the east Thames corridor concept into a much more positive dimension. I believe that an intermediate station at Ebbsfleet would provide the catalyst for regeneration, leading to the transformation of our local infrastructure and the use of development opportunities to create jobs and new employment vistas for the whole south-east region. Over 30,000 new jobs are expected to be created over a period; that must be good news for north-west Kent.

As for commuter traffic, according to figures that I have obtained, when Ebbsfleet station is opened, the benefit for domestic commuters will be vast. It will offer local commuters a journey time of 17 minutes from Ebbsfleet to St. Pancras. That compares with existing journey times to Charing Cross of 41 minutes from Dartford, 49 minutes from Stone Crossing, 51 minutes from Greenhithe and 53 minutes from Swanscombe.

The St. Pancras terminus is planned to include three platforms for Union Railways' domestic services, which offers a theoretical capacity of 12 trains per hour at peak times. Domestic services would run from the Medway towns and Gravesend, via the north-west Kent line and Union Railways, but would not call at Ebbsfleet. They would also run to St. Pancras from Ebbsfleet as well as from east Kent, via Ashford and Union Railways—that service would almost certainly call at Ebbsfleet.

The balance of frequency of the services has yet to be decided, but at least 50 per cent. of trains are expected to call at Ebbsfleet, which will be a major contribution to the flow of commuter traffic from north-west Kent to London and back again.

I must argue—as nicely as possible—with colleagues on both sides of the House who represent Essex about which is the worst railway line in the country, as the north-west Kent line takes some beating. Now there are improvements in prospect for Dartford commuters.

I remind the House of the endorsement that the Secretary of State for Transport gave the Ebbsfleet site when he made the statement on the channel tunnel rail link on 24 January 1994:

"I turn now to intermediate stations. The decision in October 1991 to route the rail link on an easterly approach into London was based in large part on the opportunities for regeneration."

That must be the key to the development of the project. It is an opportunity for the regeneration of north-west Kent and the east end corridor. The Secretary of State continued:

"This solution will provide a fast rail link between London and the channel tunnel. It achieves all the Government's objectives. People who live in Kent will get further improved rail services to London."—[*Official Report*, 24 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. 20-22.]

That is the second of the major building blocks that must

be emphasised tonight. If the project is to gain public credibility, commuters in north-west Kent must benefit as well as those in the Ashford area.

On the downside of the project, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport will be able to assure me—if not tonight, at some time in the future—that, when and if Ebbsfleet international station is constructed, he will take every possible step, through the officials in his Department, to ensure that the inevitable blockages on the two carriageways of the A2 are kept to a minimum.

When such blockages occur, their impact and the amount of traffic moving from the A2 to the country lanes on either side must be taken into account. Any hon. Member who represents Kent can assure the House that, as soon as the A2 is blocked, a phenomenal amount of traffic moves on to the country lanes. If that is to happen for two or three years, the implications and impact must be carefully thought out.

On the compensation arrangements for those of my constituents who will be disadvantaged by the reopening of the Gravesend west spur line, I hope that my right hon. Friend will assure me that these arrangements will be fully explained to those of my constituents who are affected, and that those who find themselves outside the line rather than within it understand the opportunities for appeal. I also hope that the arrangements will be as generous as possible, given that many people face the prospect of further blight and a further loss of value for their properties.

I believe the station to be a winning project. It can win over the people of north-west Kent, and I hope that the Minister will be won over by our arguments tonight.

10.44 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) for initiating the debate, and I pay tribute to him for the leading part that he is taking in the campaign for Ebbsfleet international station. The station will be good for the rail link and for the south-east of England, good for north-west Kent, and above all, from my point of view, good for Gravesham.

North-west Kent is in transition. Only 20 years ago, the economy of the area was based on heavy industries such as cement and paper, which left a legacy of empty acres of quarries and pits. We are now on course for new light industry and commercial and service industries. Those have been helped by the Government, by means of the enterprise zones at Springhead and the Imperial business park.

The Government are now pressing ahead with their creative plans for the east Thames corridor, and those can be developed there because, uniquely at Ebbsfleet of all the sites that have been identified along the high-speed rail link line, we have the acreage for the supporting development for an international station.

Ebbsfleet's international station could be a focus for all those plans for the east Thames corridor. I believe—it is one of my hobbyhorses—that it could be an ideal location for a major new exhibition and conference centre on a vast European scale. The station would put us on the first stop of the rail link, before London, and it would have direct links to London, Paris and Brussels. It would also have the advantage of being convenient for the M25.

There are many other plans for major new projects in the area, such as the Bluewater development, and there is plenty of scope for industrial and technology parks. Indeed, it has been said that 34,000 jobs could be created in the process.

We have the right people to staff all those projects, especially the people in Northfleet, in my constituency. The area is bursting with talent. We have good schools, in the Northfleet school for boys and the Northfleet school for girls. Further afield, we have major Church schools and grammar schools. Above all, we have the north-west Kent college of technology, with its campuses in Dartford and in Gravesend. We have the skills, and we have first-class people for a first-class development. I believe that the whole project could be a focus for Britain in the 21st century.

I shall highlight the specific advantages for my constituents if the project goes ahead. Like the people of Dartford, we would have an immense advantage in commuting to London. The journey time would come down from the current 50 minutes or so from Gravesend and Northfleet to the 17 minutes mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford.

There would inevitably be new roads servicing the area, linked to the A2. In particular, the development would finally bring about the Northfleet bypass, which would bring relief to residents in the areas of the high street, Northfleet, and of the Springhead and Dover roads, who have long put up with heavy goods vehicles in streets never designed for the kind of weights to which they are already subjected. For those people, it would bring relief, and for all residents in that part of north-west Kent, especially in Northfleet, it would increase the values of their houses.

Certain preliminaries and safeguards should be taken into account when considering siting the international station at Ebbsfleet. A full archaeological survey of the Roman remains in the immediate area will be necessary. That matter can be thoroughly examined and dealt with before the construction of the station.

The plans for the station and the nearby area must also take account of the environment of the ancient Ebbsfleet watercourse. With the modern techniques of planning and environmental conservation now available to us, plans can and should be developed to ensure that the environment is taken fully into account.

The Ebbsfleet international station has the unanimous support of both sides of Gravesham borough council, and I believe also of Kent county council. I can certainly say that the Conservatives of Northfleet and Gravesham are enthusiastic, keen and supportive, and that they look forward to the project being approved by the Government and going ahead.

10.49 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) on their contributions to this important debate.

There is a tendency to run down Great Britain and its achievements or plans. That is most true in respect of infrastructure. The Ebbsfleet international station is a great project of which I hope that we can all be proud. The Opposition and the press continue to commit the same mistake of always looking down on our achievements and finding fault. Why cannot we be proud—

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich) *rose—*

Mr. Freeman: No, I shall not give way. I am responding to my hon. Friends—*[Interruption.]* I shall respond; there is time enough. With respect, I am making the point that this important project should be looked on with some enthusiasm and pride. We should be looking beyond our noses to the achievements—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) will be patient, I shall respond.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford mentioned the importance of a station at north Ebbsfleet. It is perfectly true that on 24 January my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport said that that project appeared to have the edge over Rainham. Although at that stage there was no clear reason to select Ebbsfleet over Rainham, we said that we would examine carefully the alternatives to serve as a park-and-ride facility for those wishing to travel to the continent.

We acknowledged the support given by Blue Circle plc, an important private sector backer of the station at Ebbsfleet. I can confirm that we looked to the promoters of that station and to all those affected by it to submit their views by mid-April to enable Ministers to make a judgment, I hope, by the end of April, thus fulfilling our commitment to reach a conclusion on where the intermediate station should be within three months of my right hon. Friend's statement at the end of January. There are still three locations in the running—Stratford, Rainham and Ebbsfleet.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we believe that we need at least one of those stations—although two may be sensible—in addition to the station that is now being built at Ashford. That in turn is an achievement. The private sector led by Laing is financing the construction of a new station which I hope will be ready by the end of next year to handle international passengers. It is of excellent design and will be a credit to the rail system.

We hope that when we have the views of the private sector promoters of the north Ebbsfleet and other stations we can come to a decision by the end of April to enable the information to be included in the tender documentation that we hope to publish in June and to permit work on the Bill to proceed so that a Bill will be ready for presentation to Parliament by the beginning of the new Session.

We have decided to de-couple the preparation of the Bill from the selection of the private sector group to promote the rail link. That will be an advantage because it will enable us to proceed, if parliamentary time permits and if the Bill is included in the Queen's Speech, according to the fastest possible timetable. I look forward very much to the early prospect of its Second Reading. That is clear proof of our commitment.

The criteria that we shall use in judging which station to select close to the Queen Elizabeth II bridge, which carries the M25, will turn on the financial package advanced by the promoters but also—I agree with my hon. Friend on this point—on the benefit to the economy of Kent and the east Thames corridor, and that of Essex and all the east London boroughs. There is a regenerative benefit to building a railway station. There is an argument about how much benefit it brings. Any hon. Member who has been to Lille station in northern France will know that there is clearly some benefit. I admire what the French have done. The building of that station and the complex surrounding it is clearly of benefit.

Mr. Raynsford *indicated assent.*

Mr. Freeman: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me.

Mr. Raynsford: They have done it.

Mr. Freeman: The French have done it. With a new rail link and the stations attached to it, we will build a shining example of good British civil engineering design. In 10 or 20 years' time, it will be the French who look at the excellence of our new high-speed rail link. I am getting carried away with my enthusiasm. I shall return specifically to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford.

My hon. Friend was right to say that journey times will be cut in half. It will be a tremendous boon to those who live in Ramsgate, Margate, Gillingham and Gravesham —and, incidentally, to those who catch trains at Dartford, because the railway lines into Charing Cross will be less congested. There will also be marvellous uncovenanted benefits to those who live to the west of a station at Ebbsfleet, if it is selected and built.

I am grateful that my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks reminded me that the Dartford and Gravesham local authorities support the concept of the station. I seem to spend a lot of my time dealing with local authorities which are not so supportive of a new project that is designed to help the economy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford asked two questions. The first related to blockages on the A2. I can assure him that we will be careful to ensure that there is the minimum possible inconvenience when it comes to the construction of trunk road and highway authority road schemes. I am well aware of the effect on villages of traffic being diverted from main roads. Construction must be carefully planned.

I am happy to tell the House, as I have already answered in a written question, that I can confirm that we have accepted the advice of my colleagues who represent constituencies in north Kent to include in the Bill a provision for some road schemes, especially the road scheme on the M2 between junctions 1 and 4. That means that we can plan concurrently for the improvement to not only rail journeys but road journeys. That makes sense. It is a good example of integrated transport planning in action that we can consider both road and rail schemes at the same time. I use my definition of the phrase "integrated transport planning", which is sensible and practical simultaneous planning. We are not talking about detailed planning in 10 or 20 years' time; we are talking about how to avoid the inconvenience to constituents by ensuring that we do not have to revisit a specific location and rebuild at the same time.

As for the Gravesend west line, I can confirm that we will explain to all those affected the compensation schemes provided, especially in terms of those who live within the safeguarded area—the voluntary purchase scheme that will apply—and those who live outside it, and their qualification for having their houses insulated or, indeed, in some cases purchased where appropriate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham raised several points. If a station is selected at Ebbsfleet north —or, indeed, Stratford or Rainham; this afternoon, I met a group of people promoting the station at Stratford—the potential is enormous for not only business, commercial and retail development but all aspects of development,

including leisure, which could capture the benefit of international passengers coming into the country. I cite again the example of Lille where I was impressed with the related development. I agree with my hon. Friend.

As to the archaeological remains, we will take great care. I can confirm that, when a Bill is introduced, we will simultaneously present the environmental statement, as we are required to do under European law. That will take a great deal of preparation this year, which is one reason why the fastest possible timetable that we can adhere to is to present a Bill, if possible and if permitted to do so, at the beginning of the new parliamentary Session.

As to Pepper Hill, I pay tribute to what my hon. Friend has achieved in looking after his constituents. He has made the Government and Union Railways rethink the options. Considerable progress has been made not only at Pepper Hill but also at Ashford. I envisage that, after the mid-April cut-off point for final representations from local authorities and from those who live in the areas affected, we should be able to make a statement concerning both Pepper Hill and Ashford by the end of April. We must look carefully at the increased costs which would arise for any new route.

The early indications are that some of the alternative options at which Union Railways is looking both at Ashford and Pepper Hill are encouraging in terms of minimising the impact upon the environment and upon those who live close by the centre of Ashford and on the Pepper Hill estate, but still provide the fast direct link that we want.

I believe that, when we present a Bill in due course, the House will be persuaded that the impact upon those who live in Kent and in London will be minimised. I do not deny that there will be an impact. We cannot build a new railway line or a new road without causing some discomfort. I am well aware of the problems at Barking and just outside St Pancras. If we can minimise the impact in those areas—as well as at Ashford and Pepper Hill—we will end up with a rail link which represents good news for Britain, good news for Kent and good news for the constituents of my hon. Friends the Members for Dartford and for Gravesham.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 25 March 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Inner Cities

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.34 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I am delighted that the House has the opportunity today to consider and debate those policies that can best lead to the continuing regeneration of our inner cities. Our ambition is straightforward: our cities should be places where people are proud to live and proud to bring up their children.

I draw the attention of hon. Members to the wide-ranging work being done by the Government and many others to achieve such an ambition. I mention "many others" early in the debate because it is clear that effective urban revival can best be achieved—indeed, it can only be achieved—in partnerships, including central Government and local government, but, more importantly, local people, business, community and voluntary groups.

Inner-city regeneration cannot come from the Government alone. As Lord Hailsham once commented:

"the Conservative contends that the most a politician can do is to ensure that some, and these by no means the most important, conditions in which the good life can exist are present and more important still to prevent fools or knaves from setting up conditions which make any approach to the good life impossible except for solitaries and authorities . . . All the great evils of our time have come from men who mocked and exploited human misery by pretending that good government—that is government according to their way of thinking—could offer Utopia."

What the Government must do to be the principal partner is to ensure policies and guidance that promote partnerships and encourage continuing urban regeneration and economic revival, and where appropriate make available financial support. Indeed, Government support for urban regeneration in England, Wales and Scotland is currently running at some £4 billion a year. That includes elements of our main programmes and targeted initiatives; indeed, they involve large sums of money.

We all need to have a shared vision for our towns and cities—bright, bustling, vibrant, economically active, attractive to live in and pleasant to work in. Of course, we should not for one moment underestimate the challenges facing our cities, or indeed, those living there—the challenges to continue to reduce unemployment, to ensure decent housing, to continue to tackle crime, to ensure that everyone can be involved in determining their own and their family's future, and to ensure that we have the skills necessary to compete in the global markets of the 21st century.

In appreciating the challenges, we should not allow anyone to fail to acknowledge what has been achieved recently. There was an interesting trailer for today's debate on Radio 4's "Today" programme this morning. In an interview at Sunderland's Pennywell industrial estate, Councillor Les Scott, the Labour councillor for Sunderland, and Sir Paul Nicholson, chairman of the Tyne and Wear development corporation, challenged the interviewer's doom and gloom introduction. They stressed the progress that Sunderland had made over the past five years—progress in jobs and local confidence—agreeing with each other that Government support, together with local authority and business community partnerships, has paid substantial dividends. Those who listened to the interview will recall that the piece concluded with the interviewer apologising for being five years out of date. I hope that today's debate can bring everyone up to date on the achievements that have been taking place in our inner cities.

Understanding what is needed to improve the quality of our cities requires us to look at the issues in a broader, holistic way. For example, how people shop relates to how they use their cars; how they use their cars influences urban traffic flows; and how local authorities respond clearly influences whether businesses want to invest in town centres and create new jobs there.

Urban issues are all inextricably interwoven and intertwined. Vibrant cities require a sound planning framework, so we wish to encourage the vitality and viability of existing town and city centres, to ensure that, wherever possible, new shops or retail facilities are developed within town centres, and only if suitable sites are not available there should those be developed on the edge of towns. Only in very rare circumstances will we expect there to be new large-scale retail developments on out-of-town, green field sites.

Indeed, recent planning guidance makes it clear that we wish to see the end of the building of out-of-town business parks, warehouses, shopping malls and housing estates which are accessible only by car. We want to recover the vitality of life in our cities and to make them vibrant and lively places in which to live.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England commented:

"The Government is committed to development that takes place in urban areas as opposed to more suburbanisation of the countryside".

We want to curb the growth of traffic. The planning guidance published last week on transport and the environment makes it clear that future development should be planned not only to diminish the necessity to travel but to maximise the choice of the means of travel.

Developments that are major generators of travel demand, such as shops, offices, leisure and education facilities and hospitals, should be built near railway stations or on bus routes, so that people have a choice of means of getting there, and they are not just reliant on a car.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): If the Minister is serious about wishing to curb traffic in inner cities, why is not he prepared to give London Transport the investment so that we can have a transport system in London for the year 2000? Why has he starved London Transport of money if he is serious about curbing traffic?

Mr. Baldry: London Transport has received substantial sums of investment. Perhaps the hon. Lady has not noticed that we recently announced £1.5 billion of funding for the Jubilee line. We have also completed the extension to Beckton of the docklands light railway, and we are now constructing the light railway across to Lewisham. The

[Mr. Baldry]

infrastructure of London Transport is moving apace, as it is in other city centres, and considerable sums of money are being spent on that.

The hon. Lady raises an interesting point, and it may be helpful to have the matter out in the open at the start of the debate. She referred to spending, and I suspect that there will be a cacophony from the Opposition that whatever we are spending is insufficient. We must be clear on whether the spending aspirations of the Opposition have been signed up to by those on their Front Bench.

It has been extremely confusing for us in trying to understand exactly where the Opposition stand on public spending. The respected commentator Peter Riddle wrote just a few weeks ago that the Labour party spoke with two voices, if not more, on spending and taxes. He was commenting on a consultation paper on health, and I suspect that we will hear something about health in our inner cities during the debate.

The document contains none of the previous pledges on restoring alleged underfunding, but that is only half of the story. Labour conferences have approved motions proposing big increases in spending on nursery education, overseas aid, pensions, housing, industrial aid and a national minimum wage. A national minimum wage would cost taxpayers £1.5 billion, let alone what it would cost employers.

We must understand that there seems to be a new doctrine in the Labour party. If promises are made by the Opposition outside the House—even at party conferences or to business men—nobody is expected to believe them. Only when the promises are made on the Floor of the House do they appear to be firm commitments. That makes it all the more important that we watch closely the lips of Opposition Front Bench Members during the debate to see exactly what public spending commitments they are making.

When the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) pops up and down saying that she wants more public spending, let us make sure whether or not her Front-Bench team have signed up to that cry. I am afraid that she and her colleagues on the Opposition's environment team appear to have got themselves into trouble before. Only a couple of weeks ago, the headline of a report in *The Times* of debates in this House stated that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) had undermined Labour's spending promise. The hon. Gentleman appeared to have made some commitments in the House without first having checked them with his Treasury team colleagues.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): We have come to the House to hear about the Government's spending commitments, for which the Minister is responsible. Will he address himself to his plans for the single regeneration budget in the regions? Will he tell us about the senior regional director for London? The Minister talks about partnership, but will not the function of that civil servant be to replace elected persons? Will he deny what I have said in the House—that this sort of structure is a cascade of patronage which is approaching neo-fascism?

Mr. Baldry: Of course I will talk about the single regeneration budget and the single regional director in due course. It seemed important to me that, as there appeared to be cries for more public spending from the Opposition, we got out into the open whether those were commitments to which the Labour party was signing up. It is important to know whether we were to have another Friday debate in which Opposition Back Benchers troop into the Chamber giving the impression that they want more public spending, but when the figures come out into the open, they are disclaimed by the Opposition Treasury team.

I am also concerned that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has not understood the roles of the single regeneration budget and the single regional director. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and I spent what I thought was a productive hour with the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues from the London Labour parliamentary group trying to explain that. As we clearly and lamentably failed to ensure that they understood, I will try again during the debate.

Before the intervention from the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington, I was talking about the need to ensure that there was a choice of the means of travel, and that people did not have to rely on a car. Houses should be built in the hearts of our cities and near to workplaces which are made accessible to those living in city centres.

Congestion is an increasing curse of urban life. Reducing the need to travel through sensible planning must make sense, particularly in the light of forecasts that traffic will double during the next 25 years unless effective action is taken. Such planning policies will boost the regeneration of towns and cities, not only by diverting development back towards town and city centres but by promoting a greater diversity of activities within them.

Post-war planning policies of rigidly zoning different areas for different uses robbed far too many towns of their vitality. Too many of the 1960s housing estates are stuck out on the edge of cities, cut off from city centres and places of work. Cities are efficient transport locations, and we can use the planning system to enhance our cities as the focus for a high quality of urban life.

Of course, the results of new planning guidance will not be seen overnight, and the planning decisions that are taken today will have consequences for many years to come. The new guidance to cut reliance on the motor car and to boost the vitality of our cities will increasingly have an impact as local authorities prepare their local plans and take decisions on planning applications. I am sure that what we are seeking to achieve in enhancing the future sustainability of towns and cities goes very much with the grain of what people want, and what we are seeking to achieve through the planning system strikes a vital chord. People do not want ever more sheds on the bypass if that puts at risk the heritage and undermines the vitality of existing city centres.

As well as planning for the future, we are tackling the dereliction of the past.

Mr. Spearing: What about docklands?

Mr. Baldry: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's point. I do not want him to get bored and want to disappear. Of course, he could not get bored—it is such an interesting debate.

It became clear in the early 1980s that large tracts of our cities were blighted by industrial dereliction and

contaminated land. Large parts of previous industrial areas needed to be regenerated and brought back into useful economic use.

For example, London docklands is dear to the heart of Opposition Members. The last time we debated inner-city issues in the Chamber a few weeks ago, the hon. Member for Newham, South was scathing about the achievements of London docklands. I was surprised at that. Subsequently, I discovered that the only newspaper that supports the Labour party has had the perspicacity to move to docklands.

The *Daily Mirror* has moved into Canary wharf, once described by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) as a great white elephant. In a recent issue of the *Daily Mirror*, a report said:

"The 21st century starts here . . . We can see the Thames winding away East towards the sea. The old City of London spread out to the West. Beyond it, the heart of the capital.

But we can see more than that. We can see the future."

The *Daily Mirror* has rather more confidence in the future of docklands than Labour Members of Parliament who represent the dockland areas.

The editors of the various Mirror Group newspapers said:

"Nobody could be more enthusiastic about the move to Canary Wharf than the editors of the four Mirror Group titles involved.

'It's a bright new world that represents a new get-up-and-do-it attitude of Britain's young,' says *Daily Mirror* editor David Banks.

It's a quality location for quality staff, a young staff who are ambitious for themselves and for the company."

[HON. MEMBERS: "They would say that."] Opposition Members may jeer, but the newspaper is talking about jobs and bringing a substantial number of jobs to docklands.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The Minister must be short of ideas if he has to read chunks out of the *Daily Mirror* to substitute for his speech. He will know, because he was present at the launch of "Cities '94" with me at Canary wharf, that the main criticism of the developers was the failure of the Government to give adequate leadership to regeneration policies.

Mr. Baldry: That is twaddle. It is clear from what is happening in docklands that a clear lead has been given. Docklands is testimony to the leadership that the Government have demonstrated in the past decade. What is happening in docklands is being repeated elsewhere.

Today's issue of *Building* magazine gives some evidence. Opposition Members come to the Chamber so often to seek to bury Canary wharf. It is important to make it clear that Canary wharf is a great success. [*Laughter.*] I appreciate that the Opposition do not like to hear good news, but I see it as one of our functions to ensure that they understand the realities of life.

The editor of *Building* magazine said only today:

"Canary Wharf is no longer half empty; it is half full. The difference between the two is not measured in square feet, it is a question of optimism.

Developers, occupiers, clients and especially housebuilders . . . feel a whole lot better. In London, several late 1980s"

buildings

"are being hosed down for the 1990s. . . . a large chunk of the Royal Docks has got a developer. . . .

Outside the capital, the pressure is intensifying on city centre sites as there is simply not enough modern space to go around. And it is not just offices—retail, leisure, even government building work is on the up. And remember that orders are up by 30 per cent."

So the success we see in docklands is a success that we are seeing throughout the country.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The building of Canary wharf is a magnificent structure. Indeed, no expense was spared. If the Minister thinks that Canary wharf is so wonderful—I share a great admiration for the building—can he tell me why Olympia and York, which built it, went bankrupt?

Mr. Baldry: There is no secret about it. Olympia and York went bankrupt because Britain and the whole of the world was going through one of the worst recessions since the last war. It is a great pity that, even now, the hon. Gentleman cannot bring himself to welcome new jobs moving into docklands. Indeed, it is a great pity that Opposition Members cannot share even the enthusiasm expressed by the last newspaper that supports them, the *Daily Mirror*, in trumpeting the achievements that have occurred in docklands.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that there is support among the Opposition for the progress and development in London docklands? Lord Mellish, who was formerly the Member of Parliament for Bermondsey, said the other day that:

"eight and a half square miles of absolute complete and utter devastation"

has today been transformed.

Mr. Baldry: Absolutely. Indeed, Lord Cocks, a former Opposition Chief Whip and deputy chairman of the London Docklands development corporation, gives a similar story.

Ms Abbott: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Spearing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: I should like to make some progress. I have given way several times.

We also had to bring back to useful life areas such as the banks of the Tyne and the Wear and a huge acreage of contaminated land on the site of former steelworks in Sheffield. There was a clear need for a co-ordinated and locally focused strategy to tackle such areas.

We introduced the urban development corporations. The UDCs have been revitalising their designated areas since 1981, acting as catalysts for regeneration, bringing land back into productive use and, in so doing, creating opportunities for new homes and new jobs—more than 26,000 new houses and substantially more than 150,000 jobs so far. All this has been, and will continue to be, of great benefit to local people.

The regeneration has involved substantial public investment—more than £3,000 million. Last year alone, the UDCs were responsible for spending substantially more than £400 million. Here, as elsewhere, the public money that we have invested and the way in which we have invested it have ensured the levering in of millions and millions of pounds of private sector funding—I estimate almost £13,000 million to date. That is very big money indeed. It is substantial further investment in inner-city areas.

The private sector is prepared to invest where it is clear that Government and local people together are committed to revitalising urban areas and creating new opportunities.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way in the relatively relaxed atmosphere of a Friday. I hope to respond to most of his points if I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[Mr. Spearing]

In respect of Canary wharf and the *Daily Mirror*, is the Minister aware that the developers of Canary wharf are in hock to the banks? I understand that the *Daily Mirror* is not unconnected with the banks. Does the Minister agree that it is in their mutual interest to fill up the estate and talk it up, so that their liabilities are reduced? If the Minister thinks that the Isle of Dogs is the pattern for the future and has pinned the Government's reputation to what has happened there, I am pleased to hear it.

Mr. Baldry: It makes one want to tear one's hair out. Here we have an area to which a substantial employer is bringing new jobs and new business. What do Opposition Members do? One after another, they get up to condemn the fact that new jobs and new opportunities are being brought to their areas. It is mind-boggling. If business was brought to any other constituency in the country and new jobs and new activity were created, the Member of Parliament would be singing from the rooftops. The fact is that the only news that Labour Members like is bad news.

I should have liked to set out the achievements of each development corporation. They are extremely impressive and numerous. But I would hog too much of today's debate if I set them out in detail. The breadth of their achievements is dramatic, encompassing new internationally renowned innovations such as Liverpool's Albert dock and, again, London's Canary wharf.

The urban development corporations have secured the development of large city-centre sites, bringing about new business parks, hotels and conference centres, retailing complexes, cultural and leisure facilities, many thousands of new homes and impressive refurbishment and revival of numerous listed and historic buildings.

The House will recall my right hon. and noble Friend the Baroness Thatcher, when Prime Minister in 1987—I am sure we all wish her a full recovery from her recent illness—visiting Teesside, and the cameras catching her as she walked across a huge area of disused, derelict and contaminated land which was the site of former engineering works. I am sure that many of us can recall that photograph.

Less than a decade later, that site is no longer derelict. Today, that area is being transformed by the Teesside development corporation which, with its own money and some £500 million of private sector support, is building 680 new homes, providing some 140,000 sq ft of new industrial office and retail floor space, and will be providing more than 4,500 permanent jobs. That is what is being achieved in our inner cities.

The achievements of the development corporations are on-going—from a proposed new international airport for Sheffield, a new concert hall for Manchester, the extension of the docklands light railway to Lewisham, and many other similarly exciting projects. The development corporations are now approaching the end of their statutory life agreed with Parliament. Together with local authorities and the local business community, they are starting to plan their succession strategies to ensure that the momentum of their work is maintained.

We have also been investing to tackle and turn around derelict land throughout the country with derelict land grant and city grant. Last year alone, some £30 million was spent on 166 derelict land grant schemes in inner-city areas. The schemes reclaimed about 1,100 acres of land. I think that it is sometimes quite difficult for us to envisage what 1,100 acres represents. It is an area reclaimed in one year from one Government scheme alone equivalent to 625 times the size of the pitch at Wembley stadium—land for industrial development and for housing, all reclaimed for beneficial use.

There are far too many interesting and exciting DLG schemes for me to be able to set them out in any detail, but many cities have benefited. For example, in Liverpool a huge area of redundant railway land has been transformed into the Wavertree technology park; in Birmingham, nearly £500,000 of DLG has funded the reclamation of the methane-contaminated site of the former Burbury brickworks; and in Rotherham, the massive Templeborough site—I saw it the other day—once occupied by steelworks, is being reclaimed under a DLG-funded rolling programme of reclamation, bringing about the new Rotherham engineering and computer technology centre—REACT—scheme and an estimated 220 new jobs.

In addition to derelict land grant, we also have city grant. City grant supports private sector inner-city projects, including those on derelict land, where the abnormal costs are such that the market alone would be insufficient to get the project going. Since it was first introduced six years ago, nearly 400 city grant schemes have been approved, and £336 million in public money has levered in £1,400 million in private investment. That private investment would not have been spent in our inner-city areas without a public commitment. It is an impressive ratio of nearly £5 of private money invested in our inner cities for every £1 of public money spent.

In six years, more than 2,000 acres of inner-city land have been reclaimed, more than 43,000 jobs have been created and nearly 12,000 new homes provided—all very impressive achievements. For example, in Hull the Victoria docks site is being transformed into a new urban village, with 1,100 new homes on what was 150 acres of derelict land. [HON. MEMBERS: "Labour."] In Barnsley, a £10 million grant for the contaminated colliery site is providing 400,000 sq ft of industrial and office space, which will provide more than 1,000 much-needed new jobs in the area. [HON. MEMBERS: "Labour."] At St. Helens, a £3.6 million grant for the Green Bank housing project is providing more than 300 homes on formerly derelict land [HON. MEMBERS: "Labour."]

Labour Members keep muttering the word "Labour" from sedentary positions. I am not entirely sure whether that is to remind them which party they belong to. We in central Government work with local authorities up and down the country, irrespective of their political complexion, because we want to work in partnership with them. But if Labour Members keep banging on about the virtues of the Labour party, I will be prompted—as indeed I am—to share with the House some facts about some Labour councils which they might not be so proud of.

I wonder whether hon. Members opposite would welcome an association with Lambeth council—I see at least one hon. Member from the Lambeth area present in the House. Hon. Members might not have noticed a story which appeared on the "Newsroom Southeast" programme only last night. The BBC commentator said:

"it demonstrated that Lambeth council has admitted spending £9 million unlawfully on building maintenance contracts. A secret internal council report leaked to the BBC reveals that the authority also made 400 unnecessary redundancies among its

blue collar workers. The council has admitted unlawfully spending £9 million and axing 400 builders' jobs unnecessarily. The council says it broke the law by issuing major contracts for building maintenance without going through the right procedures or even gaining proper approval. Some companies have been given important contracts, despite being on the authority's official blacklist."

I am not sure whether that is a council with which hon. Members opposite wish to be associated.

Mr. Vaz: That is not a Labour council.

Mr. Baldry: I am not sure that the Labour councillors of Lambeth who appear to be running the council would accept that. I am sure that they will be interested to know that they have now been disowned by those on the Front Bench of the parliamentary Labour party.

I am afraid that councils like Lambeth go from the sublime to the ridiculous. As the House may know, Lambeth is twinned with places such as Moscow, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and even one of the red light districts of Tokyo. The council is so short of money that its town twinning officer and his assistant—one will notice that, in Labour authorities, if two people can do a job, two are employed rather than one—are not allowed to make foreign calls to the towns with which Lambeth is twinned. That is not surprising when a borough like Lambeth is losing £9 million on building maintenance contracts alone.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): My constituency has an unemployment rate 50 per cent. above the national average. I sit listening to the Minister wondering what this political nonsense has to do with dealing with unemployment and poverty in the inner cities. What have the last 15 minutes had to do with these problems? Will the Minister inform the House why, after 15 years of such Government programmes, we still have unacceptable, obscene levels of unemployment in our inner cities?

Mr. Baldry: I am again dumbfounded. The hon. Gentleman refers to the fact that just one Labour-controlled London borough in one of its activities has lost £9 million and has made 400 unnecessary redundancies, and he describes it as "political nonsense". I think that the people in Lambeth and elsewhere would be horrified by his remarks.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I point out to my hon. Friend that, in south Leeds, £46 million of public money has generated £250 million of private money, which is a ratio of more than 5:1. It has transformed the centre of south Leeds and has more or less helped to develop the whole of the city by boosting investment confidence. It has also got the Labour council off its backside and, at long last, it is running programmes in the inner city to replace the silly plans that it has gone on about for years.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes some extremely good points. In the last decade, there has been a transformation in the approach and attitude of Labour authorities up and down the country. The House will recall that when we first introduced development corporations in Leeds and elsewhere, they were resisted, and Labour councils fought against them tooth and nail. They refused to co-operate or work with them.

Nowadays, when I visit development corporations and local authorities, I am always asked, "Please extend the life of the corporation and give us more money". The focused and strategic approach of the corporations has brought great benefits to Leeds, Sheffield and anywhere else that has one.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Can my hon. Friend confirm that about £12 million in rent arrears is outstanding, and that it is mostly due to Labour-controlled authorities? If those arrears had been properly collected, they could have been used to improve council estates in inner cities and thus could have created the jobs that Opposition Members are shouting about.

Mr. Baldry: That is right, and it is worth the House noting that many Labour-controlled authorities are substantially in debt due to rent arrears and to other debts —19 out of 20 of the most indebted local authorities are Labour controlled. Islington's debt is equivalent to £20 million for each Labour councillor, and that of Lambeth and Southwark is equivalent to £24 million for each Labour councillor. In cities such as Sheffield, people face a debt repayment of £40 million. Sheffield is paying £76 every minute of every year—money which could have been invested in its infrastructure.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Will the Minister be a little more honest than he and his colleagues have been about those debts? Does he accept that the local authority debt to which he referred is the result of investment in housing? If the urban development corporations' accounts had been laid out in the same way, the houses that the Minister claims those corporations built would also have a debt entry against them. However, the Government have written that debt off, and the Minister should be honest enough to admit it.

Mr. Baldry: That shows that, in the run-up to the local elections, the Opposition are on the run because of those debts. They are concerned that the truth is getting out. Birmingham, for example, has a local authority debt that is three times that of Albania. People in Birmingham appreciate that it took Albania 40 years of state communism to acquire its debt, but it has unfortunately taken Birmingham only 10 years of a Labour-controlled council.

Mr. Henderson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baldry: No.

We are also working with local authorities to renovate and repair many of our older housing estates. As we know, some council estates have become very run down and have severe problems with physical decay and associated management problems. Those are often due to the original design and building standards of the homes concerned, as much as to the age of the property. In some cases, they have been compounded by inadequate estate management and maintenance. We have been, and are, investing millions of pounds every year in estate action programmes.

Estate action provides millions of pounds to help local authorities to invest in such estates and to implement refurbishment and renovation schemes, in partnership with local tenants, which is important.

Estate action often levers in substantial private investment in support of public spending. Since the programme was established, about 360,000 homes have been improved, which is equivalent to the housing stock of Humberside—a considerable achievement. Under many of the schemes, local tenants are participating in new ways to

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run their estates, which gives them greater control, through the tenant management co-operatives, estate management boards or other tenant management organisations that have been set up.

This year we are spending £365 million on estate action.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): As my hon. Friend is referring to estate action, will he confirm that at least two council estates in my constituency have benefited considerably from that programme? I have visited them. Does he agree that it would be more helpful if Labour-controlled Norwich city council gave the Government credit where it was due for the success of that scheme, in my constituency and elsewhere?

Mr. Baldry: Estates throughout the country have benefited from estate action schemes. As part of that continuing investment, I am pleased to be able to announce that the Government have approved £40 million in support for four estate action schemes in London, costing more than £90 million in total. The schemes are at the White City estate in Hammersmith and Fulham, Northumberland Park in Haringey, the Harvist estate in Islington and the Phipps Bridge estate in Merton.

The four schemes will result in the improvement of more than 3,500 homes and their environment, and will provide nearly 500 new homes and sustain about 400 jobs in the construction industry. On all those estates, the residents will be encouraged to become more involved in the management of their homes.

Hand in hand with regenerating inner-city land, refurbishing the old and building anew, we have to ensure the continuing revival of the economic strength of our inner cities. Those needs—physical regeneration and economic strength—are inextricably entwined and often mutually dependent. For example, investors will provide money for new business premises only if they believe that they can be let because local business is expanding, with new jobs, to take over the space available.

New business is attracted to the area because of the high quality of the business premises available and because the local work force are skilled and able to meet their needs. Those factors are inextricably entwined, and we must ensure that we can tackle and meet them all.

We are all competing in a single market in a global economy. The tools that are being used can, and frequently are, the same the world over. Whether we make a success of our opportunities and beat the competition depends on the ingenuity and skills of the people using those tools. The future prosperity of our cities depends on local people having the skills to take on the rest of the world and win.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The Minister is getting to the subject that I wanted to ask him about, but much of his speech—apart from some political sniping—has concerned a property-based approach to inner-city generation. Perhaps he will recognise that, in many inner-city areas, local people are left behind, and that behaviour patterns and lack of skills and education need to be dealt with. For example, anti-social behaviour patterns are often perpetuated. Those problems are perhaps best illustrated in the London docklands, where, in spite of the magnificent achievements, local unemployment has often increased.

I hope that the Minister will say how we can deal with the problems that are endemic in inner cities, such as low skills and poor patterns of behaviour, as well as talk about the property-based schemes that often leave local people behind.

Mr. Baldry: I am sure that I have made it clear to the House that all those issues are entwined. One cannot have new jobs and opportunities with derelict land. One must bring in private sector investment. I thought that I had just made it clear—I shall say it again, as it is important—that the future prosperity of our cities depends on local people having the skills needed to take on the rest of the world and win. It is vital to the nation's future that we raise the skill level of our work force.

The training and enterprise councils are taking the lead to ensure that as many local people as possible acquire the skills that they need. Youth training for 16 and 17-year-olds, training for work for the long-term unemployed and increasingly tailored training packages for local employers are some of the schemes.

To respond to the intervention by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) a good example of such investment is the fact that the Tyne and Wear development corporation has built, with investment, new office premises which it has let to a Chinese company inwardly investing here to manufacture televisions for export. The company purchased training from the local TEC for local people, to enable them to work for it. The majority of the people being recruited have been unemployed long-term.

New businesses, new premises, inward investment, tailored training and higher skills all go together to ensure the revival of our inner cities.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the problems of Lambeth and other inner-London boroughs are a function of very poor school results? The TECs are handicapped by the fact that schools in inner London are characterised by high truancy rates, poor GCSE pass rates and poor A-level results.

Ms Abbott: Why?

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Lady asks why. Is my hon. Friend aware that, in Lambeth, 21.1 per cent. of pupils get five or more GCSE passes at grade A to C, compared with 28.1 per cent. in Wandsworth and 45.4 per cent. in Barnet? Does that not emphasise the poor results of Lambeth schools? Is it not high time that Lambeth council, instead of practising socialism, went after standards?

Mr. Baldry: Raising standards in our schools, and in inner-city schools especially, must be an important objective for us all. My hon. Friend makes a telling point.

The budgets of the TECs are substantial. Let me give an impression of scale, because it is sometimes difficult to put that into perspective.

One TEC, Wearside TEC, has a budget of £14.5 million for this year alone, and is helping projects such as youth training, training for work, business enterprise support, employment investment in people, and in education more generally. That is £14.5 million being invested by just one TEC in one year in one part of the country. Similar sums —millions of pounds—are being invested by 81 other TECs such as Wearside throughout the country, all similarly involved in ensuring prosperity tomorrow through developing new skills today.

This year, TECs will introduce the prototypes of new modern apprenticeships, which, in subsequent years, should increase to more than 40,000 each year the number

of young people in England who achieve NVQ level 3 qualification through work-based training. We are determined to continue to raise the academic and skills levels of people in this country. It is imperative that we do so if we are to compete in global markets.

It is not only through the TECs that we are encouraging people—young people especially—to update skills and acquire new ones. In response to the comment of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), I point out that many of our urban initiatives such as the task force and city challenge partnerships have been pioneering innovative ways of encouraging people—often young people—who have been alienated by their experience of formal education, to have a second chance and obtain good basic education and training skills on which they can build.

For example, Wirral city challenge's "neighbourhood colleges" have provided what they describe as "just down the road" training locations, to make it easier and more accessible for local people to reach training opportunities. The Granby Toxteth task force in Liverpool has helped to develop open learning opportunities whereby people can study at home. I am sure that if the hon. Member for Norwood visits the Brixton city challenge, he will find that it is involved in training opportunities. It is important that we promote training in our inner cities right across the board.

Mr. Henderson: The Minister will no doubt receive support from the industrial community when he announces different training initiatives. How does he explain to the industrial community that we spend less on training than important industrial competitors such as Germany, and that the skill levels of people who have to work in manufacturing industry are considerably lower than those of their counterparts in Germany, after 15 years of a Conservative Government?

Mr. Baldry: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that, when he has finished speaking or has an opportunity later this morning, he goes to the Library and gets out some publications such as "Competence and Competition", published by the National Economic Development Office, which clearly show that state spending—taxpayers' spending—in this country compares well with that of any other country in European Community. The difference is the amount of money that employers have been prepared to invest in training. That is why we have set up TECs, which are local employer-led initiatives to ensure that they have every incentive to continue to invest in training.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) obviously was not listening. We, the state—taxpayers collectively—are investing £14.5 million in only one TEC in one year, and there are 81 TECs such as that throughout the country, investing similar sums of money. I know from visiting Tyne and Wear—which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, I now do regularly—that local employers are investing ever-increasing sums of money in local training, working with the TECs, because they can clearly see the benefit of having a work force with the best possible skills.

For many people, child care is an important element in enabling them to take up work or training. I am glad to say that there are many more child care places available than there were a few years ago. As the House will recall, the November Budget announced the introduction of a child care disregard for parents claiming family credit and other in-work benefits such as housing benefit. That will help many low-income families to get back into the world of work.

We have done a tremendous amount to ensure the right framework in which our cities can thrive and develop. We seek to provide resources for those people and places most affected by the structural changes that have affected the world in the past few decades.

In the 1960s, investment was modest and operated largely through the public sector. In the late 1970s, we introduced a more formal approach, with initiatives targeted on more clearly defined areas of need. In the 1980s, we increased the investment and expanded our initiatives. I have mentioned many of those—urban development corporations, derelict land grant, city grant and task force.

Nevertheless, we refuse to stand still. We are always seeking to build on experience. So we introduced our very successful city challenge schemes, based on partnerships with local authorities, local people and local businesses. The local authorities were encouraged to provide a lead and a co-ordinating role. In much of what we do in the inner cities, we expect and wish that local authorities will provide a lead and a co-ordinating role, and city challenge is testament to that approach. As a result of two competitions, there are now 31 city challenge partnerships in England.

The successful partnerships are all different, but they have all developed a five-year programme of initiatives that they consider best tackle the physical and economic regeneration of their areas. Each partnership receives £37.5 million of public money over the five years, but they are all succeeding in levering in substantial extra sums of private investment as a consequence of that public spending.

The city challenge partnerships are proving a great success. Thirty-one partnerships are now feeling the benefit of those invigorating plans. This year, 11 partnerships will reach the halfway point in their five-year plans. In just their first year, those 11 city challenge partnerships built more than 3,000 homes, created or preserved more than 2,500 jobs. and helped nearly 270 businesses to start up.

During the full five years of their programmes, the Government expect to contribute more than £1 billion to the 31 partnerships, and expect more than £3 billion of private money to be invested in those inner-city areas—areas where investment had previously been all but impossible to attract.

Importantly, in addition to achieving new homes, creating new businesses and preserving jobs, many of the city challenge initiatives have been able to reduce crime in their areas. For example, in Sunderland, Bradford and Newcastle, when local people were consulted, it was discovered that they identified fear of crime as the biggest local concern. I am glad to say that, in all those three regions there have, as a consequence of city challenge, been reductions of between 10 and 25 per cent. in recorded crime. For example, it is the first time for many years that there has been a decrease in crime in the relevant part of Newcastle.

It is often believed that a continuing increase in crime in our cities is inevitable. That is obviously not the case, as the work being done by city challenge shows. We want our cities to be safe. We want people to feel safe at home and to feel that their offices will not be burgled or their car vandalised.

[Mr. Baldry]

The Prime Minister recently launched a planning guidance on "Planning Out Crime", so that crime can be given early consideration in all development. There is a partnership in planning between local authorities, developers and police.

Local initiatives, too, can tackle and are tackling crime. In an increasing number of inner cities, we are seeing the introduction of closed circuit television, to the advantage of those areas.

We want cities to be safe, but also attractive for those who live and work there. Parks, trees, fine buildings, sports facilities and cultural events all have an important part to play. We a doing a lot to help make our cities attractive. We are providing funding to protect our buildings through English Heritage, encouraging arts and culture through the Department of National Heritage, and the arts through the Arts Council. We are creating green spaces with derelict land grant and city challenge money.

The House may be interested to know that we have recently appointed a special adviser, Mr. Liam O'Connor, to help advise on good design in our environment. The principles on which city challenge is based are being further developed through the new initiatives that we announced last November: the setting up of integrated regional offices, the creation of English partnerships, the introduction of the single regeneration budget and the launch of city pride. That package was widely welcomed not only in Parliament but by local government, community and business organisations and many expert commentators on inner-city issues.

Despite my best efforts, Opposition Members still seem to misunderstand what the integrated regional office will do. The integration of the Government's regional offices will ensure that all our programmes pull together as effectively as possible, and that local communities and businesses have a single point of contact for Government services. That will result in a better co-ordinated and more local service for the benefit of everyone.

We are locating together the regional staff of the Departments of Trade and Industry, Employment, Transport and the Environment, appointing a senior civil servant accountable to Ministers, as Ministers are accountable to the House, and thus introducing a much better, co-ordinated approach. I thought that that approach was also the Labour party's policy, so it is surprising that Labour Members find the concept so difficult to understand.

Ms Abbott: The Minister referred earlier to the Government's activities in relation to crime. Will he enlighten the House on why the Government still refuse to back the private Member's legislation on racial harassment, which is a serious problem in inner cities?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Lady can rest assured that every Conservative Member and every member of the Government is determined to combat racial harassment. The proposal on racial harassment would make it more difficult to combat racial attacks, because, if the Crown brought a prosecution, one would have to prove not only assault or some other aggravating factors but demonstrate, so that the court could be sure, that the attack had been motivated by racial reasons.

The legislation would make it more difficult to combat racial attacks and harassment. There is no shortage of commitment on the Government side of the House to bear down on racial harassment, but introducing further legislation as the hon. Lady suggests would not help. It would make it more difficult to ensure that those who perpetrate racial attacks are brought to justice and convicted.

I was trying to explain the approach of the integrated regional offices. It is common ground throughout the House that those are a sensible move forward.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for his courtesy in allowing me to intervene. My reason for doing so is that he has told us only half the truth. We understand the first-stop shop, but we do not agree with the fact that there is to be a bidding match, not just by a locally elected persons, local authorities and boroughs but by all sorts of other people. The Minister has not said that he is putting in place a senior civil servant to conduct that bidding match. As the senior regional director for London will take post a week today, will the Minister now say who he or she is?

Mr. Baldry: I am more than pleased to tell the hon. Gentleman the whole story, if he will stop interrupting me. I was about to come to the single regeneration budget and the position of London.

We have launched city pride for our three largest cities —Birmingham, Manchester and London—which challenges those cities to produce their vision for the future, alongside which we could align our programmes and resources. Obviously, the position of London is vital. It is a great national asset, full of life and excitement, with a great diversity of people, culture, activities and interests.

Mr. Mudie: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No, I have already given way several times. I have spoken for some time, and I am anxious to ensure that others can participate in the debate.

The Secretary of State for the Environment recently invited Londoners and all those with an interest to offer views on London's future. The full outcome of that exercise will be published soon. But the responses make it clear that Londoners have great pride in their city and that visitors think highly of London as well. We shall take full account of all the views received when deciding future priorities for London.

Meanwhile, as a further important step, we announced yesterday the new senior regional director for London. He is Mr. Robin Young, appointed at deputy secretary level, demonstrating the importance we attach to London's needs. He will serve the people of London extremely well, and bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to that vital job.

The introduction of the single regeneration budget, which brings together 20 existing programmes, has been widely welcomed. It has certainly been welcomed by those local authority leaders whom I and my ministerial colleagues have met. Local authorities and local businesses recognise that the new budget will provide the flexibility to focus assistance on areas facing multiple problems and allow local communities to get more involved in local decisions, as the budget will fund initiatives supported by partnerships whose proposals have the support of the local community.

The practical, positive partnership approach that is important in city challenge, in bringing forward proposals for the single regeneration budget, is also the approach that we are adopting for winning funds from European programmes. European structural funds have an important role to play in helping urban regeneration.

In England, we have secured £632 million in objective 1 money for Merseyside, and £2.8 billion objective 2 funding for eligible parts of England. Those areas are well placed to use such funds very effectively alongside the single regeneration budget and other national funding. In doing so, the Government will be working in partnership with local authorities, TECs and others.

As the House knows European regional development fund money does not cover the whole cost of projects; there must be matching funding. Confusion seems to persist about where such funding can come from. Let me make the position crystal clear. Matching funding can come from Government Departments including the single regeneration budget; local authorities; other public agencies such as English Partnerships; and the private and voluntary sectors. So money spent on, for example, infrastructure projects, certain environmental improvements, business support measures and training schemes can qualify as matching funding for the purposes of ERDF, and no area should have difficulty in maximising the available ERDF resources.

I have mentioned English Partnerships several times. Let me describe its role. Successful though long-standing initiatives such as city grant have been, there is scope for a more proactive, flexible and entrepreneurial approach. That is why, from next Friday, we are bringing together the work of city grant, derelict land grant and English Estates in English Partnerships, under the chairmanship of Lord Walker. That will allow maximum flexibility and greatest synergy to the benefit of local people.

English Partnerships is getting off to a cracking start. It has already announced its first significant investment of £25 million to some 25 projects, and it expects this to lever in a further £75 million from the private sector, possibly creating more than 1,000 jobs for these new projects alone, which include a private housing scheme in Liverpool, in partnership with Wimpey Homes and offices, workshops and retail development in Salford in partnership with Manchester Property Venture Fund; and bring back to life a grade 2 listed building, St. Nicholas in Newcastle, to make an attractive office development.

However much this Government and other public sector bodies do, cities will not work unless there is active private sector investment and community enterprise. We are doing much to help increase investment opportunities for the private sector. As well as the initiatives that I have already mentioned, we are also encouraging greater private sector activity through the private finance initiative.

The purpose of the private finance initiative is simple. It is to bring an extension in the role of the private sector in managing and financing capital investment and services which have traditionally been the responsibility of Government. We want to ensure that every £1 of public spending can be maximised. We start from a sound base. This year, my Department alone expects to raise more than £4 billion of private sector finance in support of departmental programmes.

Of course, money and fresh investment are important, but so are people, who are the most important ingredient. We are determined to involve local people and, wherever possible, to empower them to enable them to help determine their future. We are determined to bring on board the vast resources that the hundreds and thousands of city communities have to offer, as individuals and as voluntary groups. That is very much in the spirit of the Prime Minister's vision of active citizenship and the "You can make a difference" initiative recently launched by the Home Secretary to highlight practical ways in which to promote volunteering.

Some of the most vivid examples of the energy that communities can bring are seen in the tenant management organisations that are springing up across the country, often in the teeth of opposition from some of their local authorities. All over the country, tenants' groups are being organised. They are preparing to manage their estates.

We already support more than 200 groups in that preparatory phase. There are now 76 fully operational tenant management organisations up and running. From next Friday, the new right-to-manage scheme will give all properly constituted council tenants' organisations the right to take over the management of their estates, even if the local community is unwilling.

Of course, there are enormous challenges. City life presents challenges the world over, but phenomenal opportunities exist to continue to make our cities economically vibrant, safe and attractive places in which people will want to live and work, and will be proud to bring up their children. The Government are making a full contribution, by ensuring that policies mutually support inner-city regeneration and economic revival, in providing substantial financial resources, and in acting as a prime partner with local councils, local people and the many other partners who together can and will continue to transform our cities.

Our inner-city initiatives are working well. They are policies of which we can be proud. They will continue to help regenerate, revive and transform our cities for the better as we enter the 21st century.

10.40 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Minister spoke for an hour and six minutes and I was beginning to wonder whether his advisers had told him that Friday mornings were notoriously difficult for Ministers, and if he did not want to be left on his own, he had better have enough to say to keep the House occupied for a good part of the debate. But I should have thought that the Minister would become aware early in his speech that some of his colleagues were present and that, to some extent, their interventions have been helpful to him. I knew that that could not have been the reason for the length of the Minister's speech.

I know that the Minister likes cricket. I thought that he was obviously one of those batsmen who like to take a long time to get their eye in. I thought that, if we hung about long enough, we would see some strokes from the Minister, but I got that wrong as well.

It suddenly dawned on me that the Minister's speech mirrored the Government's urban policy in the past 15 years. They believe that if they talk about it long enough and have enough gimmicks and micro-suggestions, people will forget that the Government have no strategy and have cut resources and that the position is worse now than when the policy began. We were waiting for a strategy from the Minister. The Opposition are here to debate the single

[Mr. Doug Henderson]

regeneration budget and the integrated regional offices. The Opposition welcome some of the new structures; indeed, we have been calling for them for a long time. We are waiting to hear the Governments's strategy on those new structures and how they will fit in place. We have not heard about that.

We welcome the debate. The issue of urban decay is important. We must try to resolve it with determination if we are to have a strong nation, with a strong economy and with people living together cohesively and in peace. It is important that we represent our constituents' interests on those important matters and I am pleased that, even on a Friday morning, a significant number of hon. Members want to take part in the debate.

Urban decay is not confined to one or two, or even half a dozen, cities around the country. As I see when I tour the country, it is a growing problem. It does not exist only in Liverpool and Newcastle. It is now becoming apparent in parts of Liverpool and Newcastle where hitherto it has not been apparent. It is also apparent in southern England—in Portsmouth, Southampton, Reading and Gillingham today one can begin to see some of the features that were apparent in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow 15 years ago. That shows that Government policies have not taken account of the way in which urban decay has begun to spread. That is why the Government's urban policies have not been a success. They have been a fraud and a shambles. The policies have been a fraud because Government claims have never been realised. The policies are a shambles because the lessons that should have been learned from the mistakes have not been learned.

The Minister's speech was completely devoid of a strategy because he recognised that, in the past, the Government's policies have not been successful. The Government have been found out, not by the House of Commons, but by the people who live in inner-city communities throughout the country. If the Government are to convince people that they have a strategy that can work, it will have to be much more cogent than the Government's previous strategies.

Why has the Government's strategy failed? The failure is due to three false assumptions. The first was that urban decay was a sore in an otherwise successful economy. People who live in Britain recognise that there has been no economic miracle in the past 15 years, that the problems of the British economy are as serious as, if not more serious than, they were 15 years ago, and that urban decay is not a sore in this otherwise healthy earth.

I have already alluded to the Government's second false assumption. Urban decay is not a limited problem which can be solved by sending in a task force. Urban decay is endemic to our cities and is beginning to spread, and therefore any measures introduced to tackle it must challenge that assumption.

The Government's third assumption involves the fact that they have never been prepared to accept that general economic policy should have as much to do with urban regeneration as do other specific measures included in urban programmes or schemes. The failure to recognise that fact lies behind the Government's failure to take up the issue of the regeneration of our urban areas. Everyone in the country knows that. I do not understand why the Government have never accepted that.

People in east London know that Canary wharf, however nice a building it is, can never play an important part in the economy of the east end of London unless that economy is part of a prosperous economy in London and the south-east of the country generally. The factory units, which have been built and are welcome, will never be utilised unless there are people who want to make and sell things. When the economy is in recession and the country is patently suffering from economic failure, those living in urban areas cannot be given the hope that they are entitled to expect.

Dr. Hampson: No one could dispute the hon. Gentleman's interesting remarks, but I expected him to say that, in a recession, there should be extra investment in infrastructure, which has occurred under the Government's initiatives. That is surely what the Labour party used to believe. I am amazed that it no longer does.

The Government believe that there has been a transformation in, for example, the inner-city areas of Leeds during the recession. The urban development corporations have created about 8 million jobs. Without that catalyst, the royal armouries would not have been transferred from the Tower of London to Leeds, which will have a huge knock-on effect and will turn Leeds, interestingly, into a tourist centre. That has happened during a recession—Government programmes are helping to overcome the recession.

Mr. Henderson: I accept the economic point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). In a recession, it is right to take counter-cyclical action, first, to try to minimise the effects of the recession and, secondly, to prepare the economy to come out of the recession. It is right that there should be counter-cyclical action both on the capital account and on training to improve the efficiency of labour.

The Government's problem in dealing with the economy generally and urban policy is that for so many of the years since 1979, the economy has been in recession. When it has come out of recession, it has popped out for a short time, it has been overheated and it has had immediately to be dampened again, as happened in 1987-88. That is the failure of the economy. I accept the economic point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West; I wish that he and his colleagues would make that point more forcefully—I know that some of them have —to Ministers.

I have some sympathy with the Government on inner-city policy. It must be difficult for them to gauge how effective their policies are in changing life in our inner cities. Conservatives are not even sparse on the ground now in terms of political representation in our inner-city areas. A colleague said to me the other day that to find a Conservative representative in an inner-city borough is about as common as finding an English batsman appearing on the fifth day of a test in the West Indies.

I have some sympathy for Conservative Members and I especially have sympathy for them in relation to the London borough of Newham, on which the attention of the British people will be focused in the near future. I am pleased to tell the House that the Government have begun to prepare for their activities in the London borough of Newham; they have put advertisements in the local paper. An advertisement appeared on 16 February in the *Newham Recorder* under the heading:

"There's a job to be done."

When I first read that, I thought that the Conservative party had finally recognised that everything was not right in our inner cities and that there was something that could be done to improve the lot of the people who live there.

I read on a bit further. The advertisement said:

"There's a job to be done . . .
And you can help us to do it."

The advertisement was published, incidentally, by the Newham Conservatives administrative centre, PO box 1014, London E7 0LZ. It continued:

"We are looking for people who live or work in Newham and are interested in standing as Conservative Candidates in the May Borough Elections. If you want to see your money well spent, a Borough that is run efficiently . . . and you believe in the Conservative cause, contact us for more details of what being a Conservative Councillor means."

I knew that the Government were keen on bids for inner-city resources, but I did not realise that they had started to put the post of a Conservative candidate in the local elections out to tender. That is taking competitive tendering a little too far.

I believed that this debate would be about the single regeneration budget and the integrated regional office. The Opposition support those initiatives in structural terms, but we and those involved in the urban aid programme want further assurances. We hope that the announcements will be accompanied by assurances that there will be genuine local determination of priorities, assurances that projects will be supported when they demonstrably have the support of local communities, assurances that local authorities will play an important role in guaranteeing democracy and local involvement and assurances on many of the mechanisms of the bidding process. The wider community will be convinced that there is a new direction only when the urban aid programmes are set in the context of a changed approach to economic policy generally.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman mentioned some specific issues on which he wished to have assurances. The answer to each and every one of those questions is yes.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful for the Minister's broad response to some of those points. I assure him that the debate looks as if it will not be long enough. I shall write to him on a number of specific points that have been raised by some of the organisations involved.

The people know that even with all the aid programmes that Whitehall has conjured up, if there are acute problems in other parts of the economy, the problems of the inner-city areas will be critical. The test of whether the programmes will be effective in tackling the problems of decay will be whether they are part of a wider policy framework to lead us back to full employment and social cohesion.

There is another condition for the success of our inner-city policies. There needs to be an acceptance by all parties in our inner-city areas, such as Tower Hamlets, that Britain is a multiracial society and that solutions to inner-city regeneration must be rooted in a multiracial approach. If political parties pander to racial sectarianism, not only will tension be created, which will lead to the breakdown of democracy, but that tension will in itself be a major obstacle in the drive to regenerate inner-city areas. Selecting council candidates on the basis of racial grouping is wholly alien to the Labour party and to any multiracial road to the development of those areas and social cohesion.

Over the years, the Government have trumpeted their claims to try to demonstrate their commitment to urban renewal. We all remember—the Minister alluded to this—Baroness Thatcher on the staircase of Conservative central office on the night of the 1987 general election saying that something must be done about the inner cities. The 1992 Conservative manifesto stated:

"We take pride in our cities . . . The best way to restore the spirit of enterprise which first made our cities great is for local people, the private sector, the voluntary sector and local and central government, to work together in partnership."

Some of my ancestors came from the inner-city areas of Edinburgh. I doubt whether those who lived in the 19th century would have recognised the greatness of the parts of Edinburgh in which they lived. Even if they recognised that other parts of Edinburgh were great, that greatness would not necessarily have been motivated by a spirit of enterprise. At least it is encouraging to see that the Government have recognised that there is a problem in the cities which must be tackled.

Mr. Spearing: I may be able to inform my hon. Friend about this point of major political significance. He may recall the declaration on the stairs of central office, and the surprise and pleasure of some and the concern of others, including Sir Leon Brittan. When asked, he said that if that was the policy, Ministers would of course do it. Does my hon. Friend realise that the question was asked in the context of the advances that the Conservative party had made in the election? Baroness Thatcher was asked, "What about the inner cities?" In replying, "Yes, we must do something about that too", she meant the elimination of Labour party representation in those areas, not their regeneration. Her remark has been widely misunderstood ever since.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for his definitive interpretation of Baroness Thatcher's comments. I did not realise that I was being unduly generous; I am tempted to withdraw my remarks. Even if I had to withdraw them, there would still be sufficient evidence that the Government, at least on the face of it, are committed to doing something about our cities.

The Minister's boss, the Secretary of State for the Environment, found time away from his religious journeying a couple of weeks ago to issue a press release. It said that the right hon. Gentleman

"today pledged to help people achieve the quality of traditional town centres which they value and put heart back into the cities."

The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West mentioned the Government's apparent change of policy. All I can ask is why the Government had to wait 15 years. Why has the country had to wait 15 years for the Government to wake up to the fact that if the urban policy on industrial and commercial development is to plunder the green belt and to build new centres, the inevitable impact is that whereas some activities used to take place in the inner cities, craters devoid of economic activity are created? When it is devoid of economic activity it will soon be devoid of people activity, which is exactly what has happened in many of our cities.

There have been many Government schemes, some of which were proudly proclaimed by the Minister. It is interesting to remember how many there have been. We have had the urban programme, designated districts, city grant, derelict land grant, urban development corporations, enterprise zones, estate action, city action teams, city

[Mr. Henderson]

challenge, inner-city task forces, regional assistance, regional enterprise grants, the enterprise initiative, English Estates, enterprise zones, simplified planning zones and training and enterprise councils.

Those schemes bear some resemblance to Graham Taylor's team sheets. As the country has found out, their success bears some comparison with the success of the English football team in recent years.

Mr. Thomason: In view of what the hon. Gentleman has just said, does he complain about the 87,602 jobs which will have been created by 1998 in city challenge areas?

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman has obviously got a brief from central office.

Mr. Thomason: Here are my notes.

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman has been wise enough to copy it in his own handwriting. I am afraid that central office researchers are increasingly missing the boat. I shall give one example that I intended to refer to later in my speech. However, the House may as well have it now. Great claims have been made about job creation in the London Docklands development corporation area. Some 13,000 new jobs were created from 1986 to 1993, but I enter the caveat that many of them were moved in from areas outside the development area. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that, even within the area, 15,000 jobs have been lost in the same period, so that the net effect is a loss of 2,000 jobs.

I know what is happening in my area of Tyne and Wear. There is the same pattern. Some jobs have been created, although very few of them have been in manufacturing. The factory to which the Minister referred in Jarrow is one exception, and it is a welcome exception. However, it is not characteristic of job creation in the Tyne and Wear development corporation area. They have been mainly commercial jobs and many of them have been moved from other parts of Newcastle and Sunderland. The damning of the policy is that there are so many other manufacturing and service jobs linked to the previous manufacturing industries that have gone from that same area. That is the error of the Government's policy.

There have been many new buildings. I am not one of those with an interest in urban policy who say that we should not spend money on new buildings or that there should be minimal spend. I recognise that if there are to be new activities, whether industrial, commercial or community, we want to see them taking place in new property. We do not want industry and commerce and voluntary organisations using run-down old property. We want new property, but we want it in a context of community development and regeneration. That is the key test of whether an urban policy has been successful.

The test is not whether we can put up buildings, because if there is sufficient subsidy any developer or building contractor will tap into it, put up the buildings and say, "Thanks very much."

It is all very well to make claims about construction jobs being created in the interim period, but the test is what happens next. Will we get value for public money from that investment? We can get such value only if that property development is part of a regeneration of a complete area.

As the chairman of Tyne and Wear development corporation said on the radio this morning—if I heard him correctly—the test of successful development, including urban development corporations, is whether jobs have been created. I take that to mean a net creation of jobs because if it is not, there will be an ever downward spiral of economic difficulty. I agree with the chairman, Sir Paul Nicholson, that there must be that jobs test. In addition, there needs to be a test on the health of the people and on the homes that are made available for them.

In preparation for the debate, I asked the Library to take four examples of areas outside London that have received urban aid and three examples of areas in London where there will be a political contest in the near future. The Library has prepared figures for me on Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Wolverhampton. I hope that the Minister accepts that that is a reasonably fair representation of areas where there is an urban problem and which have received urban aid in one way or another. I hope that the Minister will also accept that Newham, Barking and Dagenham are reasonably representative of what has been happening to London's economy over the past 15 years and a reasonable test of whether Government policies have been successful. The by-elections in those areas should also be a test of what the people there believe about the Government's economic policy.

Despite all the schemes, unemployment figures, which are all for February, show that unemployment in Wolverhampton from 1979 to 1992 increased from 6 to 12.7 per cent. of the work force. In Liverpool, it increased from 12.4 to 14.6 per cent. In Manchester, it has risen from 5.8 to 10.1 per cent. and in Newcastle, it increased from 7.8 per cent.—which is a north Tyne statistic—in 1979 to 12.8 per cent. in 1994.

The figures from the three London jobcentres further demonstrate the failure of Conservative urban policies in London. In Barking, unemployment trebled between 1979 and 1994. In the East Ham jobcentre area, which covers the constituency of Newham, North-East, unemployment is now five time higher than in 1979. In Dagenham, unemployment has increased by three times since 1979.

Death rates are reasonably indicative of the health of all ages in the community. They have increased in the past 15 years in Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and in the London borough of Newham.

Between 1979 and 1994, homelessness has risen by a fifth in Newcastle, by more than a quarter in Liverpool, by two and a half times in Wolverhampton and by more than six times in Manchester. In Barking, homelessness has more than doubled over the past 15 years while in Newham it has doubled. That is the record of 15 years of Conservative policies in four northern cities and three London boroughs.

Mr. Tony Banks: As my hon. Friend well knows, we in Newham have city challenge in Stratford. It is useful, good and big money and it is coming in, but what is done with it emphasises my hon. Friend's point because it is providing us with buildings—they are good buildings and we now have the best bingo hall in the country—but it is not providing us with jobs. The sort of thing that would improve the possibility of getting jobs in north-east and north-west Newham and, indeed, in the whole of the east end, would be for the Government to announce that there will be an international railway station at Stratford. That

would really bring in jobs. If that happened, all the good buildings, including the bingo hall, would be stuffed with international visitors.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reinforcing the point that I was attempting to establish by giving his experience of what is happening in Newham. I had intended to be tempted into speaking about transport because it has an important part to play in urban regeneration. However, given the time that it has taken me to get to where I am and in view of the matters that I should like to address, I may leave that to some of my colleagues who may wish to emphasise it in their contributions.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has just left the Chamber because the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr.Henderson) gave statistics about the increase in homelessness in Manchester. Perhaps he can explain why Manchester city council, which is Labour controlled, owned 2,269 vacant dwellings on 1 April 1993.

Mr. Henderson: We can all barter statistics about empty houses.

Mrs. Gillan: Answer the question.

Mr. Henderson: I shall answer. In reply, I am tempted to raise the case of Brent. That takes us back to London, which we are discussing. Brent has the worst record for housing arrears in the country: 34.4 per cent. of the entire rent roll is uncollected by a Conservative council. I shall answer the specific point that the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) has raised. The reason why Manchester and many other authorities, Conservative and Labour authorities around the country —there are pressure few Conservative councils left, as I am sure that the hon. Lady recognises—

Mrs. Gillan: I have one.

Mr. Henderson: She may have a Conservative council. If she has, we look forward to a future contest. The reason why a lot of homes are left empty is that councils have been deprived by central Government of grants to renovate and modernise homes to re-let. Councils have also been prevented by central Government from raising the resources at local level. That is the principal reason why there are empty houses. If we are talking about empty houses, the proportion of Government-controlled empty houses is far higher than that of local authorities. I refer the hon. Lady to Ministry of Defence statistics.

Mrs. Gillan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Henderson: I am tempted again.

Mrs. Gillan: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, of those 2,269 vacant dwellings, 1,306 were only waiting for minor repairs?

Mr. Henderson: I do not know what kind of problems the hon. Lady has faced when she holds surgeries in Amersham, but when I have held surgeries in the city of Newcastle, people say that they have been allocated a new house, but that there is a delay of three or four weeks; they ask whether there is something that I can do. When I ask what the problem is, they say that the sink is bust, or that the light fittings have gone, or that the panels in the doors have gone, or that the locks have broken. Such things happen in houses over a period of time. They happen in my house and I own my house, not the council. I know the costs of such repairs. Councils will tell hon. Members of the cost of making even minor repairs to houses, but they have been so deprived of resources that many cannot make the minor repairs that they wish to make. I must press on.

Why has that urban decay continued relentlessly? What is reason for the failure of policy? Essentially, the Government have not recognised, and will not face the fact that, they cannot have a successful targeted urban policy until they are successful with economic policy generally. With the huge damage caused by the north-south divide in the early 1980s, the two deep recessions of the 1980s and the early 1990s, and the increasing recession in southern parts of the country over the past three or four years, one cannot expect urban policy to make any dent on the problems and areas. It is a question of resources.

One of the problems of the urban policy is that, in many areas, the moneys that territories have received do not compensate for moneys that have been taken away from local authorities over a period of years because of changes in local authority law. There have been quite lengthy speeches and I do not want to prolong mine more than necessary. I would have given the House the advice of Professor Robson, who has advised not only the Labour party on urban policy, but the Government. It was his view after important work conducted in 1993 that much urban aid has not compensated for the damage done by the withdrawal of support.

Successive Ministers for the inner cities have come to the Dispatch Box and there is not a great track record of their staying in post for any length of time. There is hope for the Under-Secretary, because most Ministers eventually go on to better things. The current Chief Secretary to the Treasury who, I understand, the Minister and his boss blamed for the cut in the urban programme moneys next year, said when he was Minister for the inner cities that he believed in an urban programme and that he wanted to see the Government's policy building on the success of those programmes. Of course, he has changed his tune now that he is at the Treasury.

One of the problems with urban policies over the years has been that we have heard reasonably good statements on occasions from Ministers who have come into contact with the problems, but every time that they have gone to the Treasury to ask for resources to do something about those problems, the door has been kicked shut in their face. Organisations that are closely considering the single regeneration budget and the rules that will apply to tap into that have made the same comments. They see structural improvements, but do not see any commitment to the resources that they believe are necessary to make an impact on the problems.

The Government have claimed that one of the stronger parts of the new policy was that there was flexibility and that there were not 20 schemes from which to choose. They claimed that areas would not have to apply for one scheme or the other and that, if an area was knocked back in scheme three, it would not mean that it was not entitled entry to scheme 11, for example. The Government have pooled the money so that an area could make a bid based on its overall needs and claimed that there would be flexibility. They said that there was special money laid aside for flexibility. I am told by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and others that there is little money being laid aside which is flexible—perhaps as little

[Mr. Henderson]

as £100 million out of £1.6 billion, or £1.4 billion on the reduced figure. Even some of that small amount are moneys that were previously in estate action programme. There is no evidence of either more resources or of flexibility.

The third reason that has caused the failure of urban policies, as my hon. Friends have said, is that the emphasis on property development has been wrong. It does not work. There is not a trickle-down benefit. As I said to the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), even in the London Docklands development corporation area, which the Government would say is the area in the shop window, there is no net creation of jobs. If the Government wanted to demonstrate the success of the policy, one would have thought that they would ensure that, at least in the London docklands, they managed to create in one way or another a net job creation. The reality is that, with all their efforts, they have failed miserably to do that.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there were 60,000 jobs created indirectly in the docklands as a result of Conservative policies?

Mr. Henderson: That is a vague claim to make in the House. No, I do not accept it. If the hon. Gentleman wants to give me figures on where those jobs have been created and who created them, I should be happy to consider them with the House of Commons Library statisticians, who have given me their figures which show that there has been a reduction in jobs.

Regeneration is about not only jobs, but housing policies. If the Government had wanted to demonstrate that their housing regeneration policies were successful, they would have ensured that it had happened in docklands. Even there, they have not managed to do that, as the figures show. Between 1986 and 1991, the number of people on housing waiting lists in three dockland boroughs rose from 30,000 to 39,000—a 31 per cent. increase. In the same three dockland boroughs between 1981 and 1992, the number of people whom the Government classified as homeless increased from 1,781 to 4,829—an increase in homelessness of 173 per cent.

If the commercial side had been booming and if Canary wharf had been some success, the Government could at least have said that they had not regenerated jobs, that they had not managed to regenerate housing, but that they had a successful commercial property. The Government cannot even claim that. Canary wharf is still about half empty. Estimates range between 40 and 60 per cent. I remember that the predecessor of the Under-Secretary of State, who is now the Secretary of State for Wales, claimed that there would be pilgrims flocking down the River Thames from Marsham street and elsewhere wanting to be housed in Canary wharf.

Mr. Vaz: Only the *Daily Mirror* has done that.

Mr. Henderson: The *Daily Mirror* are perhaps the sole pilgrims. The only way in which the Government will be able to persuade the managers of Canary wharf that they can fill it is if they introduce internment for all the architects, the policy advisers and the other people who have wrongly advised them over the years and if they fill the top floor with the Tory rebels. That is the only way Canary wharf will ever be a success. It could then be renamed the docklands gulag.

One of the problems is that there has been a lack of co-ordination of transport policy. If public transport is not available, it does not matter which part of the country we are referring to; urban policy will not be a success. Urban policy depends on involving people with public transport. Many people who live in inner-city areas cannot afford private transport. Even if they could, they would only further congest their city streets, which would make their problems worse.

To some extent, I am pleased that the Government have accepted the view of the Audit Commission by acknowledging that there needs to be a structural change in policies. According to the Audit Commission, in the past, the Government had

"programme overkill in a strategic vacuum."

I hope that the Minister accepts that a radical new approach is required. The Government may have tackled the problem of programme overkill—that is why the Opposition support the new structure—but they have not yet tackled the problem of the strategy for their urban policies.

For the love of me, I cannot understand why the Government will not face up to the need for development agencies in this country. Nearly every other comparable western European country has some kind of regional co-ordinating economically based body to co-ordinate the various efforts to regenerate regions.

People in London, the south-west, Yorkshire, Lancashire, the north-east and elsewhere, and their communities involving business, commerce, education and the public sector, all say that they need a co-ordinating body and a development agency. Such a body is crucial if there is to be real regeneration of our regions. The problems of urban decay in Tyneside cannot be dealt with in wards in Newcastle such as Scotswood and Elswick unless the economic problems of the north-east are tackled. The economic strategy can be successful only in that context.

Local authorities need a new role. The Government have recognised that the ad hoc schemes, the gimmicks, little quangos and perks for their friends on the quangos, have not done the job. They are as likely to fight among themselves as they are to produce a strategy to help an area. Local authorities were created 150 years ago or more to bring together local community issues, to speak on behalf of communities and to make policy accountable to communities. We need that input in respect of urban policy, as we need it in respect of many other policies.

I hope that the Government will accept that it is nonsense to say that we want to regenerate areas and put money in to do this or that and expect local authorities to play a key co-ordination role and then say, "By the way, we're going to cap your budget this year so you can't make any judgment about whether there is an appropriate level of economic resources to tackle the problem."

It is also nonsense to tell local authorities that we want them to co-ordinate industrial development and property development policies in an area, and then say, "By the way, we set the business rates nationally because we don't think that you have any role to negotiate with potential investors in your areas." That is clearly a policy error. I hope that the Minister will be honest enough to accept that

he cannot have it both ways. He cannot expect co-ordination at local level and to deprive local authorities of the resources they need to make that succesful.

I want to try to bring my remarks to a conclusion, but one cannot ignore the important voluntary sector. It is not designed to be the co-ordinating body; it cannot prepare the strategic plan for an area. However, I do not believe that the strategic plan for an area can be successful unless the voluntary sector is fully involved and fully supports the proposals.

I want the voluntary sector to develop its welfare advice and provision role. I should like it to develop its sporting and cultural activities, especially among young people in the inner cities. I should like the voluntary sector to become involved in anti-crime action. In particular, I should like the voluntary sector to be recognised as the best means of allowing ethnic minorities in inner-city areas to make their own case for the things that they need to strengthen the communities in which they live. It is important that there should be experimentation in respect of economic regeneration. In that regard, I see a role for community business schemes operated by the voluntary sector.

As has been said in the House before, we need a vision for the future of our cities. We need a vision that gives cities vitality and which identifies cities as places of progress and places which we can look forward to and be proud of in the next millennium. Cities should be people places with shops, restaurants, culture, sport, education and festivals. In Europe, I see cities as places of festival which involve ordinary people. That helps to build the cohesiveness of cities.

People want to live in some cities in Britain. However, as in America, people want to live in too few of our cities. Over a long period, planning policy in this country and in America has generally moved richer people out of cities and left the poorer people in ghettos. Planning policy in Britain, as in America, is now also moving industry out of the cities. We want to avoid the American situation whereby both people and industry have moved out of the cities, leaving craters of destruction.

The Europeans have understood that problem better than we have—*[Interruption.]* It is being pointed out from a sedentary position that the Government are beginning to recognise that, as was shown from the Secretary of State's statement last week: better late than never. I wish that the Government had taken notice of what is happening in cities such as Bruges, Vienna, Florence and some of the French cities and the way they have retained their vitality.

Cities should be accessible places and that means public transport. They should be safe places where everyone in the community can enjoy social intercourse, walk around and meet their friends. Women should be able to feel safe in our British cities. The reality is that most women will not walk around British cities today. My mother will not go through London. She is not all that elderly, but she is frightened of London. She needs someone to travel with her. It is ridiculous that people in their sixties should be frightened of the inner cities. From the response of Conservative Members, it is clear that their families share that experience.

We need a new approach to our economy, to planning and to local government co-ordination. Above all, we need consistency, cogency and forceful programmes. We need to resource our urban programmes and to complement that with resources that local authorities can gather together. We need a programme that can make a difference, which can be radical and which can be part of an integrated strategy. If this debate contributes to that demand and need, we will not have wasted our time today.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. In the limited time available for this debate, many hon. Members hope to catch my eye. If hon. Members who are successful bear that in mind, I will be able to call as many hon. Members as possible.

11.27 am

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I am grateful to be called, and I congratulate the Government on the success of their policies. I want to point the way forward in respect of several strategies.

One is amazed at the Opposition's gall in pouring cold water on the Government's policies and yet proposing almost no policies of their own except to spend more money and perhaps, to be fair, to involve the voluntary sector. In a throw-away remark, the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), even risked the anger of the football-supporting members of the public by pouring scorn on the English football team. We have witnessed amazing gall over the past half hour.

I wish to speak because, for my sins, I have had some experience of these matters. Between 1984 and 1988, I was the Government adviser in Downing street behind the veil of secrecy—*[Interruption.]* I hear all sorts of remarks bubbling up from the Opposition Benches at that. I then entered the private sector and was the chief executive of something called British Urban Development. Then I was the founding chairman of BURA—the British Urban Regeneration Association. As it so happens, this week I was elected to the chairmanship of the Tory Back-Bench committee on urban regeneration. Therefore, for my sins, I have had that experience.

Mr. Vaz: Is the hon. Member getting any money for it?

Mr. Booth: There is no money.

It is often thought that the problem of inner-city challenge is one of our time. It is to some extent but it is as old as the hills as well. Those people who have been on holiday to Pompeii have seen the ruins of an ancient city regenerated three times. All the main cities in Europe from London to Rome have been rebuilt through the centuries. Uniquely, the Tories—to some extent, this was illustrated by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North—go to all the people, regardless of whether we have councillors or Tory Members in those inner-city areas. We do it as a matter of principle; we are the party of all the people—the one-nation approach. *[Interruption.]* There is terrific cynicism, but Tory Members know that that is where we come from. We do not go in there simply to look after our own people.

We also come from a different standpoint; we come forward because we are committed to tackling inefficiency. There are 800,000 empty housing properties in Britain; many in urban areas—the empty properties in Manchester have already been referred to—and there are 150,000 derelict acres in Britain. That has reduced from 200,000 at the time when I worked in Downing street in the mid-1980s. We care about people.

[Mr. Booth]

Another "dereliction" in inner cities is unemployment—that matter has been raised by several Labour Members. Of course, we are concerned about unemployment. I pay tribute to an hon. Member who unfortunately cannot be here today—my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). He has had 20 years' experience of these matters. In 1980, he wrote "New Life for Old Cities" and in 1990 he wrote "Public Land Utilisation Management Schemes"—PLUMS—which raised many of those points. Unfortunately, he had to be in his constituency today.

It is a mosaic of different factors balancing both people and property. We at least recognise that. Curiously and ironically, it is also a balance between the corporatist approach and the free market approach. It is undeniable that derelict land is tackled partly on a dirigiste policy through development corporations. It must be partly a direction from the centre so as to create the conditions for the market to bubble up. Therefore, we have an irony that is perhaps not noted in other parts of Government policy.

We also have the partnership approach—the Minister led on that—which is so evident and so necessary to bring the strengths of both the private sector and the public sector together. We need imagination, patience and determination, and the Government have that. In a way, it is two concentric circles. We start with the economy, which will create jobs. We must then deal with the environment, transport and the infrastructure, which must lead to housing. We often find that housing—I have seen it in Liverpool—has been built ahead of the creation of jobs, and people are miserable without employment. We are dealing with crime in the safer-cities approach, and with training and education and health, which is not always recognised as a factor in urban regeneration. All those progress points lead to the economy, where we start our circle.

Uniquely, the economy in inner cities is a function of the risk taker and the private sector. In all other parts of the two concentric circles, there must be a partnership. However, the risk taking, the enterprise and the initiative which sparks the economy is the private sector's unique function. At least that is recognised fundamentally by the Government. We do get the climate right. Labour Members have been cynical about our approach. However, we recognise that the economy is the silk worm and the vital organ in the middle of the exercise.

I shall quickly review what we have, because I know that time is short. Hopefully, we may improve our policies. I shall refer to the economy. We have often forgotten to put the economy first, but we have done so in many other respects. We have often had a lack of recognition that people who deal with inner cities have huge ground problems of pollution. Anyone who takes over a British Gas site must deal with phenols of 100 years.

We must recognise that often the assets of many companies are registered with the bank with illusory figures. It is more than the lives of the owners of the companies are worth to revalue the assets, although they may have fallen in value and are blocking a vital piece of redevelopment. Manchester is an obvious case which we must address.

We must also answer the curious question whether urban regeneration is a long or short-term phenomenon. We have got it broadly right. Mostly it must be a long-term policy. Baltimore—the example that is held up as the best in the world—began its progress in 1956. Hong Kong would not be the success that it is today if people had taken only a long-term approach to investment in the late 1980s. Therefore, we must recognise short-term policies as well.

In the environment, we need to recognise patient money and patient land—in other words, people should be allowed to use land for redevelopment without money returned today, and in return they must pay back the money in perhaps 20 years' time when the development has succeeded. The Government need to recognise patient money and the whole concept of it. I hope that Lord Walker, with the new partnership initiative English Partnerships that he is leading, will recognise that.

We need new deals with regard to sites of special scientific interest. We must recognise that there are all sorts of ways in which we can improve the environment of inner cities, not only the curmudgeonly go-by-the-book rule. We can benefit the environment in different ways. We need imagination in this respect, but there is no time to go into that now.

We must also accept that grants alone are not always successful. I was involved in proposals in Leicester where we were offered grants from the Department of the Environment. We could not go ahead because the people in my group were unable to see a return on their investment at the end of the day. We may well need—I hope that the Treasury will listen to this—long-term loans that in the short term are not paid back with interest, and I hope that more grants are turned into loans for the sake of the taxpayer.

I shall speak briefly about transport. In the early 1980s, before we got it right—we had been struggling with it for a long time—we did not recognise adequately that transport had to be a priority. I remember asking people in Downing street why the Secretary of State for Transport was not at meetings. That has now been recognised and he now attends them. We have now got the transport infrastructure in docklands right, a matter referred to by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North.

In Britain, we recognise that our transport system and the provision of it is much too slow. In Essex, where we were doing an urban regeneration project, we were told that it would take at least eight years to get a spur road off the main road for a particular urban regeneration site. It has been well reported that in France they can get a spur road off a motorway for urban regeneration in six months. The key to it, and what we should recognise and change, is that better compensation is needed, as well as powers for speedier consultation with the local people. Housing is vital, but it must be linked with jobs, crime prevention, local facilities and even energy supply. We need to go beyond the strictures of the planning system to harness the aspirations and desires of the local community.

In Pittsburgh, there is an example of involving communities in planning which is called a RHUDAT system. On a Friday evening, before a proposal to regenerate an inner city is made, a local community is taken into a school hall. They sit there on and off all weekend discussing what they want, and they also hear the planner say what is impossible. Between them, they come up with a community solution which helps everyone. It means that the redevelopment will be speedier, and that everyone will get something from the proposals.

That sort of community planning goes beyond the strict and, if I may say so, dull rules which we have had since

1948 in our town and country planning system. That is the imaginative approach which we need for the future for housing and community development.

There are 10 cities in our crime initiative, and we must build on the neighbourhood approach. I hope that that will be developed later this year.

We have had exchanges in the House on training and education. In Germany, what is fascinating is not the overall figures—we can hold our flag high in relation to general provision—but the fact that the German chambers of commerce do not allow small businesses to start unless those involved are qualified in business.

The evidence in Southampton and in various parts of the country is that the success rate of small businesses is far higher when those involved have gone through training before they go to a bank to borrow money and start in business. The rate goes up from about 40 per cent. to nearly 70 per cent. success in small businesses if they go through a training process.

We must look at that, although I hope that we will not go down the stricter German chamber of commerce route which might even have stopped Henry Ford from setting up in Dagenham. It is no secret that Henry Ford was barely literate, but he had the entrepreneurial skills to be the founder of Ford Motors.

The next point on the circle is health. There is a Cabinet Committee called the EDR. When one is inside Government, those initials are like an umbrella. There is security in them—one knows them and likes them. That is fine. But outside Government, they are a barrier to all of us. I had better say that EDR stands for economic development and—I had better get it right—regeneration. [HON. MEMBERS: "Well done."] Thank you. I will struggle through the interpretation of the initials.

The committee does not have a representative from the Department of Health. If it is correct that the safety of our cities involves planning to avoid crime, we also need to build health into cities.

I commend what the Government have done in urban regeneration since 1979. The development corporations have brought in £30 billion of investment which might not necessarily have gone to Britain. Much of the investment brought into docklands has been made because of a choice of Britain rather than Germany. We should commend those people involved in docklands and in Teesside, such as Mr. Duncan Hall and others, who have been assiduous in bringing investment into Britain through the vehicle provided by the Government of the development corporations.

Enterprise zones have been mentioned. One of the outstanding examples of success that I should illustrate is the way in which Corby was transformed. No fewer than 6,500 people were put out of work there when the steelworks failed in 1981. Within eight years, only 54 out of original 6,500 were still out of work. That was due to the advent of an enterprise zone in harnessing investment.

Business initiatives, as my hon. Friend the Minister has mentioned, have been outstanding. One must add that the climate is right in so many other private sector initiatives, such as the Prince's Youth Trust, Business in the Community and others. The Prince's Youth Trust alone helped to start 20,000 businesses, and that is a fantastic performance.

There has been a survey of the improvement of the condition of houses in inner cities, and there has been a 24 per cent. rise in the condition of houses between 1981 and 1991.

Lastly, there is the level of funding. The figure of £1.4 billion has been spoken about for urban regeneration this year. Cynical Members might recall that, from 1974 to 1975, the Labour party reduced funding for inner cities by nearly 25 per cent. The average level of its commitment to inner cities was £25 million from 1974 to 1979. Even if one is being fair and uprates that to today's figures, it is still only a little over £100 million, compared with £1.4 billion today.

However, there is more than £1.4 billion. If we add Scottish and Welsh selective assistance, employment training money and the housing benefit budget to the figure of £1.4 billion, that brings it up to £4 billion. But that is not the final figure spent on urban regeneration. If one adds education, health, police and the rate support grant to inner cities, one gets a figure of between £8 billion and £12 billion a year.

We have a fine record. Much has been done, and there is much to do. The Government's record is based on people and property, and not on property alone. It is based on economic success, and not museum status. It is not so much "back to basics", but forward to fundamentals.

11.47 am

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Thousands of my constituents live in deep poverty, and often in despair. Thousands regard it as an achievement —almost a triumph—to get from one day to another. If they had been in the Chamber and had listened to the one hour and six minutes of the cheap, glib speech made by the Minister who has been put up by the Government to speak about their lives, and about their past, present and tremulous future, I do not know whether they would have wept or would have wished to throw stones. When the Minister talks about the continuous regeneration of inner cities and about the "good life" in inner cities, he is, for thousands of my constituents, making a grim joke. Life for my constituents is grim, hard, difficult and often hopeless.

I should like to describe to the House the circumstances of one young man who came to my surgery last month. His name was Mike, and he was a very nice young man indeed. He gets £30 a week income support, and lives in private rented accommodation. The limits on the amount of money that the local authority can contribute towards his rent mean that he has £15 a week rent to pay. He therefore has £15 a week to feed and clothe himself, and to pay for gas, electricity, water and council tax. That is his life today in an inner city which the Minister said was being regenerated by the Government. Like so many people in my constituency, he does not know how to live from day to day.

The Minister spoke about Government policies and of how people could use their cars, the assumption being that people have cars to use. Thirty-two per cent. of the population nationally do not have a car. In the best of the six wards in my constituency, 54.1 per cent. do not have a car. In the Gorton, South ward, 61.6 per cent. have no access to a car. In Longsight, 63.8 per cent. have no access to a car.

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

The young man Mike, of whom I spoke, lives on income support. In the ward in which he lives, 33.7 per cent. of the population live on income support.

Mr. Baldry: If the right hon. Gentleman reads my speech in *Hansard*, he may realise that he has misunderstood what I said. I said that we should ensure that places of work, shopping and other city activities should be accessible to people who do not have cars. I said that we should not build a structure entirely dependent on people having access to cars. So I am at one with the right hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Mr. Kaufman: I only wish that my constituents had places of work to go to. I shall deal with that matter in a moment. I only wish that my constituents had money to spend in shops. The Minister, coming from Banbury, simply does not understand what life is like in the inner city of Manchester and in my constituency, which is an inner-city constituency.

Let us consider the sort of people who live in the inner city. They are not the thrusting entrepreneurs about whom the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) talked. In my constituency we have a huge number of lone parents struggling along. The national percentage of lone parents is 3.7 per cent. In the Longsight ward of my constituency, it is 9.8 per cent. In Gorton, South, it is 10.9 per cent. In my constituency as a whole, it is 8.4 per cent.

Let us examine the poverty of those families. Of children in primary schools in my constituency who take school meals, more than a third qualify for free school meals. Of children in secondary schools who take school meals, more than half qualify for free school meals. Hon. Members should bear in mind the fact that it is difficult to qualify for a free school meal.

Let us consider housing benefit, which is not sufficient to help my constituent Mike. In Manchester, 46 per cent. of households have to depend on housing benefit. That is the highest percentage in the country. In the Gorton, North ward of my constituency, 63.5 per cent. of the people have to depend on housing benefit.

Conservative Members may well ask why my constituent Mike, like so many other of my constituents, lives on benefit and why he does not get a job. He would love to get a job. It would be a transformation of his life. But in the Longsight ward unemployment is 18.3 per cent. Male unemployment is 25.5 per cent. In the ward in which that young man lives, unemployment among 16 to 19-year-olds is 48.9 per cent. Some people leave school and after years have no job and no prospect of getting a job.

In the Fallowfield ward, male youth unemployment is 46.4 per cent. In the Rusholme ward, it is 38.1 per cent. Among young women unemployment is often as bad or almost as bad. In the Rusholme ward, female youth unemployment is 42 per cent. It is 37 per cent. in Longsight and 32.5 per cent. in Fallowfield.

When people hear about the problem that Mike faces with his rent, they may ask why he does not move away from the private landlord who is ripping him off. Of course, some people are completely without a home. Homelessness has become the biggest industry in my constituency. My constituency was once one of the major engineering centres of the country. I recently went to the York railway museum and saw a superb locomotive manufactured at the works in Gorton.

In Manchester, between 1984 and 1991, we lost a third of all our manufacturing jobs: the number has fallen from 47,000 to 32,000. Our biggest industry is homelessness. I live next door to a block of 35 flats which are now used solely by homeless people. The owner is paid by the council tax payer and the taxpayer £468,000 a year for making the property available for the homeless. People are becoming millionaires on homelessness. Yet if that money was spent not on homelessness but on building houses, we could get 15 brand new three-bedroom houses out of the money being chucked away to make the owners of that property and so many other owners of property rich.

Mrs. Gillan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Lady was chucked away from Manchester in 1989 by a majority of 39,000. I do not believe that she is qualified to intervene on the subject of Manchester, particularly as she presumably intends to trot out the Conservative central office statistic about empty properties in Manchester. I shall deal with that simply, without her smirking about it.

As Conservatives Members know, the housing revenue account of the city of Manchester is ring-fenced. Repairs and maintenance have to be paid for out of the rents of council tenants. We are unable to made the necessary repairs to make the empty houses habitable. I visit them regularly. I go round my constituency. I do not have to visit my constituency; I live in it. I live in the inner city; I visit my friends and my neighbours. I do not come to Manchester briefly as a parliamentary candidate and then pop back to Buckinghamshire.

Mrs. Gillan: The right hon. Gentleman has chosen to reduce the debate to a personal level. I should like to point out that I nursed Manchester, Central Euro-constituency for 18 months and had a home in that constituency for six months of that period. Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on the fact that the Labour-controlled council in Manchester ordered an independent inquiry into its housing accounts after several multi-million pound mistakes were uncovered? The report in January 1991 said that the council had concealed that major subsidy miscalculations and accounting errors had been made.

Mr. Kaufman: I congratulate the hon. Lady on living for six whole months in the city of Manchester. My constituents have to spend their whole lives there, putting up with the policies of the Government. I do not intend to defend any errors made by Manchester city council. The hon. Lady might know that the severest critic of the council in my constituency is me. I send it hundreds of letters every month on problems relating to my constituency. However, the hon. Lady should know that Manchester city council is hamstrung in helping my constituents because of the policies of the Government, whose little bit of briefing the hon. Lady has just read out.

In 1990-91, the housing investment allocation made by the Government to Manchester was £47,657,000. For the current year, it has been reduced to £25,227,000. That is in current terms, not real terms. We are not able to deal with the problem. In 1980—the final year of the housing investment programme allocation of the Labour Government—913 council houses were completed in

Manchester. Last year, we completed six and started none. It is impossible for someone such as my constituent Mike to find somewhere in the public sector to live.

It is also an impossible situation for people suffering overcrowding. Having read out her briefing note, the hon. Lady has scooted out of the Chamber—no doubt to return to her leafy constituency of Buckinghamshire, after her brief acquaintance with Manchester. *[Interruption.]* I will not have Conservative Members of Parliament for prosperous home county constituencies getting up and reading from a Tory party briefing which has been thrust into their hands, getting it on to the record and then leaving the Chamber, not to intervene in the debate any further. I will not have it, and I will not be jeered at by Conservative Members.

Mr. Baldry: The right hon. Gentleman should understand that the comments he is receiving from this side of the House are due to the fact that none of us can believe that a senior Privy Councillor of this House is behaving in such a churlish way.

Mr. Kaufman: A senior Privy Councillor of this House is concerned about the poverty, despair and degradation of his constituents who send him here. They do not send me here as a Privy Councillor; my constituents send me here to speak on their behalf because they need a voice in this place in the light of what the Government are doing to them.

In my constituency we have five times the national level of overcrowding. The lack of housing amenities dwarfs the national statistics. In the main, my constituents cannot afford to become owner-occupiers. Against the national level of 67 per cent. owner-occupation, in the Fallowfield ward we have a level of 35.9 per cent. and in Longsight it is 37.4 per cent. My constituents cannot afford to buy houses and there are no local authority houses available for rent.

If my constituents have housing, they have to deal with the health problems. There are terrible problems relating to infestation by cockroaches and rats, and problems arising from the concentration of lead in drinking water. Such problems have repercussions on people's health. In my constituency, 9 per cent. of births are low-weight births compared with a national average of 6.9 per cent. In my constituency, there is 4.5 per cent. post neo-natal mortality —that is, the deaths of children from the age of 28 days to one year—compared with 3 per cent. nationally.

Because of the state of the national health service, children in my constituency suffer more than double the national level of tooth decay, missing teeth and other dental problems. Heart disease among my constituents is far above the national average and the Manchester health authorities have demonstrated that psychological distress is far above the national level—particularly for women.

They are the problems facing my constituents which are exacerbated by Government policy. Children attend schools that are very different from the idealised pictures painted by the Government. The Department for Education publishes league tables; I wish it would publish league tables about the state of repair of educational buildings in constituencies.

In Manchester, we need to spend, at the most basic objective level, £10 million per year on day-to-day repairs and maintenance of schools. The Government are allowing us to spend only one quarter of that amount—£2.6 million. In some schools in my constituency, pieces of the ceiling fall on children's heads. Areas of schools have had to be closed because they are not safe for the children and teachers. In one school, music classes have had to be taken on the stairs.

That is the kind of educational opportunity offered to my constituents. It may be why, in the Gorton, North ward of my constituency, only 4.3 per cent. of the working population have higher educational qualifications and why, in the Gorton, South ward, 6.15 per cent. have higher educational qualifications. Only 7.6 per cent. of the population have managerial and professional qualifications. That is the kind of opportunity that the Government provide for my constituents and their children.

I have spoken about the very high levels of psychological distress in my constituency. One of the reasons for that may be the extraordinarily high incidence of crime in my constituency. There are enormous numbers of domestic burglaries—6,050 in 1992—car thefts, thefts from cars and arson and damage. We have an extremely high rate of robbery.

There is racial harassment, which the Minister glibly tried to explain away today, caused by a lack of resolution on the part of the Government to do anything about this problem. Week after week, people from the Asian and Chinese communities suffering as a result of racial harassment come to my surgeries. My constituency has a drug problem which simply did not exist 10 years ago. A pub outside which drugs were openly sold in daylight has been closed down through co-operation between the police and the brewers. The police do their best. We have an excellent chief constable who creates an admirable ethos within the police force. Yet, despite all the efforts of the police, the clear-up rate of crime in my city is only 28 per cent.

There has been a devastating reduction in the service provided by the social services department. Manchester city council used to have the best social services department in the country; now it is simply unable to cope with the problems which confront it. Because of the reductions in Government funding—the reductions in grants and reductions in the urban programme, including the effect on section 11 programming—more than 60 residential homes in our city have had to be closed. They include family group homes, small children's homes, family centres, minimum support homes, residential homes for the disabled, residential homes for adults with learning disabilities and residential homes for the elderly. That is the kind of thing that is happening in the Gorton Division.

As a Member of Parliament for an inner-city constituency, I now have to spend a great deal of time writing begging letters in an attempt to scrape up money to fund the most basic activities in my constituency. The Gorton community centre, which is located in an area of great deprivation, is in difficulty and fears that it may have to close. The Birch community centre almost did close down. These centres are located in areas of great poverty and provide services for the unemployed and lone mothers and lunches for old people.

My constituency has lost amenities. The Victoria baths, located just across the road from my constituency, has closed, as have two pet corners in parks in my constituency. Children in one of the most built-up areas of the country are prevented from seeing animals in their natural habitat.

[Mr. Kaufman]

The Government have taken millions from our city and especially from the poor. The hon. Member for Finchley mentioned the Tory philosophy of one nation, but the Disraeli philosophy of two nations affects my constituents, who are part of the second nation. The Government have brought about the greatest ever redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich in any democratic country. Via tax handouts, they have transferred to the most wealthy people billions of pounds that were benefiting people who are living in poverty.

In spite of their problems and the fact that the Government have exacerbated them, my constituents are fine people who are full of resource and are creating their own community networks.

Mr. Booth: Does the right hon. Gentleman deny the figures? The Labour Government reduced spending on inner cities by 23 per cent. in 1974. It was on average £25 million per year, and £36 million a year was the most that they spent during their time in office.

Mr. Kaufman: We did not need that sort of programmed spending. Two thirds of local authority expenditure was made up of rate support grant. At that time, enormous sums of money were available in general grants, such as housing subsidy. Those grants have gone.

I can say that we did not need that sort of spending because I lived then, as now, in my constituency. We did not need it because general funding enabled us to fund our programmes, and because we were also able to fund them through a sensible rating system. That was before the days of the poll tax, council tax and capping. In those days, such programmed spending was merely a useful addition because general funding was ample.

Mr. Booth *rose—*

Mr. Kaufman: I shall not give way again to the hon. Gentleman. I recognise his courtesy, but, partly because of the anger that I displayed at certain interventions by Conservative Members, I have spoken far longer than I intended and I do not wish to deprive hon. Members on both sides of the House of the opportunity of speaking.

My constituents will fend for themselves whenever they can, but lone mothers on income support, unemployed people who are desperate for a job and homeless people with no prospect of a house all find it very difficult to fend for themselves.

I first became a Member of Parliament representing Manchester 24 years ago, when we did not have beggars on the streets, but we have them now and they have appeared during the time, that this Government have been in office, in spite of all the urban funding that the hon. Member for Finchley mentioned.

Money for the Olympic bid is the only money that the Government have boasted about putting into our city. We are grateful and we are sorry that we did not get the games, but Manchester is still there after that bid. I am sorry to have to say that it seems to have been forgotten and rejected by the Government.

My constituents of all ages despair of what is happening to them. At surgeries, and not simply on occasional visits but as I walk the streets of my constituency every weekend, they ask me what I am going to do to get the Government out so that they can get a decent start. I recognise that we shall have another three years of this Government and that is why I beg of them not to believe that they help the inner cities by talking in all those grand and abstract phrases. Thousands of people are living in difficulty and often in despair. They look to the House to do something about it. They also look to me to do something about it, which is why I do not offer a scintilla of apology for the strength of my speech. My constituents expect no less.

12.14 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Part of the speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was sincere and well meant, and part of it was plainly offensive. He criticised Conservative Members representing the south of England for contributing to this debate. That makes it sound as though the north of England has a monopoly of poverty and deprivation. My constituents are being asked to pay for the programmes, and they are entitled to a say in how the money is spent.

Mr. Kaufman: I do not criticise hon. Members for taking part in this debate, but I criticise those who have had cheap propaganda thrust into their hands, and who intervene to get it on the record.

Mr. Ottaway: The right hon. Gentleman proves my point. He was probably too busy composing his speech early this morning to listen to the "Today" programme, when spokesmen from Glasgow and Sunderland were invited to comment on inner-city regeneration programmes. Far from being critical, they were very supportive. If my memory serves me well, both those regions are Labour controlled. One spokesman said that things had improved during the past 15 years, which coincides with the past 15 years of Conservative government.

The right hon. Member for Gorton should recognise that Manchester is entitled to £957 of grant per head each year —a higher grant than any other part of the country. If members of his authority adopted the same attitude as those representing Glasgow and Sunderland, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would not speak in such terms of despair.

I have mentioned the success in Glasgow and Sunderland, but it was not always the case. In the 1970s, because of the rundown estates there, it became obvious that the old way of funding inner cities was not working. Unless the people who lived on the estates were willing and enthusiastic that they should flourish, they continued to decline. As they did, the enterprising, the young and the employed sought a brighter future outside those rotting estates. They wanted a decent quality of life and a good education for their children, so they left and went to more prosperous areas, where housing, planning and local government were not a political football.

Whom did they leave behind?—the elderly, who had lost the capacity to increase their earnings and get out, the unemployed and the one-parent families. In the 1980s, it became obvious that we could no longer return to the bad old ways of simply throwing public money at the problem. The introduction of partnership schemes, which culminated in city challenge, revitalised such areas.

I have a strong vision of my old constituency in Nottingham, where the then Government developed two high-rise estates in the 1960s in a hurry. After 15 years, they were rotten, damp, rundown buildings, smelling of urine, which could not be called homes to anyone. It was

right that they were demolished. The sting in the tail, however, is that the council tax payers of Nottingham will continue to pay for those flats well into the next century. People who were not even born when they were built will be young, married and settled in Nottingham, and still paying for buildings that they never knew.

An old warehouse at the other end of the town became a model project. It was a joint venture between the Government and a private partnership, under the urban development grant scheme of the early 1980s. The attractive and stylish flats for the young people of Nottingham are there for all to see. The key is that those flats were privately owned, which gave people a pride in the building.

At the end of the 1980s, with city challenge, local authorities were invited to bid for projects if they could introduce private money to match central Government funds. That scheme was an outstanding success, and many projects today have resulted from the competitive pressures that were introduced. I say the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) that I hope that we shall be able to move into a third round of city challenge and build on the successes of the past.

The new single regeneration budget will pull together all the themes of the past decade, and the money will go where people think that it is most needed. That will encourage regeneration, economic development and industrial competitiveness by providing a more flexible and responsive system. That is good news for our inner cities. Local partnerships will be encouraged to bid for resources from the new budget, following the principle of the city challenge programmes. Projects to improve the standard of housing, tackle crime, encourage more tenant and community participation and improve social housing stock deserve our full support.

We do not only need to improve physical resources. We can put in place industrial and commercial sites and ensure that the economic climate is able to support the growth of small and medium-sized businesses, but we need more. Their success also depends on the success of our human resources. That is why Conservative Members know that investment in the skills and training of local people is just as important. The Government's education reforms are designed to raise standards throughout the country, but nowhere is that needed more than in our inner cities.

A network of city technology colleges is being established in urban areas. An especially successful one is the Harris CTC on the Croydon-Lambeth borders. The inner cities have also benefited especially from a range of employment and training programmes.

However, Conservative Members are realists. We know that inner cities cannot operate in isolation from the rest of the country. There has been a worldwide recession—there is no argument about that. The United Kingdom has suffered, as have the United States, Japan and Germany. There has been a slowdown in the economy, which has made life even more difficult in the inner cities.

It is not only the recession that has badly affected our inner cities, many of which are now virtual no-go areas. We all know where they are—parts of Lambeth, Hackney, Newham, Southwark, Liverpool and many more. There are still places in our urban areas out of which people are desperate to move. As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), who unfortunately has left the Chamber, said, they are too frightened to walk the streets. They are not even safe in their own homes. The schools are failing totally to educate their children and, consequently, unemployment remains unacceptably high.

Apart from those factors, what else do those areas all have in common? Their local authorities are dominated by the Labour party. The House should not be duped by the so-called "caring" image of Westminster Labour party. The real Labour party is to be found in many town halls up and down the country—town halls that issue council tax bills far in excess of those of well-managed Tory authorities, and deliver the quality of services that one would not wish on one's worst enemy. That exposes the reality of Labour—the waste, the inefficiency, the incompetence and, most of all, the irrelevance.

The "loony left" is alive and well in Labour town halls throughout the country and one does not have to look far to find examples of its lunacies. Bristol's Labour council objects to the use of black bin-liners because they are racist and Birmingham's Labour council spent £70,000 on translating Asian nursery rhymes into English. Even the Labour party has found it difficult to say anything complimentary about some of the Labour-run councils. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) described Brent in 1990 as monumentally incompetent. Keva Coombs, the former leader of Liverpool council, said that it was the worst landlord in Liverpool, probably in the country.

It is not merely incompetence that hampers our inner cities under Labour control. I read in a newspaper that Lambeth council had paid the present hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) £350 a day to co-ordinate opposition to two proposed housing action trusts in the borough.

If anyone tells us that Labour has changed, consider the town councils. It took us 10 years to repair the damage that the Labour party did to the economy, and it may take us another 10 to repair the systematic damage that it has wreaked on our society. Central Government can only do so much for the inner cities when key sectors such as education and housing are controlled by left-wing authorities.

However, some authorities understand the problems and have the will, the means and the determination to tackle them. There is plenty of proof among well-managed, efficient and cost-effective Conservative-run councils throughout the country, not least of which is my own borough of Croydon. There is no reason why the sensible approach that it has adopted in areas such as housing and education could not be adopted in other London boroughs. If it were, I am sure that there would be not only a dramatic improvement in the quality of life but cleaner streets, a better managed housing stock and improved educational results—all for a lower council tax. Just as importantly, we might be able to halt the ever-increasing drift of people and business away from the inner cities to the suburbs.

The borough of Croydon is one of the most populous in London. For the past two years, its council has introduced a housing strategy which has been judged by the Department of Environment to be among the best in the country. That has placed Croydon in the premier division of housing authorities. Croydon's housing objectives are simple—to meet local housing needs, to maintain and improve stock and to extend choice.

Croydon has confronted and tackled a major homelessness problem. In 1992, more than 2,000 households were living in temporary accommodation and

[Mr. Ottaway]

that figure was projected to increase to more than 3,000 on the then current trends, but, at the end of February this year, the numbers in temporary accommodation had fallen to 1,100, and the trend is firmly downwards. Progress is being made in housing people from the waiting list, and tenants needing a transfer. By 1 March this year, 714 households had been transferred and 303 households housed from the waiting list.

How is the council achieving that? It has built partnerships with the private and public sector agencies, pursued innovative solutions to any problems that it has encountered, and maintained an ever-necessary awareness of value for money. Yes, Conservative-controlled Croydon council has been extremely successful, but, by following its approach, so could the Lambeths and Hackneys of the country. Such a vision helps communities to thrive. Our inner cities need common-sense answers to everyday problems, not the hackneyed socialist dogma foisted on them by Labour-run authorities.

Is it any wonder that Lambeth, which has a larger debt than Haiti and Botswana combined, fails miserably to maintain its housing stock? Contrast that with Croydon council's record. By the end of this financial year, more than 6,000 properties will have benefited from works programmes, including central heating, window renewals and energy efficiency measures. Those works are planned to improve a further 7,000 properties next year.

Conservative Members recognise that the problems of increasing crime that confront us today are due in part to the disaster that befell our education system in the 1960s and 1970s. The Conservative party plans a return to fundamentals in education. It might not sound fashionable, but it does sound right. How can people expect to find a job if they cannot read, write or add up?

We cannot allow our citizens to be deprived of a proper education, which is what is happening in dozens of Labour-run councils throughout the country. All too often, socialist education policies turn out half-educated, anti-social thugs who are designed only for the dole queue or the criminal justice system. We are all paying the price for that madness in higher crime and higher unemployment, when nine of the 10 local education authorities with the worst GCSE results in England are controlled by Labour.

Contrast that with the results achieved in Croydon. We came seventh out of 108 education authorities in the age seven reading tests; 44 per cent. of 16-year-olds gained grades A to C in their GCSE exams; and more than three quarters of students stayed on in school or college, a figure which places Croydon 11th in the country.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): In referring to anti-social behaviour and poor education results in inner cities, hon. Members on both sides recognise that poor education leads to poor employment prospects, which in turn lead to crime because people have nothing better to do and no other way of sustaining themselves. But my hon. Friend's point about further education is important.

The problems of young men—it would be unfair to suggest that the problem applies equally to both sexes, as it is predominantly a male problem—would be greatly alleviated if inner cities were more vocational and other training were encouraged, as the Government have done. That would follow the same line as my hon. Friend's argument.

Mr. Ottaway: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, who makes his point well. Croydon council is pursuing such a policy, and I suggest that other councils, such as Manchester, may care to follow it.

It is not just the Labour-controlled local authorities that are guilty of such conduct. The most famous example of mismanagement in an inner city area must be in Tower Hamlets, Britain's poorest borough. In 1986, Tower Hamlets council spent £20 million of council tax payers' money on creating seven neighbourhood councils with no function except to duplicate facilities unnecessarily and waste scarce resources.

Not content with wreaking havoc in Tower Hamlets, the Liberal Democrats are proposing the same lunatic scheme elsewhere in London. Their record in other areas of the country only serves to prove that our inner cities are better off without them. Their education policy simply echoes Labour's failed and outdated methods. In Tower Hamlets, just 18.9 per cent. of pupils attain GCSE grades A to C —the third worst results in the country. Liberal Democrats would get rid of grant-maintained schools, CTCs and the assisted places scheme. In true left-wing style, they adhere faithfully to the old adage that, if something shows a sign of success, it should never again see the light of day.

In my neighbouring council of Sutton, Liberal councillors even underwent psychological tests to reveal what we could have told them for nothing. Apparently, the tests said that they lacked clear objectives and agreed goals, and could be weak at follow-through on their decisions. The tests also found evidence of unresolved tension in the group. The councillors could resolve that tension by carrying on with their psychological tests and letting the Conservatives get on with the job of running their borough.

In the 1970s, people said that we could never tackle the huge economic problems that had made Britain the laughing stock of the world. They said that we could not revive Britain's entrepreneurial spirit or halt the dominance of the trade unions. Well, we did.

Now, some people say that nothing can be done to restore pride in our inner cities, repair and replenish the housing stock and encourage commerce and industry back into sites that have been left derelict. I am convinced that the Government's announcement of a single regeneration budget will be a major contributing factor, just as ridding the inner cities of Labour and Liberal Democrat councils will be another.

12.32 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The opening speeches of this debate reminded me of the rhyme:

> "Two men looked out through prison bars,
> One saw mud, the other stars."

It is not surprising that the Minister's speech of one hour and 20 minutes made me wonder whether he was filibustering. It focused on the undoubted highlights around the country, whereas the speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) focused on the failures of Government policy in the inner cities.

It took the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) to bring the debate down to earth and remind the House that, in some communities, deprivation has reached levels that would be regarded as appalling in under-developed countries. In those communities, it is impossible for people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, and exceptional measures are required if people's lives are not to be degraded, shortened and tarnished by the circumstances in which they find themselves living, through no fault of their own.

The citizens of Gorton are no more typical than those of the constituency of the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway). His constituency is not a deeply impoverished inner-city area, but a prospering, thriving community. It has rich industrial and commercial activities and local resources that are being put to good use. It is scarcely surprising that its education results are different from those in more deprived areas. It does not take the debate forward to suggest that what is happening in Croydon can be transplanted overnight to a constituency of a wholly different type such as Gorton.

By turning the debate into a futile exchange of political insults in the lead-up to the local authority elections—doubtless the reason why the debate was planned—we miss an opportunity to ask why there are still constituencies such as Gorton in our midst. After 15 years in office, why are the Conservative Government announcing this week a new scheme of special aid for those areas?

It follows a succession of other action programmes, city challenge being perhaps one of the most notable—it has substantial merit and successes to its credit. Why are special measures still necessary after 15 years of Conservative government that has concentrated on expenditure on programmes that focus predominantly—95 per cent.—on enterprise-related activity? The Minister would have helped the debate considerably if he had given us an idea of what the Government regard as their objectives. We did not hear about that during his long speech—

Mr. Vaz: It was a boring speech.

Mr. Maclennan: I did not find it at all boring. Although it was long, I was interested in it, because it alighted here and there—like a travel guide—on some of the more attractive parts of the country, where admirable activities are being generated. It was a Cook's tour, designed to cheer us all up. It was not a boring speech, but it did not include any measures by which we could judge the success of the Government's programme. It did not give us a yardstick against which we could judge the appropriateness of what the Government plan for the future.

I do not intend to speak for anything like as long as those hon. Members who have already spoken. Some might think that that is appropriate for someone who represents not an inner-city constituency but the most sparsely populated constituency in the British Isles, which has different problems. In justification of my speech, I should say that I was brought up in an inner city, in an affluent part of Glasgow, on the edge of an extremely impoverished area.

When Parliament is sitting, I live in an affluent part of the royal borough of Kensington, next to an impoverished area. I am not ignorant, therefore, of what is happening. Anyone who has spent 28 years in the House and who has travelled around the country can give the sort of Cook's tour that the Minister gave, and give a different impression of the country.

I shall speak anecdotally and not on the success of Government policies. That would require a far more lengthy analysis than it would be appropriate for me to attempt to give.

There are some disturbing trends in our country today, which I find deeply shocking. The trend away from good health in the community is baffling. My parents were both doctors; my father was a gynaecologist who specialised in the problems of women that flowed from malnutrition in the 1930s. I remember his saying before he died some years ago that at least that problem had been licked, and that people no longer needed to bother about his specialty.

Alas, that is far from being true, because there is a recurrence of rickets in our society, due directly to malnutrition. There is a recurrence of tuberculosis in our inner-city areas, which is clearly due to the poor community health provision there.

My mother was engaged in public health, and she spent her life endeavouring to eliminate these diseases. She thought that her life's work had been a success. My parents were both happy to think of the progress that had been made in their lifetime. How sad they would have been to discover that, after 15 years of Conservative government—one of them was a supporter of the Conservative party—these scourges are back in our society.

Most of the debate has been about urban planning, buildings, the injection of capital into business projects and partnership schemes, which may or may not have a training component. I believe that all that is important, although I had a good deal of sympathy with the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser). He expressed some surprise that, after an hour, the Minister had not talked about social problems and had not reflected on the people who live in these communities, who suffer educational and social deprivation, and who face racial harassment and violence.

I was surprised by the Minister's attitude to the proposal by the Commission for Racial Equality, which has been supported by the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth). He promoted a Bill on the subject, and he spoke with a good deal of authority on some of these matters earlier in the debate. The Minister is against the introduction of a specific offence of racial harassment. He seems to have confused the proposal for an offence of racial harassment with the separate proposal for an offence of racial violence.

The Minister's points about racial violence were fair, because it would be difficult to prove racial motivation. The proper approach is to treat the evidence of racial motivation as a ground for regarding the offence of violence as an aggravated offence, and for increasing the penalty available to the court.

However, for the Minister to dismiss the Racial Hatred and Violence Bill as he did today is seriously to underestimate the problem of racial harassment which faces some of the deprived inner-city areas, where the problems of a concentration of particular ethnic minorities are placing such burdens on the local authorities, the voluntary agencies and other community bodies that are concerned for them.

I hope that the Government will think again before the Bill leaves the House; I hope that they revise their view on racial harassment, because it is a scourge which we must eliminate and on which we must take a strong stand.

[Mr. Maclennan]

Before we hold another debate on the inner cities, it would be of immense value if the Government sought to construct performance measures for their programmes, which could be applied locally on the ground, so that we could judge the schemes. It is not reasonable simply to look over our shoulder and to say, "This House has voted through and supported so many millions or billions of pounds on city challenge and the other cognate schemes which have focused on discrete areas." No doubt those schemes have been of substantial benefit to those areas, but we must look also at other communities which have not been beneficiaries and which may not be in such great need.

The system of financial support for local authorities which the Government have introduced has been substantially misconceived. That is because it has not related assistance to need in the manner that, for all its faults, the old rate support grant did. The failure of local government finance has led to the necessity to create these schemes which are produced from time to time by new Secretaries of State with great acclamation and a huzza as the new way forward.

Let us hear a little more about local government finance. In particular, the Minister should look at the Liberal Democrat proposal for site value taxation, which has much merit. It would greatly assist the process of bringing into deprived areas the kind of business that is looking for relatively inexpensive accommodation, and it would generate greater business.

Even now, after 15 years, the Government have failed to get their local taxation right. That is one of the major contributory factors to the decline of our inner-city areas. It is quite apparent to the passing visitor, not just to the resident of Manchester, Gorton, that the gap between the rich and poor is getting wider, not narrower, and that the general standards of education are falling, not rising.

In the context of education, the Government should look again at section 11 funding problems. It is monstrous to criticise the local authority in Tower Hamlets, as the hon. Member for Croydon, South did, for its educational shortcomings. That borough has done remarkably well. If the hon. Gentleman knew about what was going on there and about the pressures on the education authority's budget, the difficulty of teaching multi-language classes and the appalling impact that the withdrawal of section 11 funding will have on that burden, perhaps he would not make such inappropriate political comments.

Mr. Baldry: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman intends to deal with the matter that I am about to mention. If he does, I apologise for asking about it. The hon. Gentleman has been speaking for some time, but has not said much about Liberal policies. That is surprising, because, only a couple of weeks ago, the Liberal Democrats launched a policy on urban initiatives. Perhaps the policy passed by the hon. Gentleman, but if not, I should like him to explain some of it. Given some of the sensitivities and concerns in areas such as Tower Hamlets, about which he has spoken, perhaps he will explain what is meant by his party's policy document when it says that the Liberals advocate reform of the council house allocation system to encourage the development of communities. Before the hon. Gentleman finishes his speech, could he explain that?

Mr. Maclennan: I certainly played a part in the production of that document, which I have here. I said at the beginning of my contribution that I did not intend to make a comprehensive speech setting out the whole range of policies. I have already mentioned a number of them, but I have not presented them in the partisan way in which the Minister chose to explain the Government's position. I hope that the whole of my speech is an indication of the approach of Liberal Democrats to these matters, of our priorities and of the tests that we will apply to the policies of others.

Housing in Tower Hamlets is a serious problem, which is largely due to the failure of central Government to make provision. It is perhaps at its most acute in the Isle of Dogs which, under the arrangements set up by local Liberal Democrats—

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: I am answering the Minister's intervention, and I shall try to finish that before happily giving way to the hon. Gentleman. The failure of central Government to recognise the magnitude of the problems in Tower Hamlets, and especially in the Isle of Dogs, which is run by the Labour party, is why those troubles have come into being.

Mr. John Marshall: One would like to pass over the problems that the Liberal Democrats are having with selection in Tower Hamlets and to talk about education. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that 39.4 per cent. of children in Tower Hamlets play truant at some time during the year, compared with 13.6 per cent. in Wandsworth? Does that not suggest a disquieting state of affairs, and what is he doing about it?

Mr. Maclennan: It is a disquieting state of affairs.

Mr. Vaz: The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) reading from a Central Office brief.

Mr. Marshall: That is not true.

Mr. Maclennan: May I give way to the hon. Member for Hendon, South, so that he may have a dialogue with another sedentary hon. Member? I suspect that that would be outwith the rules of order.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South is quite right. There is a major educational problem in that area, and I was attempting to confront it. It is in large part due to the educational needs of multi-language pupils, who have special requirements which cannot all met. Despite that, if the hon. Gentleman were to go into the community, he would be impressed by efforts that are being made to tackle the problems. If he considers it closely, he would support the case for extending and restoring section 11 funding in the schools, which was reduced to below acceptable levels in autumn 1992.

Anyone who underrates the difficulty of the problems is either indulging in partisan politics or purblind. Those areas have serious problems, which are having nasty political repercussions, and they will affect the hon. Gentleman's party as much as my party. It would be sensible to consider the problems through rather less partisan spectacles.

12.51 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I am grateful for catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if only to speak briefly. One thing that rather irritated Conservative Members, apart from the rude and patronising note of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who is not in his place, was that he kept referring to the fact that he lived in his constituency, which was in an urban or inner-city area of some deprivation.

Some of us, including myself, on the Conservative Benches live in cities such as Birmingham, which has serious urban problems much the same as those of Manchester. I also live in my constituency, as I am sure do many hon. Member on both sides of the House. It is not a point of issue, and I am sure that it will not be referred to again. I surprised that a right hon. Member of such experience chose that line.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth), I have been a member of the Conservative Back-Bench urban inner cities committee for some years, and am an officer of that committee. One thing that has struck us from talking to the many people of all political persuasions who have tried to help us to understand different aspects of urban decay, regeneration and the possibilities ahead, is the remarkable synergy between certain themes that the Government have tried usefully to address and which has found echoes in other people's political views.

One of those aspects is the fact that the design of housing estates has played a large part in the problems of outer and inner-city urban decay. Poor design of housing estates has often exacerbated not only the living environment, but the security of the people who live there.

With that in mind, I hope that the Government will again consider carefully what can be done along the lines of estate action, housing action trusts and so forth on a more minor scale to improve the living environment of decaying council estates. There are many such estates in my constituency. Druid's Heath on the edge of Birmingham is notorious in that respect. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and other Ministers have visited that estate. We have serious problems of decay, social cohesiveness, security and lawlessness.

Design is absolutely vital. I hope that hon. Members in all parts of the House will give further thought to the way in which we build housing estates in future. We need to build housing estates that do not become rat or cockroach-infested, or permanently damp. Housing estates must not be afflicted by environmental problems. Above all, they must not become dens for drug dealers, pimps and other social undesirables, who can prosper within such housing estates because they are so poorly lit or because their very design gives shelter to allow such people to lurk in dark shadows.

Lighting is essential. It can seriously transform particular areas of urban decay. Areas in my constituency have benefited enormously from the far-sighted attitude taken on a totally apolitical, non-partisan basis by Birmingham city council in respect of various projects that have been assisted by Government money. I urge hon. Members in all parts of the House to concentrate in this debate on the aspects that might assist the regeneration of our inner cities in a sensible and non-partisan fashion.

Hon. Members have referred in some detail to the problems of lawlessness and poor education. I firmly believe that keeping children interested in education as they grow up, so that they progress into further education —whether that be on an academic or vocational level—is crucial to keeping children, who might otherwise be so bored as to commit vandalism and progress to more serious crime, out of crime and within the community.

I urge my colleagues on the Government Front Bench to give further support to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and others who have been pressing for due respect to be given to further education along national vocational qualification lines and to raising the standards of blue-collar qualifications to university level, so that people feel that they achieve in that area and that that area is respected by their peers and by employers.

I want to refer briefly to racial harassment and racial harmony. In Birmingham, we are lucky that many of the problems of racial antagonism and harassment that afflicted it and other major cities have been treated sensitively and are being addressed within the community more positively than they were previously. I hope that all political parties will do what they can to ensure that racial problems are not inflamed, for political reasons, and that we work together to achieve cohesiveness.

We are talking not about cultural integration or about particular parts of the community, whether they be ethnic minorities or ethnic majorities, but about social cohesion within our cities. If inner cities are to be revitalised, it is vital that people live peacefully with each other and appreciate and respect each other.

I am sure that my colleagues on the Government Front Bench, and hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench, support that view. I address that comment particularly to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) because I know that a by-election is taking place in Leicester which has extremely unattractive racial overtones. I hope that he will do his best in Leicester, as we will try to do in Birmingham, to ensure that political partisanship does not inflame the problem. I urge my hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench to do what they can in that respect.

12.59 pm

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): Since coming to the House two years ago, I have attempted to make speeches on inner-city policies and life in inner cities. I had the disadvantage of trying to make those speeches when you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were in the Chair and you usually drew my attention to the fact that they were on the wrong issue. It is a relief therefore to stand up and know that I shall make the speech that I want to make on the issue and be perfectly in order. I have my fingers crossed.

I appreciate the fact that the Government have found time for the debate. However, it is soured somewhat by the fact that it may have something to do with the elections taking place in May, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said. I hope that that cynicism is misplaced.

The debate was not helped by the 66 minutes of gloating by the Minister when he read a list of schemes and agencies in his long peroration on things that are happening in the inner cities. If the Minister got that brief from his civil servants—he read it well and with humour; he did the best

[Mr. George Mudie]

that he could with it—I hope that he does not believe it. I know that he is intelligent; I am sure that he was not the author of his speech and that he does not believe it.

The Minister spoke for 66 minutes about the wonderful work that has taken place in inner cities over the past 15 years. Sadly, the bitter tone of the exchanges between my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and several Tory Members may have taken attention away from the facts and figures spelt out by my right hon. Friend. If that happened, it would be a pity. If the Minister believes his brief, and if he believes that, after 15 years, the Government's policies are having an effect and doing the job, that is sad for our constituents.

Inner cities are desperate places. If we had more time, and if the debate were held on another day, hon. Members from urban areas could show that the problem is not isolated. Unfortunately, the problems of deprivation, poverty and insubstantial resources—I do not challenge the substantial amounts that have gone in through inner-city programmes and inner-city agencies—are not isolated in small parts of cities such as Leeds; they are widespread. Sadly, the Minister does not understand that inner-city programmes are not working.

At the heart of any urban policy debate must be the knowledge that many constituents in our major cities suffer from constant poverty. When I talk about constant poverty, I do not mean people who exist on a constant overdraft. Most of my constituents do not have that luxury. When the gas bill or the electricity bill comes in, when the kids need new shoes, when it is time to find dinner money or when a domestic crisis happens, that is a major disaster for the family. People cannot get out of poverty by using an overdraft because they do not have a bank account; they would not be given a bank account. They have no escape from grinding poverty day in and day out. Every day, people are one step away from disaster.

I beg the Minister, the Government and the House to understand that that is not an exaggeration; it is a fact of life in all of our major cities. People struggle to bring up families in those circumstances. Such circumstances ensure—this is the key point—that children grow up facing the same experience; thus, the cycle of deprivation is sustained. That is what is so heartbreaking. I have represented families in my constituency, both as a local councillor and as a Member of Parliament, and I now represent the sons and daughters of those families. I see that cycle of deprivation not only continue but get worse.

If Minister thinks that his policies have been successful, he will accept—he made the point himself—that, at the heart of the policies, are the economic issues of unemployment and putting people into work so that they can get money to enable them to look after their houses and families.

My constituency does not have the 10 per cent. average unemployment level which is enjoyed nationally. It is 14.9 per cent., but that figure hides obscene variations. There are four wards in my constituency, one of which has mainly owner-occupied properties and a male unemployment rate of 8 per cent. That is an unhappy rate, but it is livable with and is better than the national average.

Among the other three wards, there is 26 per cent. male unemployment in Burmantofts, and in Seacroft—the ward which I represented for more than 20 years—it is 28 per cent. The saddest thing, in view of our discussions, is that Harehills—with 7,500 people of an ethnic minority background, mainly Bangladeshi and Pakistani—has a male unemployment level of 30 per cent., or three times the national average. That is after 15 years of the Government's policies.

The Minister firmly believes that the policies are working. Living day in, day out in that area for more than 20 years, I say that they are not working. I do not say that glee, but with sadness because I see friends and neighbours having a sad life. Theirs is not a life which either the Minister or I would welcome.

Why are we in this position? The fact that the Government set off under Baroness Thatcher in 1980 rubbishing local councils played a major part. Instead of accepting that national Government do not have the necessary local knowledge of the varied needs of local communities in each city, and that local councils are in a far better position to have that local knowledge and would make ideal partners, the Government disdained that approach. The suspicion arises that that was because the big city councils were mainly Labour controlled. If that is a fact, it is a sad one.

For whatever reason, the Government threw away an opportunity to unite with councils in a common attack on poverty. The Government also continued to be amazed that communities and councils were less than grateful for the funds that were injected through the inner-city programme. The Government failed to realise that the marginal amounts of money that were put in under the urban aid programme were dwarfed by the cuts in rate support grants and in borrowing allocations to the mainstream budgets of councils.

Those two points together—the lack of genuine partnership and the severe cuts in the mainstream budgets—sum up the reasons why the first phase of the urban programme failed. Throughout the 1980s, there was no significant beneficial effect in economic terms in many communities. The Government should have worked with local councils, local people, businesses, police, health authorities, colleges and training and enterprise councils, using their influence and resources.

This is not a cry for more spending. It is a cry for the Government to use the inner city programme to help those organisations to prioritise their mainstream budgets to an agreed and strategic objective which is reviewed and refined each year. Instead, the Government used in it a patronising and marginal way. It did some good, and they started some fine initiatives and some fresh thinking. However, it meant that the majority of the budgets of all those organisations were spent without reference to the objectives of the urban programme. Only the Government have the power, influence and authority to act as a catalyst. Sadly, the vision, anger and hunger to carry out that task were missing.

The policy has moved on, but if lessons have been learnt, the results have not shown that. We have moved to the age of city challenge, in which 57 authorities compete for funds. All 57 use valuable staff and spend valuable money in working on vast schemes for which to obtain money. They raise expectations in communities. There are many losers and few winners.

The Minister did not respond to the sedentary observations that only 31 of the 57 partnership areas have schemes. He did not respond to the fact that, after the second year, no new authorities will be put into the

programme. The grand city challenge took 11 areas one year, 20 areas the second year and came to the buffers when the Chancellor of the Exchequer decided to save some money.

Mr. Baldry *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Mudie: The Minister shakes his head. With the greatest respect, the annual report shows that 31 partnership authorities are eligible for city challenge funding. No new authorities will be included this year.

The age of the small scheme is past. Schemes such as a creche to allow single mothers to train, gain employment and keep it and a training scheme to permit unemployed youths to gain skills was dismissed as irrelevant.

City challenge ran for two years. At first, understandably, few authorities were chosen. The scheme has now stopped. The big bang approach to urban poverty had an even more basic fault. My authority in Leeds participated. It worked on a great scheme in central south Leeds. It spent valuable scarce resources on preparing a bid, but it lost. It was commended by the Minister, but it received no money. It will have no money coming in from the urban programme for some considerable time.

Even if Leeds had succeeded, the scheme was in central south Leeds and was irrelevant to my constituency of Leeds, East. It was irrelevant to the 30 per cent. male unemployed in the Harehills area. It may as well have been in Hong Kong for all the use that it would have been to east Leeds. If the Minister cannot get money to Leeds in the first two or three years, and even if a scheme in south Leeds or central Leeds is given money, what happens to the people in west Leeds and east Leeds? Do they admire the scheme from afar and say how wonderful it is when no help is coming to their communities to help them with their problems?

I must apologise for racing at this speed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am aware that several hon. Members want to speak. We have moved into the second phase of urban development, the big bang phase. Sadly—the matter has been mentioned, but only in passing—the beginning of the second phase has meant the ending of the urban programme and section 11 funding. What is sad about that is that when the matter was raised in the House and when I raised it personally at Question Time, in the first instance the Government denied that the funding had been reduced.

Figures from the Department's report were mentioned which were said to show that the Government were spending on the urban programme and section 11 more money in 1993-94 and 1994-95 than in previous years. But those figures and statistics missed out the fact that no new schemes were to be made eligible for inner city money in the programme. The same goes for section 11 money.

The facts and figures of inner-city life mean that if one is black one has much less chance—

Mr. Baldry: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mudie: Let me finish the sentence. In two minutes, the Minister can get to his feet. Now he has broken me off. People who are black and unemployed know that whatever jobs are handed out, they will definitely be at the back of the queue. The Government stopped the funds to help train Asian people who have English as a second language and allow them to compete for jobs. I do not know how the Minister can defend that. I do not know how the Minister can see that as an improvement on the inner-city programme.

Mr. Baldry: I want to clarify one point. Section 11 funding has not finished; it is one of the 20 programmes that will go into the single regeneration budget. As for urban programmes, we have never made any secret of the fact that they are continuing—for example, the partnership programme is continuing. But we believe that a better way of delivering urban policies is through the single regeneration budget, as I set out in my speech.

Mr. Mudie: As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) said, there is a fear that, as the individual budgets go into the single regeneration agency, decisions will be taken, programmes will be stopped and money will be shuffled. The Minister cannot deny—it is a sad fact and something that the Government should rethink, particularly in view of what is happening in our inner cities—that fresh bids for section 11 should be invited forthwith. It is very sad that bids have stopped.

That is the experience of policies over 15 years. Whatever policies have tried to do, they have demonstrably failed in their main objectives and that is why I condemn the Government's complacency in this area. In case the Minister contests this point and feels that he can continue to bumble along, I will give him the facts.

New forces are at work in our major cities which, if not matched and defeated in the near future, will end for ever —I use the words advisedly—any chance that any Government have of transforming life for residents of the inner city.I speak of the growth of the illegal drugs trade. While policy has drifted and opportunities have carelessly been lost, those who organise the illegal drugs industry have acted with a speed and ruthlessness that I wish the Minister had maintained and matched.

These people are in our cities in a big way and their presence is being felt by almost everyone in our community. Crime figures boom, as adults and youngsters burgle, steal cars and mug the elderly in order to raise cash to buy drugs. A survey in West Yorkshire interviewed convicted youngsters and found that more than 70 per cent. of the crimes were drug related.

It is clear that the industry offers vast rewards. Even if urban policies had worked and if we were now prepared to educate, skill and employ our youngsters, the fact is that normal employment is beginning to look quaint to a large number of youngsters. They can, and do, earn so much more money in the drugs trade that, even if jobs and training were offered, the rewards there are so great that interest in normal employment is waning.

Hon. Members may say that they will inevitably be caught; but most experts disagree. I have spoken to the regional drugs squad and the local drugs squad in my area. The local divisional police superintendent has a drugs team and they say that, working hard as they are, the growth in the drugs trade in our inner cities is overwhelming them. These dedicated people can see the facts: not enough resources, care or attention are being devoted to combating this evil industry, which will continue to cause great problems in our cities.

Because of the rewards of the drugs trade and because of the amount of money involved and the need to guard territory, the guns industry is growing in our inner cities.

[Mr. Mudie]

This growth is completely and directly linked to the drugs trade, as evil people have seized the opportunity presented to them. I beg the Minister to understand that those loopholes and opportunities must be removed. If they are not, we shall go the American way and our inner cities will be places where one dares not go.

I fear that we have sustained deprivation and a Government who steadfastly refuse to take the problems seriously. A deteriorating situation is becoming potentially explosive because of the arrival and effects of illegal drugs. At the least, the Government should show humility. They should dispassionately order a policy review, examine funding and the lack of results, consult local authorities and associations and bring in every possible agency and Department to work out practical ways to alleviate poverty. Above all, they should skill adults, who are stranded without qualifications, and ensure that inner-city schools have the necessary additional resources to educate youngsters so that the cycle of being unqualified and unskilled is broken.

The main requirement is to bring the various agencies together and, as a priority, focus their resources on the scandal of neglect. That would bring some hope and offer a future to the forgotten people in our inner cities.

1.20 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I am grateful for being able to speak in this debate and glad that I have been able to listen to it. Times have not changed. When I was a Minister at the Department of the Environment, I had to deal with many such problems.

My hon. Friend the Minister cited a long list of what is being done, primarily through the Department of the Environment, and we heard many complaints from Opposition Members about shortfalls and inaccurate targeting of funding.

I do not want to concentrate on matters that involve the Department, because one aspect of inner-city problems worries me above all others. No matter how much money the Government have poured into innovative schemes and enterprises, while people in the inner cities perceive that they are at great risk from crime, burglary, mugging and —even more important—women fear violent assault and rape, I have to wonder whether we have achieved anything.

Perhaps crimes are more a perception than a reality. One of the polling organisations published research this week suggesting that, above all else, people fear being mugged and burgled. I read in my morning newspaper today about some research by Labour-controlled authorities in London, which shows that insurance companies are drawing a red line around London because it is an area of much greater risk for them. Are people in London taking the right precautions to protect themselves against burglaries and car crimes?

Interestingly, Mr. Michael Grade, of the television industry, apparently told us that people's perception of crime is enhanced and enlivened excessively as a result of television programmes, such as "Crimewatch" and the series showing re-enacted crimes that the film producer Michael Winner has been bringing to our television screens. I do not know whether crime is more a perception than a reality, but I know that we must look for solutions to the problems of inner cities.

Above all, our police forces must receive full support for their efforts—in London, that means the Metropolitan police—and that support must come from individuals, communities and local councils. We were all pleased to hear of the success of Operation Bumblebee—a Metropolitan police campaign against burglary. Since 1991, when it started, 5,000 arrests have been made and more than 10,000 burglaries have been solved in north London alone. Fifteen thousand fewer houses were burgled in the Metropolitan police area in 1993 than in the previous year. That shows some success, and perhaps some of the perceptions of the British people have not been entirely accurate. Nevertheless, people continue to be frightened.

We have had the initiatives in community co-operation of neighbourhood watch and of the police and community group set up in each borough to tell the police what people desire. We have had home beat policing, to try to bring policemen closer to the home communities, and the Metropolitan police are now conducting an operation called sector policing. Obviously, efforts are being made to combat exaggerated perceptions of the likelihood of crime and to combat crime when it happens.

In combating crime and in making people aware of their community duties, we must start with young people. In the inner-city boroughs of London and, indeed, in the outer London boroughs, junior citizenship schemes have been set up whereby the police work with the councils and schools to ensure that young people understand from the beginning what their duties are. I am very pleased about that. One London borough has introduced its sports development officers on to all the estates. All the areas that suffer the deprivation described by some hon. Members might be able to introduce young people to pursuits that will keep them off the streets and keep them out of crime. All that is helpful.

I know of the work of some of the councils in inner London and I am especially impressed by one. It will not surprise hon. Members that it is Wandsworth borough council, which has tackled— *[Interruption.]*—The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) may scoff, but the tackling of those problems often depends on what councils and councillors are prepared to do with their resources, together with the police, teachers and so on in the area.

I have here a file of the various schemes and measures that have been instituted by Wandsworth borough council throughout the borough to combat crime. One or two hon. Members mentioned closed circuit television. It is unfortunate that doubts were expressed in Birmingham city council about closed circuit television and the fact that there might be undue surveillance of people's private actions. Nevertheless, in Wandsworth, with sponsorship from local business, closed circuit television has been introduced in several of the main high streets where the council is well aware, as a result of police research, that there are real problems and threats to the populace. It has introduced mobile closed circuit television operations to cut motor car crime and break-ins to motor cars.

I have also been most impressed by the way in which progressively, as a result of forming a crime prevention policy review panel, Wandsworth borough council has considered designing out crime in alleyways and in the remote areas away from the streets and away from the main movement of the public. It has thereby cut many of the easy escape routes that criminals would have had. It has also introduced better lighting in car parks and in side streets.

Those measures have proved to the criminal fraternity that there is no point in trying to continue their criminal activities and they have proved to the local people that they are safer than they may have believed.

The proof is contained in the statistics that the officers of that inner-city council have given me. The crime rate per person in Wandsworth is almost 30 per cent. lower than the inner London average and continues to be the lowest in inner London. Comparing Wandsworth—as we so often do in the House and outside—with its neighbour, the borough of Lambeth, we find that Wandsworth has 31 per cent. less crime per person. Compared with 10 other inner London boroughs, Wandsworth had the lowest rate of burglary and violence against the person. Lambeth had 182 per cent. more crimes against the person, 112 per cent. more robberies and 40 per cent. more burglaries.

It is clear that councillors, together with the community, must tackle the threat of crime and the criminal fraternity if those idle hands are not to get away with their activities. Before we consider putting more money into programmes, we have a duty to ensure that we protect our people, as the London borough of Wandsworth has succeeded in doing.

1.31 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I am proud to represent the London borough of Hackney in the House of Commons. It is possible to be too negative about our inner cities. Since the 19th century, my borough has contributed a stream of distinguished people to this country's public and business life—people such as Herbert Morrison, architect of the London county council and a great post-war Labour statesman, and Sam Cohen, father of Lady Porter, the distinguished Tory statesperson.

It is appropriate to point out the many remarkable aspects of inner city life. I live in a borough where, by and large, people from Africa, Ireland and Asia live happily side by side with people from one of the largest Hasidic Jewish communities in Europe. Although we have seen an unfortunate rise in racist violence and fascist activity, we should pay tribute to the fact that in most inner cities it is remarkable how people of different religion, faith and colour live happily as neighbours.

There is also an enormous amount of energy and activity in our inner cities. Politicians often ignore the amount of effort, energy and voluntary labour that people put into their community groups, churches, mosques and temples. I should like to strike a different note than has been struck hitherto and say that, despite everything, people in inner cities are not just surviving but managing to achieve. However, they are doing so despite the Government and their programmes, not because of them.

To listen to Tory Members discuss inner cities is to hear them at their worst. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) pointed out, Tory Members neither live in nor represent those areas. Their knowledge of inner cities is largely gleaned from central office handouts and their glimpses of poverty are from the back windows of their town houses. To hear Tory Members discuss inner cities is to hear them give way to the worse kind of ignorance and prejudice.

We have heard a lot about schemes and much political point scoring, but the central reality for those of us who live and work in the inner city is the massive level of unemployment. In Hackney, North and Stoke Newington we have the sixth highest level of unemployment in the country. Unemployment is not about figures or manipulating statistics. The very high levels of unemployment in inner cities mean absolute poverty, from which many of our other problems flow.

Unemployment, particularly for men, means a tragic loss of identity. My father was a welder. He was a skilled man who served an apprenticeship and, in turn, had his own apprentices. For ordinary working men in inner cities, their trade, craft and job was part of their identity. In committing our young people to joblessness and throwing older men out of work—men in their 40s who become unemployed in districts like Hackney will never work again—the Government are not merely condemning them and their families to poverty, but stripping away the identity of the men. That point is not often made, but it is at the heart of many of the disorder problems in our inner cities.

We cannot touch on the problems of inner cities without mentioning housing. Housing issues form a major part of the work load of every inner-city Member of Parliament. Of the thousands of cases that I deal with every year, 60 per cent. are housing cases. The Government's record on housing is abysmal, particularly in the inner cities. The number of new houses built under the Tory Government —whether in the private or public sector or by the housing corporations—has dropped year by year.

Conservative Members are quick to jump up and talk about housing associations, but those associations cannot provide for the housing needs of the inner cities. They can help and make an important contribution, but the high private sector rents mean that there has to be a thriving public housing sector in inner cities to meet the needs of constituents. Housing associations may work in the shire counties and in the suburbs, but they neither claim to meet, nor are capable of meeting, the housing needs of inner cities. The Government have failed to give people in inner cities decent homes. That is one of the most tragic aspects of the Government's record. When the Government give money to housing associations, they force them to pursue high-rent policies, so when housing associations build developments in inner cities the rents are so high that the only way for ordinary people to be able to live in them is to claim housing benefit.

Another big issue in inner cities is that of single-parent mothers. The Government's attack on single-parent mothers in our great cities of London, Manchester and Birmingham has been distressing and degrading. Despite the Government's propaganda, smears and attacks, most single-parent mothers in our great cities did not choose to become so—they are widows and divorcees. Given the chance, most of them would work and look after their children. Attacking women who are doing their best to bring up their families does not help the inner cities.

Conservative Members talked about education and training. One of the biggest blows to education standards in London was the abolition of the Inner London education authority, which meant the loss of the finance available for education in London. It also meant that poor districts, such as mine in Hackney, lost the redistributive effect of the Inner London education authority. Services such as the youth service, special needs education and nurseries have also suffered. Inner-city residents in London have suffered from the loss of a voice in the shape of the Greater London council.

[Ms Diane Abbott]

I wish to concentrate now on the role of black and Asian business people in cities. Black and Asian business people, often without Government grants, have done more to preserve the fabric of life in inner cities and to regenerate the inner cities than any of the Government's bogus public relations schemes. They do not get grants and support. Above all, they do not get recognition.

For the past few months, I have organised a network of black business women in London. The businesses include hair care, financial services, shipping, retail and many other areas. These women, young and middle-aged, have their own businesses and they are trying to help themselves. They tell me that what they want above all from the Government is not pity or tokenism, but recognition and practical support, especially in terms of finance and the lending policies of our great banks.

Ministers have talked about the Isle of Dogs as a triumph of Government policy. They have talked about Canary wharf as the symbol of all that the Government are doing for the inner cities. Yes, the Isle of Dogs is a symbol of all that the Government are doing for the inner cities. What do we have on the Isle of Dogs? There are glittering office developments, but the local population suffers absolute levels of poverty, unemployment and deprivation, to the extent that they have voted for the British National party. In that sense, in the public poverty amid private splendour and the rise of the National Front, one can indeed see the emblem of Government policies for the inner cities.

It is easy to get into political point scoring when we debate the inner cities. Conservative Members never resist the temptation to talk about the inhabitants of the inner cities as though we were all objects of social concern—drug dealers, single mothers scrounging off social security or some sort of subculture. My message to the House this morning is that the people who live in the inner cities are men and women just as Conservative Members are. What they want is respect, recognition, jobs for the men and for young people leaving school in their communities and, above all, an end to bogus schemes which focus on the public relations effect. They want the beginning of Government policies that will genuinely and materially raise the living standards of people such as those whom I am privileged to live among and represent in Hackney, North and Stoke Newington.

1.41 pm

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): I welcome the speech by my hon. Friend the Minister. It will give great heart to my constituents in Chesham and Amersham, especially as it appears that the Government now recognise one of the problems that face my citizens and shopkeepers in Chesham—the erosion of the high streets of our towns and cities by the development of out-of-town shopping centres. In this context, I welcome planning policy guidance note 13 from the Department of the Environment which at last appears to recognise the problem. I look forward to seeing how the Government will move forward to tackle our dying high streets, both in the inner cities and in towns such as Chesham.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) sought to find an explanation of strategy in my hon. Friend the Minister's speech. I felt that the strategy was clearly pointed out by my hon. Friend. I looked for the alternative strategy in the hon. Gentleman's speech, but I could not find it. I hope that when he sums up we shall hear some of Labour's positive proposals.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) started well and I was delighted to hear that she intended to make a positive speech on the inner cities. Indeed, I agreed with many of her points. However, she could not resist the temptation of casting aspersions on Conservative Members. I may represent a beautiful constituency, but I have spent the past 20 years living and working in London, our largest city, and it has been a great privilege. I do not walk round the streets of London with my eyes closed to the problems or to the improvements.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) cast aspersions on my running back to my leafy constituency. In fact, I nipped out of the Chamber only for a couple of minutes, whereas the right hon. Gentleman seems to have deserted us completely. I nipped out of the Chamber to check up on a few statistics. I am privileged to have had the honour to fight the Euro-constituency of Greater Manchester Central, and I keep an eye on what happens in Manchester. I was right because since January 1993 in all the Greater Manchester constituencies there has been a positive downward trend in unemployment. As the right hon. Gentleman painted his sad picture of some of his constituents, I thought that he would have had the grace to acknowledge that.

I should like to mention two topics, the first of which is directly connected with my constituency. It is a beautiful area not far from London—close enough to run the danger of mainly inner-city problems being exported to my towns and villages. I refer particularly to the export of crime and the development of the awayday criminal. One cannot look at the inner cities and their problems or successes in isolation: one must also consider the impact on our rural communities. Sadly, crime has always been a feature of urban areas, but, as our successes against the criminal fraternity are notched up, the probability of the perpetrators seeking new pastures rises.

In Chesham over the past few years we have, sadly, seen the advent of the vicious crime of ram raiding and a number of shops have been affected more than once. Closed-circuit television has reduced crime in some inner-city areas and we want that facility in Chesham as soon as possible, not only to deter potential thieves and villains but to catch them and show them that those who dare will lose in Chesham. It is quite something to listen to Opposition Members talking about crime and accusing Conservative Members of being soft on it. On the issue of closed-circuit television, I discovered that in Birmingham Labour tried to block the extension of the city watch programme. Last year a Labour councillor was

"extremely worried about the intrusion of sophisticated surveillance equipment into public life."

My law-abiding citizens are not worried about the intrusion of such equipment: they want it because they want to stop the criminal.

Mr. Henderson: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gillan: No, because in the short time available I should like to complete my speech.

The displacement of crime from urban areas to the countryside is being dealt with, and I hope that this will continue, by our very able police forces who are

developing ways to combat the travelling criminal. Good examples of an effective response can be found in schemes such as country watch and farm watch which are based on a two-way flow of information between the rural communities and the police forces.

There are now more than 370 farm watch schemes in England and Wales helping to combat a whole range of crimes from the theft of equipment and vehicles to sheep rustling and poaching. Robbery and burglary, the classic urban crimes, have undoubtedly increased in the past decade. Our village post offices and shops and more isolated properties present a soft target to the criminal. Regional crime squads are increasingly targeting criminals who travel across boundaries and the Government must give them great support.

One of the great success stories, which has been touched on only briefly by one of my colleagues, is the Prince's Youth Business Trust which aims to help people between the ages of 18 and 29. It focuses particularly on the long-term unemployed from the inner cities and ethnic minorities, those with disabilities and young offenders. I hope that no hon. Member will disagree with the view that the Prince's Youth Business Trust provides a superb opportunity for inner-city youngsters.

I should like to mention one such young person. I had the privilege to visit a recent exhibition at which I met the 20,000th entrepreneur, a young woman from Sheffield called Joy Taylor, who is setting up the Westbourne shiatsu practice. Twenty thousand young people have been helped by the Prince's Youth Business Trust and I know that not only the Prince of Wales but the Government will help many more. I hope that the Government will continue to support that scheme to help our young people in the inner cities.

1.49 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): We seem to have come full circle in the debate with the speech of the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan). The Minister opened the debate with a somewhat bland and, I thought, self-serving speech and the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham certainly moved away from the central purpose of our debate of defining the main problem of most inner-city urban areas—overwhelming, grinding and continuous poverty.

In response to the comments of the hon. Lady, may I point out that, in Newcastle, the installation of closed-circuit television was strongly supported by the Labour authority. When I visited the Home Secretary with my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) to urge him to authorise closed-circuit television in one of the shopping centres in my hon. Friend's constituency that had been the victim of IRA bombing, his response was negative in the extreme.

I do not want to get stuck in the party-political elements that I believe have disfigured certain parts of our debate. The central issue was touched on most tellingly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott).

It is sometimes thought that my constituency, as I have had occasion to say before in the House, is entirely populated by millionaires and is therefore excluded from the difficulties from which inner London areas suffer. Nothing could be further from the truth. My constituency suffers from most of the classic inner-city problems. For example, the latest unemployment figures show that 13.7 per cent. of my constituents are without a job, which is almost 40 per cent. higher than the national average of 9.9 per cent. That figure has more than doubled in some of the wards in my constituency. In one ward, male unemployment is 31 per cent. The average unemployment rate of Northern Ireland is 13.5 per cent., so that the rate in my constituency is considerably higher.

Housing is also a major problem. In Camden, 1,518 families are without a home—4,300 people, of whom almost 2,000 are children.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland mentioned the diseases that poverty is reintroducing into our societies—he cited rickets and tuberculosis—which is undoubtedly the case. The incidence of rickets is being suffered most severely, certainly in London, among those families who are trapped in appalling bed-and-breakfast housing conditions. That too seems to be an area in which the Government are throwing money down the drain. It costs £14,000 a year to keep families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in this city. How many flats or maisonettes could be built for that money?

Crime has also increased in my constituency. There were 22,070 crimes recorded in the past year, which is one crime every 20 minutes and a rise of 8 per cent. on the figure for the past year. Nevertheless, my constituents are to lose 22 police officers in the rescheduling of policing for London. The figures that I have given can be matched 1,000 times over for the whole of London.

I should like to refer briefly to two figures from the 1994 advice on strategic planning for London compiled by the London planning advisory committee, which is an all-party organisation, so that there can be no accusations from Conservative Members that I am indulging in party politics. Its document states:

"London has suffered 52 per cent. of net national decline in employment since 1988. Between 1981-1989, employment in services grew by 8 per cent., though this has been eroded steadily in the last four years. Manufacturing employment, meanwhile, fell by almost 50 per cent. between 1981 and 1991. Services now make up 85 per cent. of total employment while manufacturing only makes up 11 per cent."

We cannot survive in this city solely on the basis of employment provided by service industries. In the main, service industries offer part-time jobs which are invariably low paid. I hope that the Government will seriously consider the need to reintroduce manufacturing industries into this capital city.

The LPAC document also states:

"Government, . . . should acknowledge that, on the basis of provisional estimates, there are 560,000 households in housing need in London, of which 380,000 are unlikely to be able to meet their needs through the private market. Guidance should therefore include policies to secure a substantial increase in the availability of affordable housing between 1992 and 2006".

I cannot believe that that housing need will be met if the Government only put forward schemes which, by their very nature, are competitive. There will admittedly be winners, but there will also be an increasing number of losers.

It is essential that we should try to restore in the people who live in our inner cities a sense that we value them as individuals. They must be aware that they are not dismissable and that they will not be discounted. They must know that their lives and communities have a value

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and that that value will not be defined according to whether their area wins one of the competitions about which the Government continually talk.

Every fortnight, I buy my copy of *The Big Issue* from Elizabeth. She is an accredited seller of *The Big Issue*. Her stand is in the wind tunnel between the underground station and the gates that lead us to this House. She is in her late 70s. I said to her, "Elizabeth, why are you here?" She said, "What better place should I stand and attempt to sell this magazine than cheek by jowl with the place where the decisions are taken which affect housing, homelessness and housing need?"

I strongly urge the Minister to speak to Elizabeth and to acknowledge that the Government have done good things, but they are merely the tip of the iceberg. The Minister presented a programme that reminded me of the spotted dick puddings that we used to get in school: there was a great weight of mainly grey suet pudding with the odd raisin dotted here and there, covered by a glutinous, too-sweet syrup.

There is real poverty and real need in our inner cities. There may be social explosions if we do not acknowledge that now. It is no good Conservative Members criticising local authorities on housing, education and how they deal with crime when Conservative Members religiously walk through the Lobby to support the Government who have cut housing and education budgets and who will be reducing section 11 funding.

1.57 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): It is one of the joys of a Friday that one comes to this place with a long speech and is then told that one can speak until approximately 2 pm. I will therefore be very brief and will comment on only two of the many speeches that we have heard today.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) complained about the impact of the uniform business rate on local business. The UBR was introduced so that local authorities could no longer make industrial deserts of themselves. Before the UBR was introduced in London, an industrialist thinking of setting up in Haringey or in Enfield knew that if he was foolish enough to go to Haringey the burden of local authority rates there would be much higher than it was in Enfield. Similarly, someone thinking of setting up a commercial operation in Lambeth or Wandsworth knew that he would pay very much more in rates in Lambeth than in Wandsworth. The uniform business rate was designed to destroy the evil impact on local industry of high-cost socialist local authorities.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) lamented the abolition of the Inner London education authority. She failed to realise that ILEA destroyed the chances of a generation of children in London. It sent them into the world unqualified for jobs which their native skills should have enabled them to be qualified for. The quality of education delivered by the ILEA was an absolute scandal. Abolition of the ILEA is at last giving hope to the children of inner London that they may leave school with a chance to get a good job and have a prosperous and full future.

In debates such as this, it is traditional to complain about the level of public expenditure in the inner cities. What is important is not the level of spending by local authorities but the way in which they spend money. For example, refuse collection in Hackney costs £33.90 per resident, whereas it costs £13.40 in the London borough of Barnet. That is an example of inefficiency. Rent arrears in Barnet are 4.3 per cent. of the rent roll; in Hackney, they are 20.1 per cent., and they are 29.7 per cent. in Lambeth. It is no wonder that the local authority debt in Lambeth is £878 million, compared with £132 million in Barnet. That is inefficiency, incompetence, a refusal to collect debt and a refusal to disgorge assets that local authorities have had for far too long.

I could speak at length about the incompetence of Hackney council, but suffice it to say that 0.9 per cent. of the local authority housing stock in Barnet is vacant, whereas in Hackney it is 9.2 per cent., 10 times as much.

Incompetent, socialist local authorities have destroyed inner cities in London. They created the problems. They denied the residents of those cities the chance of decent education and decent housing, and they destroyed opportunities for the residents. They deserve to be kicked out bag and baggage in May from the positions that they have abused for far too long.

2.1 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): This debate has been a tale of two cities: the reality of what has been happening in our cities over the past 15 years, as told to the House so eloquently in the excellent speeches of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie), for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) and for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson); and the other cities that Tory Members such as the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) seem to believe exist.

> "What I saw was a city in which the smoke was everywhere. It smelled of burning wire and plastic. The smoke was so thick that it obscured the lights of a helicopter circling directly overhead. Sirens screamed every few seconds as strike teams of fire engines escorted by California Highway patrol cars—literally convoys of twenty vehicles, the patrol cars to protect the fire-fighters—raced from one fire to the next".

That graphic description of Los Angeles in the spring of 1992 was seen by the current United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Henry Cisneros. That is not the sort of tale that we wish to be able to recount at first hand about inner-city Britain. The truth is that our inner cities may not be so far away from that appalling scenario. Our cities have been ravaged because of a lack of guidance, support and leadership from the Conservative Government.

This is Britain in 1994: the British National party—a fascist party—has a council seat in Millwall; drugs and crime are out of control; our prisons are overflowing; policemen are shot in broad daylight in cold blood; people are kicked to death on our streets; and people are forced to live on the streets. That is the unfortunate reality of life in Britain, and the ultimate blame rests with the Government.

Since the Conservatives took office in 1979, our cities have had to contend with different inner-city policies being launched at a rate of more than one a year—my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) has already listed them—but still the decay goes on.

This is the first debate on inner cities since the Government decided to abolish the urban programme. We

come to lament the urban programme; they come to bury it. There was not one word in the Minister's speech about the successes and achievements of that programme—one policy which, for a generation, provided much-needed funds and support for our inner cities.

The roots of that policy go back a long way, from a speech made by the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson in May 1968, to the changes announced in April 1977 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), with advice from my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), through to when the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) confirmed the Government's commitment to improve the inner cities in 1979.

The right hon. Gentleman was then prepared to lavish praise on the urban programme which was devised by a Labour Government and was readily acceptable to, and accepted by, Conservative Governments. That was the case until 1 December 1993, when the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction said:

"As the hon. Member knows, the urban programme is being phased out".—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1993; Vol. 233, c. 1032.]

That shock announcement contradicted his superior, the Secretary of State, who proclaimed on 24 January 1993 that the urban programme had not been abolished.

Ministers for inner cities move on just in time to avoid answering questions on policies that have suddenly disappeared. The bodies of old inner-city policies must be holding up the triple towers of the Department of the Environment in Marsham street. Out with the urban programme went 30,000 jobs, 70,000 training places and 9,000 schemes, which provided £250 million a year to our most deprived areas. Those were all destroyed when the Government abolished that long-held policy.

There was no more secure funding for inner-city areas and there was no consultation with the voluntary sector. There was not even a glance back at the lost partnership. That was the latest slur on our inner-city areas. Our cities now face a crisis in confidence, resources and management by the Government. All we get are half-baked schemes and broken promises. There is a deep wound at the heart of our urban society—as has been mentioned so passionately by my hon. Friends—and the bloody fingerprints that caused that deep wound are those of the Government. It is well that the Minister should examine his fingerprints as I say that.

The breakdown in society that can occur has been foretold in Millwall, as was mentioned in the debate. There, the politics of despair and frustration have taken a hold. It is only a small step from Canary wharf to the Isle of Dogs. How can a party that propagates hatred and bigotry have a councillor elected in an inner-city ward in Britain in 1994?

The reason is shamefully obvious. People in that area have been forgotten for far too long by central Government and they are not receiving the help that they so desperately need. There is an absence of hope, and I saw that for myself on Monday when I visited residents and tenants in Tower Hamlets with my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn.

The vulnerable have suddenly become scapegoats. The division of ethnic groups on racial grounds in inner-city areas must be stopped at all costs. That is why the Labour party has campaigned strongly against the cutting of section 11 grants. Cutting section 11 will solve none of the budget problems which are so pressing and will only lead to increased friction. That will place an even greater strain on inner-city schools.

There is also a responsibility on the Liberal Democrat party in Tower Hamlets. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) did not take the opportunity to condemn the way in which the Liberal Democrat party operated in Tower Hamlets. It is all very well for the leader of the Liberal Democratic party to lecture us on ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, but then we hear of the ethnic cleansing of council candidates who have been duly selected by the Liberal Democrat party.

I hope that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, who is a decent man, will take this opportunity to condemn what his party has done in attempting to remove candidates on the ground of their race.

Mr. Maclennan: I regret the line taken by the hon. Gentleman, and I would accept his strictures with greater humility if he himself had shown a readiness in Leicester to condemn clear racist actions which have been taken in his own neighbourhood. The hon. Gentleman did not acknowledge the exhaustive analysis of the complaints that were made against certain councillors, or the self-criticism contained in the report by Lord Lester of Herne Hill. Those have been adopted by my party and amount to a brave admission of wrongdoing. It is a serious attempt—unlike that of the Labour party—to eliminate racism in politics in Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Vaz: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has not taken the opportunity to condemn members of his party. My views on recent events in Leicester are clearly set out in early-day motion 693, which I hope that he will sign. Other members of his party, such as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), have signed that motion.

The term "cosmopolitan" used to imply all that was good about society in our inner-city areas: a wealth of different cultures and experiences coming together and joining to form a society that was more cultured and broad-minded than most. With our cultural diversity, we should be the most envied society in the world. Under the Conservative Government, our inner-city centres have become the most pitied.

Crime and the fear of crime are the most serious blights on our inner cities. That is no wonder when we consider that car crime increased by 156 per cent. between 1979 and 1992. Burglaries have increased 163 per cent. in the same period. Drug abuse has increased fivefold since 1982. Drug-related crime has also increased by a staggering 153 per cent. since 1982. What a pity that the Minister did not take the opportunity of the debate to support the excellent work that is being done by the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) in promoting the Bill of which I am a sponsor.

People are being increasingly marginalised and left to adopt increasingly extreme measures to protect themselves and their families. The time when private security guards protect those who can afford it, leaving the less wealthy stranded in lawless ghettos may no longer be the stuff of science fiction if the Conservative party continues with its present policies.

The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) rightly raised the alarming conclusions of an Association of London Authorities report published today entitled "At a premium". It highlighted the fact that insurance companies

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are restricting the amount of insurance that they give to inner-city businesses and homes and that there are certain places in our inner cities that they are not prepared to insure. That is an indictment of the way in which the Government's policy has operated in the past 15 years.

Mr. Kaufman: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of my constituents, whose business has been the subject of malicious damage on racial grounds, has been told by his insurers that malicious damage will be removed from his policy forthwith?

Mr. Vaz: I am not in the least surprised by what my right hon. Friend says. It points to the fact that the policies that have been implemented simply have not worked.

We need to restore civic pride and leadership to our inner cities, not the city pride initiative that the Secretary of State launched so recently. That is just another cheap gimmick launched by the Government in a vain attempt to show that they are doing something for our inner cities and the people who live there. The Government have spent 15 years robbing our major cities of their money, dignity and pride. Now they want to give it back.

City pride involves only three cities: London, which does not have an elected strategic government, Labour Manchester and Labour Birmingham, which was recently pilloried by Ministers for investing in its future and the future of its people. The burning question for the cities involved, and certainly for Opposition Members, is what extra resources the Government intend to provide for the cities that participate in the scheme. I can tell the Minister the answer. We have been told in replies to parliamentary questions. The answer is none. Not an extra penny of resources will be made available for city pride. One wonders why the Secretary of State launched the initiative in the first place.

It is surprising that the Secretary of State could name only three cities in Britain which he said had an international reputation. What nonsense. What an insult to all the metropolitan areas such as Leeds, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East, the international reputation of which is beyond question. The reality of Conservative policy for our cities is limited scope, limited investment and limited vision.

Then there is city challenge, heralded as the great hope for our urban areas and abandoned after only two rounds. City challenge turned the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) into the Hughie Green of regeneration policy. It was an "Opportunity Knocks" policy, with very few winners and many losers.

Labour Members support the idea of funds being made available for inner-city areas, but we cannot accept the fact that there were so few winners in the game show and that the funds made available were so few and under such tight restrictions.

Nigel Smith of Drivers Jonas, a chartered surveyors firm with a great deal of experience in this area, has said of city challenge:

"It is annuality gone mad".

The effect of the extreme regulations surrounding city challenge winners is that the best scheme does not always receive the funding it requires. The Government seem to have adopted the attitude that if a policy can be launched in a blaze of glory, then do it, regardless of its real effects and without consideration for those struggling to improve our inner-city environments.

The Labour party also rejects the notion that towns and cities should have to compete with each other for limited and valuable funds. How can it be right that Liverpool should compete with Bristol, Salford and Plymouth and that Leicester should compete with Luton, Leeds and Manchester?

At last, we have the single regeneration budget. That is finally an acceptance by the Conservative party of what the Labour party has said for years: the time for a co-ordination of Government policies on inner cities has surely come. Labour has been campaigning for many years for an integrated regeneration policy. However, as with all other good ideas from this side of the House that the Conservative party pilfers, its implementation causes us great concern.

The reality is that Derby, Nottingham and Leicester, for example, which, under the urban programme alone, received £12 million will now have to compete with the rest of the east midlands area for a slice of the £100 million budget. That equates to £10 million for the entire east midlands pot. A large proportion of the agencies active in regeneration are small and have no experience of competing for funds, especially where the allocation decision rests ultimately with Ministers. The number of bidders has vastly increased and the pivotal role for local authorities has been callously disregarded.

People are leaving our cities at the rate of 4 million every five years. According to a recent survey, a further 30 million people would like to leave them. Community groups and voluntary organisations must be fully involved in the decision-making process about regeneration initiatives. The success of the programme in the most deprived areas is also dependent on the index of urban conditions being used to ensure that areas of multi-deprivation remain the focus for attention. It seems that the single regeneration budget is now to be a scaled-down version of city challenge, with less funds and fewer winners.

Is it not strange that we heard nothing in the Minister's speech about the so-called capital receipts holiday? The time limit on the release of receipts was a cynical move by the Government, as it forced local authorities into a hopeless situation. We support local authorities being able to use their capital receipts, but we cannot agree with the time limit.

Local authorities had to sell as much as they could in an attempt to protect front-line services because of the cut in their standard spending assessments. However, they attempted to sell at a time when the market was at its most depressed. The year time scale meant that those buying from the authorities were in a very strong position, which partly explains why the authorities failed to raise the figures expected.

The 57 urban programme authorities were told by the Treasury that they would be able to cover the cut in the urban programme, plus the cut in standard spending assessments with the funds that they would raise from the sale of their investments. I have conducted a survey, and the truth is that not one of the authorities that have responded to my survey have been able to cover even the cut in their SSAs, let alone divert funds into the urban programme projects.

In total, 23 urban programme areas that responded faced a deficit of more than £24 million in their regeneration budgets alone. These areas are already, by definition, the most needy. Stealing from them, as the Government have sought to do, has hastened the decline in their infrastructure and has led to greater environmental degeneration—facts for which this Government are alone responsible.

The hopes and aspirations of those directly involved in urban regeneration are not lost for ever. I recently returned from the United States, where I met people involved with the creation and implementation of President Clinton's urban regeneration policy. The meetings included some at the Housing and Urban Development Department, where I spoke with Secretary Cisneros's advisers. To ensure that I got a balanced view and did not overlook any of the main agents, I spoke to members of the Centre for Community Change and people who were implementing the policies.

I found a real feeling of hope and excitement for the future there. After a decade of neglect and decay under Presidents Reagan and Bush, cities are finally back on the political agenda. The new Administration, under even tighter financial constraints than those in this country, are investing real money in inner cities. Nearly $900 million is being provided for 104 cities, six of which will get $100 million each, to be spent without federal Government interference in 10 years. That massive investment runs concurrently with—not instead of—existing Administration policies. The Administration are relaxing existing legislation to free funds that are already available.

As we are told, however, money is not everything. As well as that massive investment programme, the Clinton Administration are changing the emphasis for regeneration policy. From the President down, agencies have given their backing and support to regeneration schemes. As a result, the private sector is very excited by the prospect and is waiting, cheque book in hand, to become involved. At last, the Americans have an Administration who are prepared to act and to listen.

The private sector in Britain is a valued partner in regeneration policy, but Conservative Members must realise that it has had enough of the Government's tired and discredited policies. If they need any reminder that their policies are failing, the Minister and Conservative Members should read the speech by the director general of the Confederation of British Industry last week. He commented on the Government's attitude to local authorities. Howard Davies is not the first person in the private sector to speak out against Government policies, but merely the latest in a long and illustrious line that includes the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, which stated that

"the role of local authorities and the work they undertake is vital. Policies need to be developed which will encourage local authorities to see the agency as a welcome partner, rather than an hinderance imposed from outside."

The Institute of Directors, the British Urban Regeneration Agency and other organisations have been ready to support the view that the Government must ensure that regeneration policies are planned properly.

If the Government do not care about the views of the private sector, they care even less for those of the voluntary sector. For the past 15 years, that sector has largely been ignored. Regardless of that blanking by central Government, it has continued to grow in importance. It is vital for the voluntary sector to be allowed to play a full part in ensuring proper regeneration of our inner cities.

We have heard a lot from Conservative Members about certain Labour-controlled councils. I shall not waste the time of the House by reading out the Conservative list of shame, which includes Brent and Ealing councils. In Brent, council rents have increased by 71 per cent. and the rent arrears, at a staggering 34.4 per cent., are the worst in the country. There has been a 27 per cent. fall in the number of elderly people receiving home helps and a Tory councillor's car loan of £6,500 was written off and no action was taken.

In Ealing, £16,000 of council tenants' money was squandered in an aborted attempt to sell council housing and council rents have increased 118 per cent. under the Conservatives. For three years, Ealing has failed in its bids for European funding. The list goes on, but I have heavily edited it in view of the amount of time available.

It is no wonder that people in our inner cities are turning to the Labour party. The House will have heard about the splendid result in Quinton ward in Birmingham, where the Rev. Richard Bashford won the seat last night with a massive majority of 300 votes. It is the first time that the Labour party has won that seat. That is a tribute to the excellent work of Theresa Stewart, the leader of Birmingham city council, and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones).

Our inner cities will either follow the American example, which has led to social fracture and anarchy, or take the path of the European city. Labour intends to tackle the problems of our inner cities head-on. That is why we established City 2020, an inquiry into our urban areas. The inquiry has visited 15 urban areas in the past six months and will visit a further 30 before November, because we do not feel that it is possible to develop a coherent effective strategy for our cities without consulting the people involved in the regeneration process. The committee is considering not only the ways in which urban policy has failed, but the success stories—the examples of good Labour councils throughout the country. It was Manchester, a Labour council, which put in an excellent bid for the Olympic games.

Yesterday, I was in Greenwich and Lewisham. In Lewisham, I saw, in the shape of the Lewisham 2000 initiative, a bold and imaginative attempt to unclog an inner-city area. In Greenwich, I saw evidence of a good Labour council working with the private sector through the Waterfront Partnership. I also heard of Greenwich's plans to be the centre of the millennium celebrations. What better place can there be in the world for those celebrations than the place where time itself is measured? I urge the Minister to support that venture, which will be a tremendous boost, not only for London, but for the country.

Which authority can match the municipal drive and imagination of Birmingham, Sheffield and Leeds? Even the Government have shown they have had to swallow their pride and praise Labour councils. The Home Secretary mentioned Birmingham's crime-fighting initiatives and the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction praised Birmingham's housing policy. Those councils are not exceptions, but are members of a great and illustrious club, of which cities such as Coventry, Liverpool, Leicester, Nottingham, Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle, Plymouth and Labour London are members. All have undertaken excellent schemes.

[Mr. Vaz]

The Labour party proposes a new Magna Carta for our cities, encouraging civic entrepreneurship. Municipal leaders are waiting to take up the challenge to clear derelict land sites, construct new buildings, encourage the private sector to invest, create jobs, provide training opportunities, establish confidence in the area, build or enhance cultural amenities, promote an efficient transport infrastructure and confirm the international importance of their city. It will be a real partnership of equals. *[Interruption.]* The Minister may shout, but he spoke for 66 minutes. In that partnership, local authorities, the voluntary sector and the private sector will work together to improve our urban areas effectively.

No solutions can be imposed from above. Communities have to be empowered. Local people must realise that they have a stake in their environment. It has to belong to them. Ministers cannot, and must not, be allowed to adopt the Pontius Pilate attitude to inner-city problems. It cannot be left to the Church of England alone to have faith in our cities.

Our cities will have a major role to play, economically and socially, in the new global marketplace—one which will take them forward into the next millennium, prepared and ready to compete with not only the best in Europe, but the best in the world. The evidence is all around us. There is a new consensus for change. We have a good history of municipal leadership and the civic leaders in Britain are ready to take up that challenge.

2.27 pm

Mr. Baldry: The House will notice that the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has given me only three minutes to respond to the debate, so I apologise to my hon. Friends if I am not able to respond in the way I should have liked.

We heard some excellent speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Finchley (Mr. Booth), for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves), for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). Those speeches are worth reading and re-reading. My hon. Friends spoke with concern, knowledge and commitment.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), who introduced the Opposition's approach to inner-city policy, put up three tests. He said that there should be a test on the economy, on planning and on co-ordination. I am happy to accept those tests.

It is obvious that the economy is moving from strength to strength. Unemployment decreased by 38,000 in the month to February. The unemployment rate is at its lowest since July 1992, and in the past six months unemployment has decreased by an average of more than 28,000 a month. Unemployment is reducing and the number of people in employment is increasing.

In February alone, the volume of retail sales was 2.5 per cent. above the previous year's level. Manufacturing productivity rose by 3 per cent. in the year to 1994. Some Opposition Members were scathing about the construction industry, but total orders received by contractors for construction work in the three months to January were 16 per cent. higher than in the previous three months and 30 per cent. higher than in the same period a year earlier.

I am happy to accept any challenge put to the Government on the economy, because we are one of the few countries in the developed world that are moving out of recession and into recovery.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East cannot have been listening when I described our new planning policies. My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham also set those out clearly. New planning for town centres, retail developments, transport and the environment are all intended to ensure the regeneration—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 29th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to Rating and Valuation not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; and

(2) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Sir Fergus Montgomery relating to Northern Ireland Affairs not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments to the said Motion which she may have selected and which may then be moved; notwithstanding the practice of the House the said Motion shall be regarded as a single Motion:

and the above proceedings may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Hon Members: Object.

Menwith Hill Station, North Yorkshire

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak on this subject. In a curious way, it stems from two Ministers: the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, who claimed that there was parliamentary accountability for Menwith Hill station; and the Minister for Public Transport, who found Menwith Hill station so secret that he was not even aware of it when he was a Minister at the Ministry of Defence and thought that it was a railway station. In a recent debate, he astonishingly said that his civil servants had prepared him to reply to this Adjournment debate and he then discovered that it was connected with the Ministry of Defence.

The story of Menwith Hill begins in the public area, not with a ministerial statement, debate or planted parliamentary question in the mother of Parliaments. It began on 18 July 1980 when the *New Statesman* published an article by Duncan Campbell and Linda Melvern entitled

"The Billion Dollar Phone Tap—America's Big Ear in the Heart of Yorkshire".

To suggest, as the Minister has, that there is parliamentary accountability for that spy station in the Yorkshire hills is to torture the truth. Its establishment has been accompanied by lies, evasion, deceit and a persistent refusal by Ministers to provide proper information to elected representatives in this so-called mother of Parliaments. Indeed, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has refused to allow Labour Members around the base. That is a curious change because in 1981 the former Secretary of State for Defence, Francis Pym, gave me permission to visit the base. The only qualification to that permission was a refusal to allow Duncan Campbell to accompany me because he knew something about the spying and procedures going on inside the base.

Parliamentary accountability is virtually non-existent. There is little point in asking questions when answers are refused. On 27 April 1988, I asked the Secretary of State for Defence

"if he will list the agreements authorising the use of Menwith Hill communications base, Harrogate, by the United States National Security Agency."

Mr. Ian Stewart replied:

"The use of Menwith Hill by the United States Department of Defence is subject to confidential arrangements between the United Kingdom and United States Government."—[*Official Report*, 27 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 203.]

I asked the same question on Thursday 19 July 1990. The then Minister of State said:

"I have nothing to add to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) gave to the hon. Member on 27 April 1988."—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 654.]

I persisted again on Tuesday 16 June 1992 and asked the Secretary of State for Defence

"if he will list the agreements governing the use of Menwith Hill by the National Security Agency of the United States of America."

The Minister replied:

"The use of Menwith Hill by the United States Department of Defence is subject to confidential arrangements between the United Kingdom and the United States Government."—[*Official Report*, 16 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 501.]

In other words, elected Members of Parliament are denied information on the appropriation of more than 200 acres of land by the United States Government, who now run a spy station in the heart of our country which is linked up to a global network. That is inexcusable. If there is parliamentary accountability, the moon is made of green cheese.

The Menwith Hill story starts with the purchase in 1955 of a 246-acre farm on rural moors west of Harrogate. On 15 September 1960, after the expenditure of $6.8 million, the United States army security field station opened. On 1 August 1966, control of the station was transferred to the ostensibly civilian National Security Agency of America. Francis Raven, who was the chief of G group of United States army intelligence until 1975, claimed that the takeover occurred because the army resisted eavesdropping on diplomatic and economic targets. That claim can be found on page 209 of James Bamford's excellent work "Puzzle Palace". At least the Ministry of Defence is helpful in some respects. The copy of that book has disappeared from the House of Commons Library, so it secured one from the MOD library—it was the only piece of useful information that the MOD has provided on the matter.

Menwith Hill is a spy station—a sophisticated version of the man in the dirty raincoat looking through a bedroom window or the pervert spying through a lavatory keyhole. Those who defend the station's invasion of our land, which has never been approved by Parliament, are no better. There is no glory or wonderful purpose involved in Menwith Hill. That is all the more true now that the cold war is over. Ministers justified the Menwith Hill base by saying it was part of the cold war, but we understand that that has finished. What is their justification for the spy station now?

Yorkshire land has been taken from us to provide an eavesdropping centre that is virtually free from urban, electro-magnetic interference. That is why the station is sited at its current location. The station is part of a chain of such stations that span the globe. Their aim is to assert and retain United States supremacy. For example, exactly opposite to Menwith Hill, on the other side of the globe in a prohibited region in Australia stands the twin of Menwith Hill, Pine Gap station. When Menwith Hill opened, the United States air force security service listening post at Kirknewton near Edinburgh ceased operations and a former employee is quoted on page 210 of "Puzzle Palace" as saying:

"I had to keep a special watch for commercial traffic, details of commodities, what big companies were selling, like iron and steel and gas. Changes were frequent. One week I was asked to scan all traffic between Berlin and London and another week between Rome and Belgrade. Some weeks the list of words to watch for contained dozens of names of big companies. Some weeks I just had to look for commodities. All traffic"

— interception material—

"was sent back to Fort Meade in Washington."

Menwith Hill took over those functions and continued to pursue military eavesdropping.

Its spying grows. The cold war has ended, but the radomes number 21 after recent expansion. About 1,200 staff, who are mainly American, are employed there—the number has grown from 400 in 1980. United States staff are ordered never to mention the National Security Agency of America and to report all outside contacts with foreign nationals—the British people who live in the region—to ensure that supervision of such contacts is maintained. The base has a few carefully controlled public relations

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

contacts to camouflage its isolation and secrecy, but many British people continue to oppose the base, for which there is no longer any justification, if there ever was.

Throughout the time of the base's existence, Otley peace action group has held demonstrations and campaigned against it. A group of women, including Lindis Percy and Anne Lee, has focused particular attention on this foreign intrusion and has repeatedly entered the base and obtained valuable information—more power to their elbow. If Parliament will not provide accountability, people outside always will. While Parliament remains inert, it is people outside this place who have pushed Parliament along the road to democracy.

Some of the information was given in a recent Channel 4 "Dispatches" programme. The fact that domestic intrusion exists at Menwith Hill station is surely shown by the fact that British Telecom has a 32,000-telephone line capacity connection from Hunter's Stone Post Office tower along the B6451 to Otley. There cannot be 32,000 telephones on the base in simultaneous use; that defies credibility. The Hunter's Stone Post Office tower happens to be a pivotal point of more than 1 million route miles of microwave radio connections installed in Britain. The cable from Hunter's Stone Post Office tower runs directly to Menwith Hill. There has never been any parliamentary authority to allow this serious and unwarranted intrusion into our telephone network.

There are two large United States firms within the military-industrial complex: Loral Space Systems Incorporated, formerly a part of Ford, and Lockheed Aerospace. They sell much of the spy equipment and they are both involved in arms sales to third-world countries. Menwith Hill gains information that would be useful to them. Lockheed and Boeing, for example, oppose the success of Airbus Industrie, which has sold many aeroplanes round the world. Can the Minister guarantee that information about commercial matters relating to Airbus Industrie and the sales of the Airbus 300, for example, has never been picked up by Menwith Hill and has never been passed on to part of the US military-industrial complex? Both Boeing and Lockheed depend for their continued existence on military contracts from the United States Government. Our Government continue to betray our people by allowing spy stations such as Menwith Hill to be dominated and operated by the United States, without any control that is visible to the people at large.

A recent "Dispatches" programme on Channel 4 examined the matter in some detail. I shall put a few quotations on the record for Parliament. Margaret Newsham is one of the few people who have worked at Menwith Hill and spoken out. She worked there from 1977 to 1981. She says:

"From the very beginning of my employment, it became very much aware to me that massive security violations were taking place. All the programmes that I did work on were subject to these abuses."

She is referring to interference in commercial traffic.

The programme's commentary on Margaret Newsham continues:

"And that wasn't all. Inside Building 36D at Menwith, she was invited to listen in on an American Senator's intercepted phone call. After leaving, she informed the US Congress about what she'd seen."

Good on her. Can the Minister assure us that Menwith Hill never listens in to any telephone calls of United Kingdom Members of Parliament, not directly in the United Kingdom, but bounced back over the various satellite systems?

According to the programme, only one person in the world has ever got the National Security Agency to admit intercepting his messages. He was a United States lawyer called Abdeen Jabaro who said:

"It took me 18 years to get my records finally destroyed. It is like Big Brother. It's like 1984, of—surveilling people all over the globe. And if you're British, if you're French, if you're Dutch, you're any—any people, anywhere you have no rights to complain about this. You have zero rights."

What does it say for parliamentary democracy when people have no rights against these arrogant organisations which are given authority by a clique of people called the Government who have not come to Parliament to get any authority? It is a scandal and a disgrace, and I look forward to the Minister trying to explain that away, as he tried to at Question Time in a superficial and cliché-ridden manner.

A National Security Agency employee was quoted on the programme, but the words of an actor were used as a disguise. The Government know all about using actors' words to disguise someone. That employee was quoted as saying:

"Menwith Hill was responsible for intercepting 'ILC' and 'NDC' traffic from 1966 to 1976. Then came the satellite intercepts, like MOONPENNY. ILC is International Leased Carrier—basically, ordinary commercial traffic. Your and my phone calls. And 'NDC' is 'Non-US diplomatic communications'. But that job was later moved out of Menwith Hill during the 1970s, to Chicksands, where a special unit called DODJOCC was run by the NSA, direct from Menwith Hill. 'DODJOCC' stands for Department of Defense Joint Operations Centre Chicksands. Because of the high sensitivity of its work no Britons were ever allowed in."

Was that high sensitivity because they were intercepting British communications? Howard Teicher, National Security Council member from 1980 to 1986, said on the programme:

"As a rule I believe that the United States government would never spy on the British government, and would never direct the National Security Agency to try to collect information on British government entities or individuals.

However, having said that that would be the rule, I would never say never in this business because, at the end of the day, national interests are national interests. And, as close as the US and the UK are, sometimes our interests diverge. So never say never. Especially in this business."

The former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Admiral Stansfield Turner, explained how he met an American called Joe—of course—who said that there was information and that he was a CIA operator working secretly and spying in a country, the name of which is not given. Joe told the admiral that there were three contracts competing with United States firms. Admiral Stansfield Turner said: "

"What did you do about it Joe?" And he said 'Well, we don't have any policy on this, so I did nothing.'"

When Admiral Turner took over at the CIA a new organisation was set up inside the Department of Commerce. Its special function was to receive valuable information from US intelligence that the Department could use to America's economic benefit. It is the Office of Intelligence Liaison.

The programme makers were not allowed inside, so they used the American Freedom of Information Act which the United Kingdom, the home of the mother of Parliaments, does not have and they asked for the standing orders of the department. They claim that they show that

the office receives some of the unique type of intelligence collected at NSA stations such as the one at Menwith Hill. It is called sensitive compartmented information. Of course, the documents that were shown on the programme demonstrated what I have already said, that Lockheed and Laurel are integrated in the National Security Agency's operations. They are still involved in running the computers.

I shall quote again the words of Howard Teicher, the former head of the CIA. He said:

"The United States was always concerned about the purchase of non-American advanced armaments by the government of Saudi Arabia. We were certainly aware that by preventing a foreign government from selling something that we hoped would lead to an American entity to be able to sell, it would certainly contribute to our commercial interest, but that was not the first priority."

The first priority that he spoke about was the cold war, and that has ended.

What is the first priority at Menwith Hill? Will the Minister publish the agreement that allows Menwith Hill to be operated at the base near Harrogate? Why should not the people of the United Kingdom know about these matters? In a democracy, why should they be kept from them? It is an outrage that they ever have been.

What laws govern the operation of Menwith Hill? Do the United States employees there come under United Kingdom law or does the Visiting Forces Act 1952 apply to civilians? What rights do individuals or companies have if they believe that they are being spied on by Menwith Hill? For example, can the Minister give a categorical assurance that Menwith Hill is not intercepting commercial traffic?

Finally, if the Minister is so confident about democracy, will he allow me and other Labour Members to visit the base, especially since Harrogate councillors have certainly done so?

1.49 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): I very much welcome the opportunity afforded by the debate and I should like to use the occasion to deal with some of the fundamental issues concerning Menwith Hill station, which would perhaps benefit from clarification, as well as reply to some of the individual points that have been raised. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, the reason for the debate is not totally unconnected with my invitation for him to do so. We are in no way trying to quell accountability for our activities in the United Kingdom —quite the reverse.

As the House knows, I visited the station on 27 January. On that occasion, I received briefings on its current role from the senior UK and American personnel working there, including the head of station. I should make it quite clear that Menwith Hill is owned by the Ministry of Defence, but it may help if I explain the basis on which the United States forces and their civilian component are present before going on to underline the importance to the United Kingdom of the operations carried out at the station and the wider significance of the continued US presence in the United Kingdom and Europe. Finally, I shall address the issue of control and accountability for operations conducted at Menwith Hill.

Her Majesty's Government have made the site on which Menwith Hill station is situated available to the US Department of Defence. As such, the station is an integral part of the worldwide network which supports United States, United Kingdom and NATO interests. The arrangement has been made in accordance with the agreement regarding the status of forces of parties to the North Atlantic treaty of 1951 and other arrangements appropriate to the relationship that exists between the United Kingdom and the United States for the purposes of our common defence.

To that end, the United States Government have been granted permission to use the site, and the administration of the facility is the responsibility of the station authorities. However, the land comprising the site is Crown freehold land. I stress that Her Majesty's Government retain ownership of that land, and it follows that we have control over the use made of the site and its facilities. The United States is aware of, and entirely accepts, that position. At no time have the arrangements between the two Governments for the use of the site conferred any rights of ownership of the land on the United States Government.

The function of Menwith Hill station is regarded by Her Majesty's Government as being of the highest importance to the country's defence strategy and is subject to confidential arrangements between the UK and US Governments. The work carried out there is highly sensitive and rightly classified as secret. I believe very firmly that it would not be in the national interest, and would indeed defeat the very purpose of that work, if I were to comment in any detail on the activities that I have seen conducted there.

United States forces have been stationed in the United Kingdom as a visible sign of the US commitment to NATO throughout the cold war. With changing circumstances in Europe, the US Government, in consultation with all their NATO partners, are realigning their forces to take account of the evolving security situation. Although the end of the cold war has brought about changes in the focus of US and UK defence concerns, the need for Menwith Hill station to continue its role as part of a worldwide defence network remains. Moreover, as recent events have shown, we continue to live in a very uncertain world and the recent NATO summit has confirmed that the forces of our US allies remain committed to a strong presence in Europe and, therefore, in the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, I welcome the continued presence of United States personnel at Menwith Hill as a tangible sign of the close defence and security ties between the two countries. I also would not wish to underestimate the beneficial impact on the local economy of their presence. I remind the hon. Member for Bradford, South of the number of jobs directly created by the existence of the base, which was referred to at Question Time about three weeks ago. There are currently some 600 UK employees, serving at every level throughout the base, and 1,200 US personnel.

Indeed, those working at the station play a full part in the life of the local community centred on the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), who is regularly in touch with those at the base. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) recently spoke in the House of the excellent relationship between the United States personnel and the local community. I need hardly stress again the economic importance of such a base to that part of North Yorkshire. Its presence is widely welcomed and it is estimated that it contributes approximately £40 million to the local and national economies.

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

The station's recent construction programme was planned and started several years ago and will therefore carry through to completion. As this has been the subject of much ill-informed speculation, I take the opportunity to state categorically that there are no underground bunkers, either existing or planned, at the station. The recently completed operations centre was built into the side of a hill to take advantage of the natural topography of the ground in that location.

As I stated earlier, there are currently 1,800 personnel employed at Menwith Hill, of whom 1,200 are US Department of Defence personnel and 600 are UK nationals. I also said that I have visited the base. Nowhere was closed to me. I saw US personnel representing all four armed services—US army, navy, air force and marine corps—and Department of Defence civilians and US contractor personnel. I also saw UK personnel, as I have stated, at every level.

As in the case of other US bases in the United Kingdom where US forces are based, locally employed UK staff or Ministry of Defence civilians work in support of activities there. A detachment of Ministry of Defence police is assigned to the base. The MDP officers are responsible for security, the costs incurred being reimbursed by the United States. However, it is worth mentioning that if overtime is occasioned by the activities of protestors, including those mentioned by the hon. Member for Bradford, South, that is a direct cost to the United Kingdom. That amounted to nearly £500,000 in the last financial year. Those people are not clever. They are merely destructive and wasteful.

In addition to the support staff, senior UK personnel are present at the station. For that reason, Her Majesty's Government are in a position to be entirely confident that British staff are aware of all facets of operations at the station. They are integrated at every level. Consequently, no activity considered inimical to British interests is, or would be, permitted there. On the issue of accountability and control, I stress that Menwith Hill operates with the full knowledge and consent of the United Kingdom Government.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned visits to Menwith Hill by Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament. Previous requests for such visits and briefings have not been approved, on the grounds of disruption to the operational commitments of the base or for security reasons. I have stated that that would be the same for Conservative Members as for Labour Members.

It is not the practice of the Ministry of Defence to organise tours of the working facilities at Menwith Hill. In my reply to the House on 8 March, I said that the strictures appled equally to all. The local constituency Member, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon, has visited the station, but not for the purpose of receiving an operational briefing or a tour. His visit was organised as part of a programme to enable US personnel to understand better the workings of the British parliamentary system. He went there to brief, not to be briefed.

At the end of his speech, the hon. Member for Bradford, South said that local councillors had visited the station. That is true. Some 70 local councillors and 20 council officials have visited it. They were there either for social purposes or for planning purposes. They were not there to study operational purposes.

In closing, I should like to state that the personnel at Menwith Hill are carrying out an important and responsible job in difficult circumstances. They are accountable to both Her Majesty's Government and the US Government.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hanley: No, I will not give way because I have more to say.

I remind the hon. Member for Bradford, South that we have introduced further legislation to ensure that the work of our intelligence services is more transparent than it has ever been before. However, the irresponsible actions of activists who try to disrupt legitimate activities taking place at Menwith Hill cannot be interpreted by any stretch of the imagination as being in our national interest. I am afraid that I can only despise the actions of hon. Members who seem only too happy to jump on that particular bandwagon and to indulge in damaging innuendo and downright untruths about what goes on there.

The Interception of Communications Act 1985 applies to that base as it does to any other. I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, South realises that early-day motion 925, to which he referred, shows ignorance, prejudice, a ready desire to exploit the nation's security interest and, I might add, a total lack of any sense of humour.

I recognise that the hon. Member for Bradford, South is at a disadvantage in not having visited the site. However, most of what he peddles is ill-informed, second-hand fantasy based on prejudice against our allies which in itself is not in the national interest. His colourful language may well make good sound bites, but it is pathetic in its paranoia.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 28 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Care Allowance

1. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the child care allowance for those in receipt of family credit.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): We expect the child care allowance to be very effective in helping low-income families back into work and improving their living standards.

Dr. Jones: Will the Secretary of State make it clear that that allowance is not a cash benefit and that, although some people will gain provided that they are not paying much more than £1.50 an hour for child care, the poorest—those receiving maximum family credit—and those who use relatives to look after their children will gain nothing? What will the Secretary of State do to help them?

Mr. Lilley: I will not make those things clear because they are not correct. I am sorry that the hon. Lady greets this welcome reform so sourly, as it has been welcomed by everyone else in the sphere. Far from its helping only a few, we estimate that it will help 150,000 people, of whom 50,000 will be encouraged back to work. The people who are already on maximum family credit are usually those who work the shortest hours, many of whom will be able to increase their hours if they become eligible for child care costs. The allowance will enable them to put their children in care while they are working.

Pensioners' Incomes

2. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the value of the average pensioner's income from savings and occupational pensions; and what were the comparable figures in 1979.

Mr. Lilley: In 1990-91—the latest year for which information is available—the estimated average value of pensioners' income from savings and occupational pensions was £63.20, which is an increase of more than 125 per cent. in real terms on the comparable figure of £27.80 in 1979.

Mr. Bates: But is not it also the case that pensioner living standards and incomes are up on the 1979 figures and that the only figures that are going down are the number of pensioner couples in the lowest income band and the amount of press coverage that such excellent news receives?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I have found that the most telling evidence of good news is the lack of reporting that it receives in the press. The fact that the income standards of pensioners are rising so strongly is extremely good news, and they are set to continue rising as more pensioners have occupational and private pensions.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Secretary of State accept that the figures that he gave are utter nonsense? The real increase in the level of the state old-age pension since 1979 is 3.6 per cent., as he has admitted. Will he stop bandying about figures that include investment income for a very small number of elderly people and instead consider the real levels of poverty among the elderly, the number of old people who die from hypothermia and the number of single women pensioners over the age of 75 who have no access to occupational pensions, savings or anything else and are living in poverty? Will the right hon. Gentleman restore the link with earnings, which the Conservative Government broke in 1980, and give people a decent pension?

Mr. Lilley: Apart from state provision, occupational pensions are the biggest single factor. It is true that in 1979 —the year to which the hon. Member harks back—only 43 per cent. of retired people had occupational pensions. In the latest year for which we have figures, 61 per cent. of retired people had such pensions; among the newly retired the figure is 70 per cent., which is excellent news. I simply remind the hon. Gentleman that, in every year since 1979, pensioners' incomes have increased on average by more than they did in all five years under Labour.

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that 10.7 million employees are members of occupational schemes? Will he also confirm that the Government will continue to provide an environment in which such schemes can flourish?

Mr. Lilley: I can certainly confirm that for my hon. Friend; he is absolutely right. More than 10 million people in work are building up occupational pensions—apart from those retired people who are enjoying them—and 5 million additional people are building up private pensions for the future. That is good news, as is the additional provision that the Government have made for the least well-off—£1 billion a year since 1988.

Community Care

3. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement regarding community care grants.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Community care grants play an important part in support of the Government's wider initiatives to promote care in the community.

As in previous years, we have identified from our routine monitoring scope for some minor improvements to the Secretary of State's directions and guidance. Details of amendments taking effect from April 1994 are being placed in the Library today.

Mr. Field: As the Minister is talking about minor improvements, does he think that it is satisfactory that people living in hostels are deemed not to be living in the community and so qualify for community care grants, whereas people living rough on the streets are deemed to be living in the community and do not qualify for those grants? When the right hon. Gentleman makes what he calls minor amendments, will he include the latter group so that such people qualify for the grants?

Mr. Scott: Amendments have been placed in the Library today. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind the fact that whether or not people are enabled to resettle in the community will depend on the care that they have been receiving hitherto. Many hostels provide such care and those who move from them into the wider community certainly have an entitlement to community care grants, subject, of course, to the flexibility of the fund.

Pensioners (Home Ownership)

4. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the proportion of pensioners who own their own homes; and what estimate he has made of how this is likely to change over the next 20 years.

8. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the proportion of pensioners who are owner-occupiers and have paid off their mortgages.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): Information for the year 1990-91—the latest available—shows that an estimated 48 per cent. of all pensioners own their own homes and have paid off their mortgages. The comparable figure in 1979 was 37 per cent. We expect the rising trend in home ownership among pensioners to continue during the next 20 years.

Mr. Richards: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, even among pensioners on lower incomes, around a quarter own a home valued at about £25,000? Does he agree that that is evidence that home ownership among pensioners is spreading, thanks to the policies of the Government?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend is right. Home ownership among pensioners has spread and will continue to do so because of the factors already described by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—the growth of occupational pension provision and income from savings. Those developments have occurred because we have had a Government who have encouraged diversity of pension provision and ensured low inflation so that savings are actually worth something.

Mr. Congdon: Does my hon. Friend agree that the figures that he has given demonstrate the spread of ownership among pensioners and the extent to which they are better off than their predecessors? Will he also confirm that almost all pensioners now have a television, most have a telephone and a large majority have washing machines? Is not that a tribute to the success of the Government's policies?

Mr. Hague: Again, my hon. Friend is right. Pensioner households now have a great many more of the things that matter to quality of life—for example, 90 per cent. have a telephone, whereas in 1979 barely half of pensioner households owned one. The number of pensioner households with cars has nearly doubled since 1979 and the percentage in the bottom decile of income distribution has fallen from 31 to 11 per cent. Those dramatic improvements seem to have escaped Opposition Members' notice.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister accept that a real measure of prosperity would be how many pensioners bought their houses after they became pensioners; how many had their houses bought for them by members of their family for investment purposes; and how many houses were bought by members of the Tory party looking for a fast buck, such as the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan)?

Mr. Hague: What matters to pensioners is living in homes where they do not have a mortgage to pay. What matters to them is having all the household durables and other goods that we have mentioned, which make a big difference to their living standards. We have seen tremendous improvements in those standards.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that about 390,000 pensioners in Strathclyde—including my mother, incidentally—voted no in the referendum on the future of water services in Strathclyde? Many of those pensioners own their own houses and are being ignored by the Government. Why?

Mr. Hague: We would not dare to ignore the hon. Gentleman's mother; I can assure him of that. Pensioners in Strathclyde will have shared with pensioners in the rest of the country the improvements in living standards to which we have already referred, with more owning their homes, more having cars, more having telephones and many having much greater incomes.

Housing Benefit

5. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he plans to cap housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: As the House knows, the Department is conducting a fundamental review of all social security expenditure. No decisions have been made and the Government will consult widely as and when proposals are ready. We have no plans to cap housing benefit.

Mr. Miller: I hope that that is a stronger promise than we had from the Ministers on VAT, and that they do not renege on commitments in that area. [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am not reading. The Minister should realise that the Government's own policies have allowed the benefit to increase; the deregulation of private sector rents has been the cause of that. The Minister should ensure, in liaison with his colleagues, that that is taken into account in the review and that there is no capping and no cuts whatever in the benefit.

Mr. Scott: Far from anticipating cuts, we expect that, by the end of the decade, expenditure on housing benefit is likely to increase from £7.3 billion to between £10 billion and £12 billion, so one can see growth in that area. I do, however, think that there is merit in concentrating subsidy for housing on individuals and their circumstances rather than entirely on bricks and mortar.

Mr. Willetts: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government's figures show spending on rent allowance increasing by 7.1 per cent. a year and spending on rent rebates increasing by 5.5 per cent. a year until the year 2000, and that that shows the need for tight control over housing benefit spending?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that that is true, and we have taken steps to enable local authorities to take action to prevent the meeting of very high rents where luxurious accommodation or over-generous provision of space is currently being subsidised by the taxpayer.

Family Poverty

6. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received over social security provision to deal with family poverty.

Mr. Lilley: From time to time, I receive copies of reports and studies from various institutes and other organisations about low-income families.

Mr. Winnick: But is not it a disgrace that, whereas in 1979, 9 per cent. of households had incomes below half the national average, the figure is now 25 per cent.—nearly a threefold increase in poverty? Does not that show that, for many people, the Tory Government since 1979 have been a curse?

Mr. Lilley: That is nonsense, as the hon. Gentleman knows. There has been a rise in living standards across the country. The average increase in income is about 35 per cent. in real terms. The figures that the hon. Gentleman cites do not reveal any worsening of people's real position —simply a change in the distribution of income, which is occurring in many other countries, too. I urge him to look closely at the figures; he will find that, in the bottom 10 per cent. of households, there are 500,000 reporting zero or negative incomes, mainly consisting of self-employed people, who are none the less able to consume, on average, more than the average person in the population as a whole.

Mr. Dicks: With regard to those benefits, can my right hon. Friend confirm whether it is true that a certain Mr. Gerry Adams is receiving social security benefits while he is able to fly halfway round the world to decry the Government? Will he examine that situation and ensure that he is taken off those benefits immediately?

Mr. Lilley: I cannot comment on individual cases, but I will refer the question to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who has responsibility for social security in the Province. I am sure that if there is any evidence of wrongdoing by anyone in that area it will be inquired into.

Mr. Ingram: Has the Minister had an opportunity to study in detail the report produced last week by his Department, which showed that £2 billion in benefits remain unclaimed in 1991? Is he prepared to accept that such a shortfall in take-up increases the extent of family poverty in this country? Instead of treating the problem with complacency, as his Department did last week, is he now prepared to accept that the Department has a responsibility and a duty to seek out those many claimants who do not take up the benefits and assist them in so doing?

Mr. Lilley: We do not deal with that matter complacently. We are pleased that some 90 per cent. of benefit available is taken up. We want to ensure that those who, for any reason, are less able, knowledgeable or well equipped to claim benefit have the relevant knowledge to enable them to claim. We have been encouraging an increased uptake, particularly in family credit, with some success. That benefit helps people back into work, which means that, ultimately, they draw less benefit from the state but are better off because they are in work. Thus, everybody is better off: the person concerned, the taxpayer and the economy as a whole. We are encouraging that process further.

Mr. Evennett: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government intend to target benefit towards those in genuine need and that that policy is widely supported throughout the country? Will he further confirm that, since the Government have been in office, low-income families have benefited from family credit, income support and other benefits, and have done quite well within society because of what the Government have done to help them?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right. We must try to ensure that the benefit goes to those in need. That objective must be shared by all hon. Members. We have targeted benefits towards low-income families, to whom the extra benefit since 1988 is now worth £1 billion a year. For a typical low-income household, that is worth £13 a week more than it received under the previous regime.

Child Support Agency

9. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce an independent appeal procedure to the Child Support Agency system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Child Support Agency was introduced to ensure that parents meet their responsibility for the financial maintenance of their children where they can afford to do so. It replaced an inconsistent, often unreliable system that resulted in a drastic decline in maintenance payments over the last decade.

There is already the right of appeal, on the basis of an incorrect application of the formula, against a decision of a child support officer, to an independent tribunal.

Mr. Hogg: Is the Secretary of State prepared to accept that the changes to the Child Support Act 1991 implemented in February have totally failed to deal with the extensive criticism of the Act? Does he accept that there must be further fundamental changes if public confidence in the Act is to be restored?

Mr. Lilley: The changes that we introduced in February have already benefited some 30,000 or 40,000 people as a result of a direct reduction in the amount that they were required to pay. Many more people who receive assessments in the future will benefit. Extra help will also be provided in the form of phasing, for which people are now applying. That will be welcomed by those with second families who already have maintenance agreements.

If the hon. Gentleman seriously believes that such a measure can be introduced with no criticism whatever, he is mistaken. In every other country where such a system has been introduced—Australia, New Zealand and various states of America—it has met with criticism. I remind the

hon. Gentleman that, since we introduced those changes, there has been criticism from lone parents who naturally receive less when absent parents pay less.

Mr. Ward: My hon. Friend will be aware that I support the principle of the Child Support Agency. Is he aware that, in a small number of cases, people may be better off unemployed than in employment if they pay what the Child Support Agency asks for? Will he look at that aspect?

Mr. Lilley: That was an aspect with which we tried to deal when we introduced changes in February. We nearly quadrupled the amount above income support level below which the income of an absent parent's second family cannot fall. We have increased the increment above that level which they can keep. That makes it difficult for people to find themselves in the position to which my hon. Friend refers. But, as I have made clear previously, we are keeping the matter under continual review as we want to ensure that we are aware of any continuing problems.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Secretary of State is right that there is a limited appeal system that will allow people to take cases to tribunals, but there is no appeal system for hardship. If the Government allowed a hardship tribunal for people who were asked to pay more than they could possibly afford, people would be given a chance to argue their case before an independent body. That would also provide the Government with better evidence of how badly the Act is turning out in practice for people with second families who are being blown apart by the sums of money that they are being asked to pay.

Mr. Lilley: We hope that, as a result of our changes and of the original proposals, endorsed by all parties represented in the House, people will have enough income left, after paying their child maintenance, to meet their other commitments. I am, however, keeping that matter under continual review. We must beware of going back to the discretionary system under which, in effect, the whole burden of child maintenance was transferred to the taxpayer. Indeed, we cannot go back to it: it betrayed the children, the parents caring for them and the taxpayer.

Mr. Brazier: I support my right hon. Friend's robust stance on this matter, but may I draw his attention to one anomaly that needs a fresh look—the problem of parents who are paying yet who believe that the money is not being spent on the children? At present, no avenue is open to such parents; I know of two constituency cases. Will my right hon. Friend look again at a system for dealing with such cases so that people can be sure that the money is being spent on the children?

Mr. Lilley: This is a difficult issue and the problem applied under the old system, too. Essentially, a court awards the primary responsibility of caring for a child to one parent, and the money transferred in maintenance, under a court order or under a Child Support Agency order, has then to be allocated for the child by that parent. But I take my hon. Friend's point and I will look at it further.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister realise that the growing public anger, dismay and despair are undermining confidence in the Child Support Agency system and putting at risk the very principles of responsible parenting that that system was brought into being to buttress? Does he accept that there is, in the name of justice, a need for a system of redress for people who find that maintenance demands are out of line with their ability to pay?

The Minister referred to the criticism that greeted the Australian system. Does he recall that, two or three years into the operation of that system, the Australians successfully introduced a review officer procedure to deal with some of the injustices and difficulties that we are encountering? If there is a review, when will we see its outcome?

Mr. Lilley: We discussed that issue in a full day's debate in the House a month ago. It became clear then that the hon. Gentleman's idea of a review system was very different from that practised in Australia, which is extremely limited, and which in some ways means a lesser alleviation of the burden on absent parents than is provided under our present system.

Mrs. Roe: Has my right hon. Friend seen the article by Liz Lightfoot in *The Sunday Times* yesterday, headed "Child Support Agency cleared of suicides blame"? Does he share my regret that misleading and sensational reporting by the tabloid press has distracted attention from the excellent work that the Child Support Agency is doing to ensure that maintenance is paid to thousands of mothers and their children?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing the attention of the House to that article. I read it, and I think that it would be well worth many people's time to read it. Suicide is always a terrible tragedy and a terrible shock for the family and friends left behind. But it is monstrous to try to use it as a weapon in a political campaign against an agency—which, incidentally, had the wholehearted support of the House—especially when it emerges that the evidence for some of the claims is, to say the least, flimsy.

We in the Government do not comment on particular cases; we will continue not to do so. I hope that others will be more responsible in their treatment of areas in which bereavement is involved.

10. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many assessment forms for the Child Support Agency have been completed.

Mr. Scott: In the period 5 April 1993 to 31 January 1994, the Child Support Agency issued more than 755,000 maintenance application forms to parents with care, of which more than 548,000 had been returned to the agency by 31 January 1994.

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to the Minister for that information. Does he realise that he is only just beginning to get into the water on this issue? He is barely up to his ankles. By the time the legislation really bites in 1996 he will definitely be "dans la mer jusqu'au cou" and will find it exceedingly difficult. Conservative Members are already feeling the anger and resentment of people who have been wrongly targeted. The Opposition agree that the legislation is right in principle, but it is very wrong in practice. The wrong people are being targeted and it is about time that the Government quickly withdrew from the mire into which they have led their supporters and made adjustments to the legislation before the tidal wave of resentment overcomes them completely.

Mr. Scott: That was a fair old polemical outburst from the hon. Gentleman. It is in all our interests to get this policy right. As the hon. Gentleman has said, the legislation had widespread support in principle in the House. We have already made some changes to improve the shape of the system. We are continuing to keep it under review, but I do not think that anybody can challenge the principle that those who have care of children, particularly women, should be guaranteed a regular amount of money to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend make sure that people working in the Child Support Agency are trained to deal with matters more thoroughly, more sympathetically and more speedily?

Mr. Scott: If my hon. Friend has any examples of cases in which he feels that individuals have not been so treated by the Child Support Agency, I hope that he will communicate them to me. The agency's aim is to deliver a speedy but sympathetic service to those who need its help.

Mr. Wicks: Does the Minister accept that those of us who genuinely believe in the principle of parental responsibility find it more difficult now to defend the Act against bad practice? Does he agree that among the reforms that we need are reforms to ensure that lone parents on income support actually receive some child support in terms of extra money so that the legislation truly becomes a Child Support Act and not, as it is now, a Treasury support Act?

Mr. Scott: I believe that it is right and to the benefit of, normally, the woman concerned who has care of children to receive a regular and guaranteed amount whether she remains at home looking after the children or takes on some employment, as many lone parents wish to do. People who started to earn money would have their benefits reduced. However, if they receive maintenance from a guaranteed source, manifestly they can use their earnings to enhance their living standards.

Mr. Waterson: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that about two thirds of the cases taken on this year by the Child Support Agency will be those in which no maintenance at all is being paid? Does not that fly in the face of the current misconception that the agency is going after only absent parents who have already faced their responsibilities?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend is right. One of the agency's great successes is that it has managed to obtain that maintenance for many women with care. It is all too easy for the Opposition to prate on about believing in the principle while seeking to undermine the practice of the agency every time they have the chance.

Personal Pensions

11. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total of incentive paid to those opting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme into personal pensions at the current date; and what he expects the total to be five years hence.

Mr. Hague: The cost to date of the 2 per cent. incentive paid to those opting out of SERPS into personal pensions for the period 1988-1993 is estimated at £3.1 billion. The incentive is not payable for periods after April 1993 and the total cost five years hence is therefore expected to be unchanged.

Mr. Flynn: Is not this the biggest financial deception since the South Sea Bubble—the equivalent of 100 Maxwell pension scandals? Some 3.2 million people have been bribed and conned by the Government to their financial detriment, and the Government have been aided and abetted by wickedly deceitful advertising and pressure salesmanship from the pension industry. What has the Minister to say that will help those 3.2 million future pensioners and protect others from the salesmen, the muggers in smart suits from the pension industry?

Mr. Hague: The introduction of personal pensions has given millions of people the opportunity, which they did not enjoy before, to build up a fund to add to the income available in their retirement. That is not a scandal. Personal pensions have given people greater flexibility and pension provision than ever before. If there has been mis-selling and people have taken decisions on bad advice, the Government expect the Securities and Investments Board to present acceptable, workable and effective remedies—and it is now working on them.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that if there is any deception or scandal to concern the country, it is that successive Governments have taken national insurance contributions and spent that money, but did not use it to make provision for people in their old age? Will my hon. Friend ensure that the Government give people every incentive to make their own pension provisions? Does he further agree that had that been done 40 or 50 years ago, there would be far fewer elderly poor today?

Mr. Hague: I am not sure that the national insurance fund is a scandal either, but my hon. Friend is right to say that things would be better in future if people built up a fund of their own, rather than rely on a pay-as-you-go state system. The increased diversity and provision of occupational and personal provisions is about that, and the Government will continue to encourage them.

Family Credit

12. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many working mothers in receipt of family credit have had a reduction in financial support from an absent father following the intervention of the Child Support Agency which they have been unable to replace with increased family credit.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that fewer than 1,000 families have temporarily lost income because of the combined effects of the child support changes and the fixed award rule in family credit. Those families entitled to housing benefit or council tax benefit, or who become so entitled following the reduction in maintenance, could recover up to 85 per cent. of their loss.

Mr. Rooker: I am grateful to the Minister for at least showing that the Department has counted the number of working women affected. Will he take it from me that the rigidity of family credit rules mean that working mothers such as one of my own constituents, Miss A—about whom I have written to the Minister—lose about £30 a week maintenance once the Child Support Agency becomes

involved? Miss A is unable to have her family credit readjusted so, as far as she is concerned, the agency and the Minister do not care a damn about her circumstances. It is no answer for her to be told by Ministers, "If you lose your job, you can claim income support." Miss A does not want to lose her job—she wants to maintain her income. It is wholly unfair that she loses £40 maintenance weekly and receives only £10 through the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Scott: The success of the family credit 26-week rule has been widely welcomed. I am reluctant to interfere with that rule because of the impact on child support matters. Of course there will be gainers as well as losers under the present arrangement.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that family credit is one of the Government's great successes? Can he say how many families receive that benefit and how many received assistance under the old family income supplement?

Mr. Scott: There has been a tremendous increase in the number of recipients over the old family income supplement. Some 500,000 families now benefit from the certainty that they will, for a 26-week period, receive a given amount of family credit support.

Mr. Hardy: How is it that the Minister can give my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) a detailed response when scores or hundreds of Members of Parliament have been waiting for detailed responses from the Child Support Agency since 1993? In many cases, injustice is matched with outrageous incompetence, which causes great concern and anxiety.

Mr. Scott: The agency's performance has steadily improved in recent months and it is intending to improve further in the weeks and months ahead. The job that the agency is doing is right, and it is doing that job increasingly well.

Social Security Reform

13. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures to reform social security benefits are being taken in other European countries; and what comparison he has made with his own approach to welfare reforms.

Mr. Scott: Most European countries are having to take immediate steps to contain social security costs, and balance budgets, because of rising unemployment and changes in social and demographic trends.

Mr. Rowe: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, since 1979, our social security budget has risen two thirds? Is not that in remarkable contrast to the panic action by many of our European Union partners, with which we have traditionally been unfavourably compared?

Mr. Scott: I certainly agree. As all the countries of Europe and developing countries face pressures on their social security budgets, it is right that we should plan to meet those pressures sooner than many of our neighbours have been able to do, and not be compelled to adopt the short-term, panicky measures to which some of them have been driven.

Mr. Trimble: Will the Minister consult the authorities in Italy on whether it is the practice there to pay social security to the leaders of the Mafia and the heads of Mafia organisations? If it is not, perhaps he would follow their example and so ensure that the leaders of Sinn Fein/IRA, including Mr. Gerard Adams, do not draw income support and thus become entitled to legal aid to challenge Government decisions?

Mr. Scott: I am not sure that I would like to delve too far into practices in Italy in respect of the Mafia, but I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier in these exchanges, in which he promised to draw a certain gentleman's position to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science Investment

28. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what new proposals he has to increase investment by Government and industry in British science.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): The Government's plans were set out in the White Paper "Realising our Potential".

Mr. Flynn: How will investment in science be aided by the Government's frantic review of 53 science institutions in 90 days? Does the Minister agree with Michael Atiyah, the president of the Royal Society, who said that scientific considerations had been totally disregarded in the panic to privatise and that there was no chance of any sensible outcome of the review? Will the Government's neglect of science mean that British workers become the coolies of the Atlantic rim countries?

Mr. Waldegrave: The president of the Royal Society did not quite say that. The scrutiny study of the ownership and future of Government research establishments is, like any other scrutiny study, rightly ensuring that we get the best value for money. That must be vital for science, as for anything else.

Mrs. Gillan: Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of the House on the Government's investment in British science week last week, which was so successful, and on retaining the size of the science budget? Is not the commitment being shown by the Government the very commitment to British science that we require?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. As *The Daily Telegraph* said today, the £150,000 spent on science week was well invested. On my hon. Friend's second point, Save British Science, a pressure group, agrees that I have kept my promise to protect the science budget last year and next year. We intend to ensure that there is proper investment in the science base.

Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council

29. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the budget for the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council for 1994-95; and what proportion of this is devoted to CERN.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

announced on 2 February that the allocation for the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council was £184.9 million in 1994-95. In that year, we expect the CERN contribution to be about £56 million. That is some 30 per cent. of that funding.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister agree that research in particle physics is extremely expensive for relatively low spin-off or industrial application and that, looking to the future, we really must make every effort to persuade the United States and possibly Japan to become involved in the work of CERN?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman is right. Indeed, the British Government are doing everything possible to assist the director-general of CERN to encourage as many non-member states, including those that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, to join in the funding of the large hadron collider project, which is the biggest and perhaps most important super-physics project of this decade.

Mr. Ian Bruce: What part of the budget is likely to be spent with AEA Technology and the new company that will come out of AEA Technology? Can my hon. Friend give any good news to my constituents at Winfrith about new projects that they may be able to win in their new privatised stake?

Mr. Davis: I cannot tell my hon. Friend the exact figures for any contracts about to be won by AEA Technology. One thing I will say, however, is that there is a great deal of spin-off from CERN in practical as well as theoretical science in cryogenics, magnetic science and computers. We do the most possible to ensure that British firms get the best possible slice of that action.

Open Government

30. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has recently initiated with governmental colleagues on the issue of open government.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am engaged in final discussions with colleagues on the code of practice, which will come into effect on 4 April 1994.

Mr. Wareing: In view of the Chancellor's recent statement about the correctness of the telling of lies by Ministers, will the code of practice be entitled "If You Believe This, You Will Believe Anything"? May I suggest the provision of guidelines to let people know the sort of questions that may or may not be answered correctly by Ministers—or might a reprint of the Tory party's election manifesto suffice?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall seek authority from a former Member of Parliament for Bristol, South-East. I refer to Sir Stafford Cripps, whose words on those matters were, I think, definitive.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend have a word about open government with the leader of Tameside borough council who, when asked for an inquiry into the Tameside Enterprises Ltd. scandal involving old people's homes, responded to the seven councillors concerned by suspending the lot of them?

Mr. Waldegrave: That would be rather drastic action —even for you, Madam Speaker, when you are faced with some of the problems that occasionally occur.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The ombudsman's current remit in regard to the code of practice does not include personnel matters. That is understandable in relation to individual cases, but may we have an assurance that, on freedom of information principles, it will cover information relating to any material about the political backgrounds of individuals who may be subject to appointment or approval by Ministers in Departments?

Mr. Waldegrave: I should need to examine the code closely, but I think that, if the information were collected and available, it would probably be covered.

Mr. Meacher: How can the Government pretend that they support open government when five years ago—as we now know—they allowed three men to go to prison for engaging in illegal arms deals with Iran, rather than reveal that they had fully colluded in those men's activities? Furthermore, three years later they would have allowed three Matrix Churchill executives to go to prison for engaging in arms deals with Iraq, rather than reveal that they had fully colluded in those activities as well.

As Minister with responsibility for open government, the right hon. Gentleman has said that he believes that it is right, in exceptional circumstances, to lie to Parliament. Does he also think it right—even in exceptional circumstances—to allow innocent men to go to prison to protect a Government cover-up? If he does not, how can he remain a member of a Government who clearly do?

Mr. Waldegrave: I now understand why Hugo Young said, in a recent article, that the peak of the hon. Gentleman's career occurred when he was junior Minister for garbage in the last Labour Government. I think that he would be wise at least to read the evidence about public immunity that is being presented to Scott. He will find that public immunity was, quite correctly, claimed on various occasions by Labour Ministers as well.

Science And Technology

31. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures are being adopted to promote science and technology; and if he will make a statement.

35. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives he is taking to improve public understanding of science in the year ahead.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following the resounding success of the first national science week, which ended yesterday, the Government are already in discussion with the British Association for the Advancement of Science about funding for a second week in 1995.

Mr. Dickens: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the initiative that produced national science, technology and engineering week, which was a great and unqualified successes. Does he agree that it was brain power that made ours one of the great industrial nations of the world and led to many inventions—radar, television and the jet engine, to mention but a few? Will he now build on the great success of his initiative by ensuring that he maintains a good budget for science, technology and engineering and makes this country once more a forerunner in the industrial world?

Mr. Waldegrave: I whole-heartedly agree with my hon. Friend. I believe that the week was a success: more

than 1 million people took part in events up and down the country. My hon. Friend is right, however; we need to become better at applying the ideas that we invent, so that we can earn our living by them.

Dr. Fox: I am probably the last person from whom my right hon. Friend would expect to hear the question that I am about to put to him. Will he recognise the impressive contribution that the BBC has made to national science week? Was not it a pleasant surprise to get up in the morning and see on "Breakfast News" something positive, in terms of science, about Britain, instead of Mr. Witchell's usual niggling questioning? Would not it be nice if the BBC were to do this on a regular basis?

Mr. Waldegrave: I congratulate the BBC on its contribution to science week. It has by far the most impressive science unit of all broadcasting organisations in the world. Its commitment to broadcasting on science and engineering is perhaps one example of what happens when a large arts-based organisation is run by an engineer.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why have we allowed flat screen television technology to disappear to Japan and other countries in the far east although it was invented in the United Kingdom? Why did not we, with all the commercial resources that are available to us, develop the technology? What has the right hon. Gentleman been doing about this?

Mr. Waldegrave: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's frustration. Flat screen television technology was indeed partly, although not wholly, invented here. The objectives of the Technology Foresight exercise and of all our reforms of the research councils are to bring industry and the science base closer together so that such things happen less often.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Following the publication of the report "The Rising Tide", which is aimed at promoting opportunities for women in science, engineering and technology, can the Secretary of State tell us how he intends to implement the recommendations that it contains?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is a good report. Some of its recommendations go much wider than my Department, but I hope shortly to respond positively to some of them.

Citizens Charter

32. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about how the privatised companies have responded to the citizens charter initiative.

Mr. David Davis: The privatised utilities have an enviable record in implementing the principles of the citizens charter. Some of their many achievements include a fall in real prices for domestic customers of 6 per cent. for electricity, 21 per cent. for gas and 35 per cent. for British Telecom. In addition, they have raised many quality initiatives, and they are excellent flag carriers for the citizens charter movement.

Mr. Riddick: I thank my hon. Friend for his first-rate reply. Is he aware that privatisation has not only brought prices down but led to a dramatic improvement in the quality of service to customers? For example, public telephones now work, and it takes five days to have a telephone installed in one's home, instead of the six months of the bad old nationalised days. Is not it the case that privatisation has been a massive winner, not only for the Government but for consumers?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is entirely right. He has long been an advocate of privatisation, freedom and competition in the interests of the consumer. The competition, quality and charter initiatives are all Government policies in which these are used to the full.

Mr. Enright: I thank the Chancellor for his letter of apology for telling me an untruth the last time he was at the Dispatch Box. I should like to pursue the matter, which concerns Yorkshire Water. Why on earth was Diane Scott sacked from the chair of Ofwat in Yorkshire—the only person to be sacked—with no justification whatsoever? Three people resigned from Ofwat in protest. Is not that scandalous, and does it not deserve whatever is the opposite of a citizens chartermark?

Mr. Davis: Frankly, that is a matter for the director-general of Ofwat. The activities of the regulator have worked very much in the public interest in the past decade. At this point, I cannot comment on the activities of an individual chairman.

Mr. Mans: In relation to the citizens charter initiative, will my hon. Friend take particular note of NORWEB, which has cut its electricity prices to such an extent that, despite the imposition of VAT, pensioners in my constituency of Wyre will pay less for electricity this year than they paid last year?

Mr. Davis: I am happy to commend the activities of NORWEB, which is not alone in this matter. In fact, most electricity boards have done the same and it is reflected in the fact that gas and electricity disconnections have been more than halved and are now at the lowest level ever. That is also a reflection of the charter initiative in the utilities.

Mr. Garrett: Surely the most obvious response of privatised industries has been to increase prices, boost their directors' salaries and fire their workers? Why does not the citizens charter apply to citizens who are employees?

Mr. Davis: I wonder where the hon. Gentleman has been for the past five minutes while I have been telling the House about the reduction in prices in most of the privatised utilities. He clearly has no idea what he is talking about.

Government Information

33. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make an annual report to Parliament on the operation of the code of practice on Government information due to come into operation on 4 April.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend accept that his reply will be extensively welcomed, but is he yet in a position to say what the scope of his report will be? Will it, for example, include an account of the progress of the revised security classification system announced last week

and the extent of his success in ensuring that only those documents are restricted that genuinely need to be so classified?

Mr. Waldegrave: I had thought that the essential report would be one that gave an account of requests under the code, applications to the ombudsman and so on, but I will consider with care why my hon. Friend said.

Mr. Gunnell: Does that mean that on 4 April the permanent secretaries' handbook will be placed in the Library so that hon. Members can read the advice given to the permanent secretaries on their behaviour? Can the right hon. Gentleman assure us that the whole of the permanent secretaries' handbook has been passed to Lord Justice Scott for his consideration?

Mr. Waldegrave: All the papers for which Sir Richard Scott has asked have been passed to him. The code of practice, which comes into play on 4 April, will mean a major freeing of public information. The Campaign for Freedom of Information which, of course, wants to go further, described the new role for the ombudsman as "a valuable step forward".

Research Councils

36. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress in setting up the new research councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to confirm to the House that the new research councils will come into being on 1 April this year, as planned.

Mr. Coombs: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the fact that the timetable for the reorganisation of the research councils set out in the White Paper last summer has been met. Are not congratulations also due to the staff of the research councils in my constituency who are enabling that to happen? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as a result of the reorganisation of the structure of the research councils, the opportunity is now offered for encouragement and for a boost to industrial competitiveness through the work of the research councils in helping industry?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend and join him in paying warm tribute to the staff of the research councils who have enabled the timetable to be met and especially, although not only, to the staff of the former Science and Engineering Research Council out of which two completely new research councils have been formed. I believe that the policy and intention set out in the White Paper will now be achieved for the good of the country.

Dr. Bray: Would not it be a poor start for the new research councils if, as a first step, some of their key laboratories were taken from them and grouped under a civil research agency, which would remove them from application and from the science base?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman knows very well, there is a wide range of different research establishments and research stations belonging either to Departments or to research councils. From time to time, it is right to examine them across the board to ascertain the best form of ownership for them, but nothing will be done to damage the long-term commitment of the research councils to basic science.

Mr. David Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the fact that it is often believed that there is far too much pure research in this country and not enough emphasis on getting research products into the marketplace? What is being done to enable British products to be marketed around the world?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is essential to maintain Britain's contribution to basic science, but in the area of generic and strategic research where applications are in mind, my hon. Friend is entirely right; we should bring our academic base closer to industry. That is the whole purpose of the White Paper policy.

Charterline

37. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with local authorities concerning the east midlands pilot scheme, charterline.

Mr. David Davis: Officials have had discussions with representatives from all public services in the pilot area, including local authorities.

Mr. Barnes: Is not the east midlands pilot scheme, charterline, costly and unused? It costs £400 to deal with a call, partly because only 10 calls are dealt with every four hours. Would not it be better if the resources were made available to the local authorities in the area, such as the North East Derbyshire council, where few phone calls are made to the charterline, which is 275th out of 295 councils in terms of resources per head made available by the Government? Is not it time to scrap that experiment?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman got one thing right in that little speech—it was an experiment or a pilot scheme. However, what he got wrong was that he added all the start-up costs to get the number that he reached. If I were in charge of the allocation of money to local authorities, I certainly would not give any more money to Derbyshire county council, which, at the previous count, according to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, was owed £34 million in uncollected community charge. The interest on that alone would more than pay for charterline.

European Union

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the European Union Foreign Ministers' meeting over the past weekend in Greece.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I welcome the opportunity to answer the private notice question of the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). The new presidency proposal, which I brought back last night, is for a transitional arrangement for a root-and-branch review of qualified majority voting in the 1996 intergovernmental conference. In that transitional period, the presidency and all members of the Council will be legally bound to work for an agreement on the basis of a 23 vote minority. No specified time limit is set, although the Council will be required to do all in its power to reach a decision on the basis of a 23 vote blocking minority in a reasonable time.

Perhaps I can spell that out more fully. *[Interruption.]* With pleasure—with growing pleasure. There was a constructive discussion at that informal meeting of Foreign Ministers at Ioannina at the weekend. As a result of the discussion, the presidency has circulated the compromise proposal to which I referred and a copy of that text has been placed in the Library of the House. The presidency has asked all member states to tell it by tomorrow evening whether they can accept the proposal.

I am sometimes asked whether qualified majority voting is more or less important than the enlargement of the Union to include Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway. The answer is that there are major British interests at stake in both areas. We want enlargement to go ahead, while adequately protecting our interests on qualified majority voting. The Cabinet will discuss the question at its meeting tomorrow morning. Let me explain not what the Cabinet will decide, because I cannot predict that, but the nature of the compromise which has been proposed and on which we shall have to take a decision tomorrow. The original— *[Interruption.]* I am sure that Opposition Members are following this answer with the care that it deserves.

The original presidency proposal was for a blocking minority of 27 to apply from 1 January next year and to last indefinitely, without any restriction or any qualification. After discussion, what the presidency now proposes—after, I must accept, some argument—is as follows. First, there will be a transitional arrangement between the date of accession of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden and the end of the 1996 intergovernmental conference. At that conference, there will be a root-and-branch review of the system of qualified majority voting, including not only the weighting of votes between countries, which had already been agreed at the Brussels summit last December, but —and this is new—the threshold for agreement; that is, the definition of majority and minority.

Secondly, the proposal is contained in a legally binding decision of the Council which requires the presidency, with the help of the Commission, to do all in its power to reach agreement on the basis of a 23 vote minority, taking "any initiative necessary" to achieve that objective. Thirdly, there is no time limit for that procedure, although, if all initiatives are exhausted, the Council will be able to take a decision on the basis of a blocking minority of 27.

There have been three misconceptions, which I should like to correct. First—because of the Opposition's policy, they would be well advised to listen to this next point—we are not talking here about any threat to the veto of the United Kingdom. The only threat to the veto of the United Kingdom comes from the Opposition. The most important decisions in the European Union can be taken only by unanimity. These include the powers of the Commission and the European Parliament, the amount of money available to the European Union, and foreign and security policy initiatives.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): That has always been so.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman says that that has always been so. It would not be so if the Leader of the Opposition carried out the policy that he has proclaimed. That is, as the hon. Gentleman said, and remains the position. Even where the treaty specifies qualified majority voting—for single market legislation, for example—the United Kingdom retains the right to continue discussions indefinitely when our vital national interests are at stake. That right—the so-called Luxembourg compromise—is not affected by the debate over QMV any more than is the British veto.

Secondly, the Community needs qualified majority voting to carry business forward. QMV has, for example, been important in achieving the decisions needed for the completion of the single market and pursuing reform of the common agricultural policy.

Thirdly, some have asked why the issue has been addressed only recently, and why the QMV issue could not have been left alone. I should like to answer that. The present treaty specifies the level of the qualified majority at 54 votes out of 76. If the question had been left on one side —left untackled—the qualified majority, under an unamended treaty, would have been 54 votes out of 90, which is a blocking minority of 37. I am not sure that many in the House would have supported that. That means that the question had to be tackled. *[Interruption.]* No, those are the facts.

I cannot prejudge the view that the Cabinet will take tomorrow, because there are still matters under this heading that deeply concern us, particularly in the social area. They do not concern Opposition Members, because they seem careless of the effect on jobs of some of the measures proposed. It deeply concerns us that measures have been tabled against our interests, sometimes on a questionable legal basis. That is a different issue from the one that was discussed yesterday, but it is crucial under this same heading. The presidency proposal, which I have sketched to the House, is a compromise and one which the Cabinet will need to weigh—and will weigh—carefully tomorrow.

Dr. Cunningham: The House has rarely, if ever, heard such a squalid and dubious statement from the right hon. Gentleman. Is not the reality that it was always the case that the intergovernmental conference in 1996 would review the whole question of qualified majority voting? The answer is yes. For the right hon. Gentleman to say that he has won some concession on that point in the past three weeks is, frankly, just not true.

Is not it clear to all except the anti-European bigots on the Conservative Benches that Britain's overriding priority and the best interests of our country will be served by the accession of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden to the European Union, bringing net contributions to the Union budget and assisting British taxpayers in so doing?

Does not the right hon. Gentleman recognise that it would have been difficult to devise a sequence of events that did more damage to Britain's interests and reputation in Europe than the confused and contradictory behaviour of the Government in the past three weeks? Is not it the truth that the Foreign Secretary's negotiating stance has been one of weakness and vacillation masquerading as strength? If this issue is so important, why was it that on every previous enlargement of the Community under the Government not a single voice was raised when the appropriate adjustment to qualified majority voting took place? Why is it so important now? Is not the honest answer that this is all to do with the deep and irreconcilable divisions in the Conservative party and nothing to do with Britain's best interests?

How can Conservative Members feel pleased with the performance of the Government, which has angered our existing European Union partners and infuriated our friends in Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain what his position will be if, tomorrow, the Cabinet does not accept his recommendation—whatever it is; he has not made that clear to the House? If the Cabinet throws out this dubious mish-mash and sleight of hand tomorrow, will not Britain's position in Europe be deeply damaged and will not the right hon. Gentleman's position in the Cabinet be untenable?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has been hard at work, as I have, over the weekend, but perhaps not to such good effect. He was repetitive in his adjectives, and there was not a great deal of heat and certainly no light in what he said. He was wrong and inaccurate on his first point. The difference between what was proposed by the presidency yesterday and what was there previously on the question of 1996 is that the threshold, as well as the weighting, is to be examined. That means that contrary—

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Big deal.

Mr. Hurd: It is a big deal, because it means that what we are talking about now is not a change that will last for ever, but a change to a system that will be examined root and branch, as I said, from the beginning in 1996. That is a very important point.

The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that in previous enlargements there has been, as it were, a mechanical uprating preserving the 70:30 proportion. The differences this time are, first, that there is more qualified majority voting than there used to be and, secondly, and perhaps more important, that the proportion of the peoples of Europe whose representatives could be outvoted in qualified majority voting has increased from something like 30 per cent. to 40 per cent. That means that the issue is more important than before. That is why we and other countries have felt bound to raise it. If we had not raised it —if we had followed the advice of the right hon. Gentleman—we would not have gained the two proposals that I have sketched today. I do not know whether the Cabinet will consider those to be adequate and I will certainly keep my counsel on the recommendation that I shall make to the Cabinet tomorrow, but I have tried to sketch the proposal on which the Cabinet will reach a conclusion.

The right hon. Gentleman represents a party which has very recently pledged itself, through the mouth of its leader, to a change of policy by which majority voting in the Council would be the norm. Which bits of the British veto and the unanimity rule would be sacrificed by the Labour party in order to make majority voting the norm?

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the compromise, with its emphasis on the arrangements being of a transitional nature and putting off crucial decisions until 19[illegible]—which is when many of us have argued they should be taken—is a compromise worth fighting for? Does he also agree that it will be even better if he can set before us some of the areas where there will cease to be majority voting and where the powers of the Commission and the Community will be unwound so that the QMV issue becomes less important, rather than more central, as it would under the policies of the Labour party? Does he agree that if we can set out our strategy for 1996—

Madam Speaker: Order. On occasions such as this, it is important that one or two brisk questions are put to the Minister so that the many hon. Members who wish to speak have a chance of being called.

Mr. Howell: If we can set out our strategy for 1996, we shall be greatly reassured about the way that we are going towards a looser and non-federal European Union.

Mr. Hurd: Certainly it is now clear that in 1996 we shall have a fundamental review of the relationship between the weighting of votes and the threshold—that is the new point—

Dr. John Cunningham: It is not a new point.

Mr. Hurd: No, the right hon. Gentleman is mistaken about that. It will be important to get it exactly right, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said. We also hope to see continuously, throughout the period, subsidiarity working in practice and the reduction in the load of legislation from the Community, which has already halved in the past 18 months. As the trends develop, they will counter the centralising trend that has worried so many of us in the past and is the rallying call of the Labour party.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Given that, in the run-up to the meeting in Greece, the Foreign Secretary and, in the House last week, the Prime Minister were insistent that fundamental and vital national interests were at stake, is it not utterly incomprehensible and beyond belief that a British Foreign Secretary should come to the Dispatch Box of the House of Commons and say that on a matter of vital national interest—as he defined it—he will keep his own counsel about the deal that he brokered over the weekend? Who is in charge of foreign policy in the Government? It is clearly not the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Hurd: I am puzzled by the hon. Gentleman. He grins, but he knows that he is well astray. The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), using his undoubted powers of prerogative, has tabled a private notice question, which I welcome. The hon. Member for

[Mr. Hurd]

Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and the House know perfectly well that the Cabinet will consider the matter tomorrow—*[Interruption.]* I do not know whether he will ever know one day, but we live under a system of collective decision taking. When the Cabinet has reflected on and analysed the matters, it will take a decision. I shall certainly not prejudge that decision today. I will prejudge the view of the leader of the Liberal Democrat party who wants Ministers to make decisions in public—there, at least, he is in line with the hon. Gentleman—without single national vetoes.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the sour and embittered reaction from the Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs, the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), to the proposal on the agreement for qualified majority voting that my right hon. Friend has brought back from Greece—which demonstrates that the proposition based on a 23 vote is legally binding and transitional—shows that the right hon. Gentleman and the Labour party have no interest in promoting Britain's interest in Europe?

Mr. Hurd: They do not. The Labour and the Liberal Democrat parties propose, in their European manifestos, to make concessions and give away British rights that no one is asking us to give away. I am baffled by their attitude.

We have two British objectives: enlargement and the protection of the legitimate rights of minorities. We have had to work hard and, I must say, painfully to achieve a reconciliation between them. The Cabinet will decide tomorrow whether this set of proposals is adequate for that purpose. I would add an area of concern that was not covered yesterday—concern over social policy and our belief that the proposals on that front go beyond the base of the existing treaty.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): While the roots of the problem are the transfer of powers from this country to Europe and the extension of qualified majority voting on the Council of Ministers, surely it is absurd for our continental friends to insist on a final solution now and on the adoption of a formula of 27 when they do not even know whether four, three, two or one of the applicant countries will be allowed by their people to join, following a referendum. Is not it equally absurd that they should insist on that when they know perfectly well that, under the Maastricht treaty, there will be a further intergovernmental conference in 1996?

Mr. Hurd: Precisely. We are talking about the regime during the transition and whether the voting structure should be mechanically uprated, as it has been, or there should be restrictions and qualifications on uprating, which is what we and the Spaniards have proposed.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): Without prejudicing Cabinet discussions and the decision tomorrow, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the difficult compromise—the transitional arrangements—that he brought back? In developing the single market, will not it be in British interests, from time to time, to ensure that legislation is passed after enlargement with a 70 per cent. majority, rather than requiring a 75 per cent. majority? Would he not like legislation on more freedom and competition in telecommunications throughout Europe? We would not want that to be blocked by three countries.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, but congratulations are a shade premature. I am grateful for his having grasped the essence of the problem. He is right in his second question. A great deal needs to be done on some matters—those connected with liberalisation, of which he gave an example, and with the common agricultural policy, before we can say that that makes common sense. On both those issues we need, and will continue to need, qualified majority voting.

We may find ourselves in the minority on other issues and it is those on which the dispute centres. I would home in on our concern about social issues, which is why my right hon. Friend's congratulations are a little premature.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Given that the British and Irish Governments are bound together in what they like to call an absolutely unique relationship, deriving from various treaties, agreements and declarations, does the Foreign Secretary feel that he is now entitled to the whole-hearted support of Irish Government representatives in the remaining negotiations?

Mr. Hurd: I have kept in close touch with Mr. Spring on this. A week ago I was in Dublin and we discussed those matters. Expectation is putting it a bit high, but I think that we can expect friendly understanding.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, after the successful conclusion of the GATT round, the greatest threat to the European Union comes from increased competition from the United States and the far east? It would be folly to burden industry throughout the Union with the extra costs that would be imposed by social legislation. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that France and Germany were originally in favour of a 23 blocking vote? Will he further confirm that the transitional arrangement will last until 1996, when all the voting procedures can be reviewed?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend is correct on both points. Countries are entirely entitled to take a view and then alter it. That is what has happened.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): If it is only a transitional arrangement to last two years, what on earth is all the turmoil in which the Government have got themselves involved about? As, in 1996, the Government are liable to be in a minority of 15 to one rather than 11 to one, is it not a fact that the humiliating antics that the right hon. Gentleman has been required to perform have nothing to do with European union and everything to do with Conservative disunion?

Mr. Hurd: I rather miss the right hon. Gentleman's style and that question was a little souvenir of happy times in the past. He has not grasped the essential point, because when we started on the discussion it was by no means clear that we were talking about a transitional arrangement. It is clear now. It is clear in the presidency document that was issued yesterday that not only the weighting, but the thresholds—that is the definition of majority and minority—will be up for discussion in 1996. That was not clear before and it would not have been made clear unless I had done a bit of arguing meanwhile.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that a mere examination of the issue of the blocking minority at the intergovernmental conference in 1996 would be inadequate, because what should be done is to include those arrangements in the accession treaty so that when we come to 1996 we can guarantee that we would be able to unravel any decision arrived at in the meantime?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend makes a perfectly reasonable point, but I do not think that it would have been sensible in the context of the enlargement negotiations to reopen the question and try to reach a definitive conclusion on it. That would simply have meant that there was no enlargement for many years to come. It is now agreed that the basic issue—my hon. Friend is quite right about its importance—will have to be examined, root and branch, from the beginning, in 1996. We are therefore talking about a transitional regime to allow four countries, for whose entry we have worked under different Prime Ministers for many years, to come in and take part in the negotiations and discussions in 1996.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that, under the proposals on offer, the blocking minority on qualified majority issues will be 27?

Mr. Hurd: It will be 27, constrained, as I have explained to the House, by the fact that we are talking about a transitional period and by the legal obligation that all concerned will enter into to reach an agreement that is satisfactory to the minority in cases where there is a minority of 23 to 27.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Will the Foreign Secretary be careful to emphasise to the Cabinet tomorrow that qualified majority voting is basically to do with minor issues? Will he also remind his colleagues that when the blocking minority went up from 18 to 23, there was virtually no dissent? Is not it true that his Spanish colleague yesterday regarded the compromise that my right hon. Friend has announced today as a major triumph?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, the Spaniards argued very long and hard, as we did, and the Spanish Minister came to the conclusion yesterday that the result was satisfactory. I was not in a position to do that and I am not in a position to do so today, because there are concerns that the Spaniards do not share, which are not common to them, which are of considerable concern to us.

My right hon. Friend spoke about QMV relating to minor issues, but there is no doubt that some of those issues are important. They are not, however, the really big issues such as the amount of resources available to the Community, the powers of the Commission or the Parliament or foreign policy initiatives, which, under the present system, which we intend to maintain, require unanimity. Some of the issues relating to QMV are important, however, which is why we spent so much time discussing the matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that one thing is certain—he is a well-groomed poodle at least? I suppose that the Duke of York was the same; when he was up he was up, and when he was down he was down, and when he was halfway up the hill he was neither up nor down. Thank God that the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and this Cabinet rabble were not around in 1940.

Mr. Hurd: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for his usual courtesy.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, during the past half hour or so, he has, on a number of occasions, referred to a decision that will be taken in Cabinet tomorrow? Will the House have any say on what the blocking minority might be for affairs in Europe that will affect this country?

Mr. Hurd: The House will be asked to approve legislation later to enable the Government to ratify the treaty of accession.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): As the Foreign Secretary knows better than any of his Cabinet colleagues the pros and cons of the compromise as it affects the United Kingdom, why is he not prepared to tell this elected House of Commons what recommendation he will make to the Cabinet?

Mr. Hurd: Because we operate a system of collective decision taking and responsibility.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): When my right hon. Friend meets the members of the Cabinet tomorrow, will he remind them, as he has reminded the House, that we still retain the veto, and that experience under General de Gaulle demonstrated very clearly that when he used the veto in the best interests of France he was never accused of being disloyal to Europe and France was never accused of being disloyal to Europe? It is important that, when members of the Cabinet make their decision, they remember that it is not only being at the centre of Europe that is important and that the outcome is vital to Britain's best interests.

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is why it is important to make it clear in this discussion that the veto—the unanimity rule—is not at stake, is not in jeopardy, except to the extent that the Opposition parties propose to give it away.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What, for the Foreign Secretary, is the single most important element in what he sees as the British national interest?

Mr. Hurd: We need to preserve the role of national states and national Parliaments in making a success of the European Union. It was much easier in the old days, when to be a good European one was almost automatically a centraliser; when one believed that gradually power should be moved step by step to the centre. We now know—

Dr. John Cunningham: Answer the question.

Mr. Hurd: I am answering the hon. Gentleman's thoughtful question in what I hope is a thoughtful way.

Now we have to devise a new model, because the centralising model has run aground. It obviously does not correspond to what most people in Europe want. The new model is a more difficult one to construct because it is unique. It will not be like the United States, Canada or Australia. That is what Conservative Members are trying to do—to construct and make persuasive a distinctive, positive, European model of the type of Europe with which this country can feel at home.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Does not my right hon. Friend agree that, in pursuit of that objective, his stance, in trying to secure that the larger populations do not suffer a disbenefit in relation to small populations coming into the Community in relatively large numbers, is an absolutely key factor in determining proper equality in the European democracies? Should not he be congratulated on standing on that issue?

Mr. Hurd: We have ensured, I think, that in 1996 there will be, as I have said, a root-and-branch examination of that point. I think that there is a general feeling that the present structure needs to be examined fundamentally, and that will happen.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): The Foreign Secretary stated that the Luxembourg compromise was not affected by this scheme. Most people assumed that the Luxembourg compromise had been abandoned at the signing of the Single European Act. If that is not the case and the Luxembourg compromise remains in force, why is the latest scheme necessary?

Mr. Hurd: We certainly believe that the Luxembourg compromise remains in place, but the hon. Gentleman knows that it concerns only the vital interests of the country. The importance of this provision is that it extends to all matters that could be covered by qualified majority voting.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Will my right hon. Friend clarify the meaning of the words in the declaration: "within a reasonable time and without prejudicing obligatory time limits"?
What do those words mean in practice?

Mr. Hurd: There will be an obligation on all members of the Council, whether they are in a majority or a minority in the situation envisaged, to work for an acceptable agreement within a reasonable time. I resisted efforts by some delegations to define that in terms of two or three months because it seemed to be unnecessarily restrictive. The obligation set out under paragraph c) of the proposed decision is not defined in time, so the obligation to seek a satisfactory agreement is unlimited.

On the second part of my hon. Friend's question, the words "obligatory time limits" refer to those parts of the treaty which, once the Council has taken a decision, go to the Parliament and the Parliament comes back with amendments which the Council must discuss within specified time limits. What is not time limited is the time within which the Council takes its initial view. That is the crucial point from our point of view.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Has not the Foreign Secretary set a constitutional precedent in telling the House that there will be a Cabinet meeting tomorrow on a crucial foreign policy issue, giving us the details of the agenda and saying that there will be a vote? Should he not take us a little further on such a crucial matter and say which way he will vote? As the whole argument is not about Europe but about the Tory leadership election, will he report to the House on how each of the Tory leadership contenders voted?

Mr. Hurd: Would the hon. Gentleman really have been content if I had taken the line, "No, I can't answer a PNQ today" and had given the House no indication of what had happened? Of course not. I have answered the private notice question of the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). Obviously, as I have said before several times, decisions are taken in this country collectively by the Cabinet, and the Cabinet is accountable to the House.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend giving us this assurance: that by this compromise, and provided that all four of those countries join in the next year or so, Britain will concede no power or control over any item of European legislation, which it does not already have, between now and the conference in 1996?

Mr. Hurd: There is no proposal to extend the range of qualified majority voting. I cannot be certain what proposals coming forward in the next two or three years will fall within the QMV. If—and it is still an "if"—this compromise were thought to be acceptable, I would know that we were talking about a transitional period and that we had a legally binding protection. It is for the Cabinet to decide, on our behalf, whether that is thought to be adequate. Those were the terms of my remit, so I cannot give my hon. and learned Friend an assurance covering all kinds of legislation that there may be in the future.

The volume of legislation is falling rather fast. We are gradually and increasingly applying subsidiarity and we are confident that, in many of those matters, including the areas that I have outlined, we shall be in the majority and not the minority.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): As the negotiations on enlargement have been going on for many months and as the Government agreed to the accession of the four countries, when did the Foreign Secretary suddenly discover that the Prime Minister had signed away such vital British interests as to cause great offence to those countries, which we have been trying to get into the European Union?

Mr. Hurd: I am not following the hon. Member. We have been taking this stance consistently since the enlargement negotiations began.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that if a vital interest of the United Kingdom should arise in the interim period, he will use what is known as the Luxembourg compromise to safeguard our interests? Bearing in mind the fact that my right hon. Friend wants a root-and-branch review by 1996, would it not be a good idea to argue that the review should be brought forward, and discussed now?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend the first assurance that he seeks. We believe, as I have already made clear, that the Luxembourg compromise continues and is an important safeguard for member states.

To answer my hon. Friend's second question, we have just had a long and, I would say, bruising discussion across Europe about the treaty of Maastricht. It has just entered into force, with its different pillars, its intergovernmental co-operation and its powers for the Community. We thought—indeed, everybody agreed—that it would not be sensible at this stage to try to define for ever the relationship between votes and population. We therefore did not want to hold up the enlargement to include Finland, Austria, Norway and Sweden while that was done; but it is now clear that it has to be done, and it has to be tackled in 1996.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is not the root of the problem the fact that the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have consistently tried to be pretend that we can be a community of nation states while the treaties, especially the last one, expressly forbid that? Why does the Foreign Secretary keep on talking about the Luxembourg compromise when he knows it is not in the treaty? Surely the Community is authoritarian, centralist and barely democratic—and more people in the country and in the Conservative party are beginning to learn that. It is when the Government try to do something about it that they run into trouble.

Mr. Hurd: I do not want to make this point again, but I have to when such criticism is levelled at me. The hon. Gentleman must sort this out with his own Front-Bench spokesmen. If a Labour Government were elected, this sort of discussion would become wholly secondary to the great, extra concessions, out of the unanimity rule, which the Labour party proposes.

The hon. Gentleman and I have crossed swords on the issue over and over again. He should look at what is happening—look at the sort of proposal that the Home Secretary made last week on fraud, not intergovernmentally but under the treaty. He should look at how we are tackling questions such as South Africa, the middle east and Bosnia. He will see that it is not right to say that these matters are being sucked into a centralising machine. On the contrary, for the first time they are being tackled under the new treaty, on the basis of co-operation between Governments.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is it not typically honest, courageous and responsible of my right hon. Friend to have brought this difficult matter to the forefront of the negotiations in Brussels before the four countries that have applied to join have joined? Has he not, in his negotiations, enhanced Britain's and every country's powers to safeguard itself against unwelcome decisions taken under qualified majority voting?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's epithets. I find that I lurch from being the subject of excessive praise to being the subject of excessive criticism—I am in the middle of such a lurch now.

Once my hon. Friend got his compliments, for which I am grateful, out of the way, his underlying point was right. The issue could not be left entirely on one side in the enlargement negotiations, because the result would have been a blocking minority of 37; it therefore had to be tackled. On the other hand, we did not feel—nobody felt—that this was the occasion to try to tackle it outright, because that would have meant, and will mean eventually, a discussion lasting a long time. But the issue is now quite clearly and fundamentally on the agenda for 1996.

Dr. John Cunningham: Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that he looks increasingly ridiculous presenting a climbdown as a success? Do not he and his right hon. Friends recall that the last time there was an extension of qualified majority voting in Europe the Bill in question was guillotined through the House by him and his right hon. Friends? The Single European Act was guillotined, and he and all his right hon. Friends voted for that extension of QMV without a murmur.

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that in December of last year he and the Prime Minister signed a declaration in Brussels, as follows:

> "As well as examining the legislative role of the European Parliament and the other matters envisaged in the Treaty of European Union, the intergovernmental conference to be convened in 1996 will consider the questions relating to the number of members of the Commission and the weighting of the votes of the Member States in the Council. It will also consider any measures deemed necessary to facilitate the work of the institutions and guarantee their effective operation."

The right hon. Gentleman agreed to that statement in December last year. Why does he pretend to the House that he is saying something different and new now? Will he also make clear that the question of Britain's so-called veto, the need for unanimity on those decisions that require it is not, and has never been, in question during the discussions? Will he withdraw the false accusation that the Labour party has agreed to give up its power of veto in those matters? It is completely dishonest for the right hon. Gentleman to say that. Is not it also clear—*[Interruption.]*—as this fiasco behind him continues, that the Conservative party—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman knows that it is at my discretion whether he has a couple of minutes for a winding-up speech. I hope that he will now use those two minutes briskly.

Dr. Cunningham: If Conservative Members stop shouting, I will be able to do that.

Is not it clear that the divisions in the Conservative party and the Cabinet divide not only the Tory Government but Britain from Europe and from our best interests in the European Union?

Mr. Hurd: Thanks in part to the right hon. Gentleman, as sometimes happens in the House, an occasion that is certainly important and difficult and might have been more difficult has become rather a pleasure. The right hon. Gentleman is so busy polishing his questions that he does not listen to the answers that they receive. He correctly quotes last December's declaration in Brussels, but was not listening to the answer that I gave to an identical question by one of his hon. Friends: the proposal coming back from the presidency also refers to the crucial question of the threshold—the definition of the majority and minority. If, even on the second time, the right hon. Gentleman cannot understand the importance of that addition, he should go back to his homework. The right hon. Gentleman's leader signed a paper on 6 November which stated:

> "For the first time we are fighting the European elections as the party of European Socialists . . . We want . . . majority voting within the Council to be the norm."

What on earth does that mean if it does not mean giving up unanimity?

Points of Order

4.17 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It relates to guidelines which have been issued by the Charity Commissioners and which make two disturbing points.

The first is that charities must not conduct publicity campaigns indicating how individual Members of Parliament or parties have voted on a particular issue as a means of applying public pressure on those Members or on the Government. The second is that charities must not distribute pro-forma letters for people to sign and send to Members or Ministers.

It seems intolerable that a public body that is funded by the taxpayer should seek to limit the right of members of the public, including taxpayers, to know how Members of Parliament vote, not least on the distribution of moneys that have been contributed by taxpayers. Secondly, it must be equally worrying that a public body funded by the taxpayer is seeking to restrict the democratic right of taxpayers and other members of the public to influence Members of Parliament.

The guidelines have been issued with immediate effect and the Charity Commissioners, rather unusually I understand, are asking for comments after the guidelines have been implemented. I ask you, Madam Speaker, to reflect on those guidelines and the points that I made, with a view to making a statement on whether you deprecate the implications of the guidelines for the general public and a large number of charitable organisations.

Madam Speaker: As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman is complaining about legal advice given to charities by the Charity Commissioners. That matter is not for me, and it would be most unwise for me to comment from the Chair. The hon. Gentleman must find another way to pursue the issue.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I refer to a matter that may be of precedence, in relation to powers and privileges of the House. This morning, the Secretary of State for the Environment opened a new railway in the docklands that passes through my constituency. That event was well known and I believe that the right hon. Gentleman was well received.

However, the Secretary of State proceeded to a second event relating to the inauguration of a housing project ultimately designed to accommodate 5,000 people in 1,500 dwellings. It is known as an urban village, and is controversial. Unfortunately, the mayor of the borough was not informed of, or invited to, the inauguration of that large scheme, and neither was the Member of Parliament concerned.

I hope and expect that no such action by the Executive in relation to the people of this country represented in the House will recur, with such short notice or no notice at all being given.

Madam Speaker: It is a convention of the House that all Members of Parliament, including Ministers, inform other hon. Members when they are to attend a public function in a constituency other than their own. As it happens, my office always notifies a right hon. or hon. Member if I am to attend a function in his or her constituency. It is incumbent on Ministers to do likewise.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You heard the Foreign Secretary say that the Cabinet will deal with the European Union voting issue tomorrow morning and that the result will be communicated to the Council of Ministers.

The House will rise for the recess on Thursday, and Wednesday will be the last day to consider matters not related to Adjournment debates. Is it not essential that a statement on the Cabinet's decision is made to the House, not merely referred to during Prime Minister's Question Time?

If it was right and proper—and it was—for the House to hear from the Foreign Secretary, how much more important it is that the House should know of the Cabinet's decision. Apart from anything else, it will be communicated immediately to the media, so why not to the House? I trust that the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary will make a statement tomorrow.

Madam Speaker: I make it clear that it was I who granted today's private notice question and that the Foreign Secretary appeared at the Dispatch Box in response to that. As the hon. Gentleman must know, I have no authority to summon a Minister to the Dispatch Box to make a statement. I see that there is a collection of senior Ministers on the Treasury Bench, and no doubt they have noted the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC ORDER BILL [*MONEY*] (No. 2)

Queen's recommendation having been signified—
Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State—

(a) for making payments in connection with measures intended to prevent crime or reduce the fear of crime;

(b) for defraying or contributing to the costs incurred by local authorities in providing, or arranging for the provision of, accommodation for restricting the liberty of children; and

(c) for making payments in respect of the costs incurred by local authorities or probation committees in providing supervision for offenders subject to secure training orders.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill

As amended (in Committee and in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 73

DISPLAYING, PUBLISHING, SELLING OR DISTRIBUTING ETC. OBSCENE MATERIAL IN SCOTLAND: SENTENCE OF IMPRISONMENT

'. In section 51(3) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (which makes persons convicted in summary proceedings in Scotland of certain offences relating to obscene material liable, among other penalties, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 3 months and persons convicted there on indictment of such offences liable, among other penalties, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 2 years), for the words "3 months" there shall be substituted the words "6 months" and for the words "two years" there shall be substituted the words "3 years".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

In Committee, hon. Members on both sides—including the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who for many years has pursued the interests of safeguarding children—rightly expressed the view that the maximum penalties for certain offences of obscenity and indecency are inadequate. The Scottish Office has sympathy with that view and neither it nor the Government opposed an amendment to double to six months the maximum duration of the new custodial penalty for possession of child pornography.

Unfortunately, whether by accident or design, that amendment neglected to address the position in Scotland, with the result that the Bill introduces a three-month custodial penalty in Scotland and a six-month custodial penalty south of the border. The first reason for the new clause is that the Government intend to remove that discrepancy with an appropriate amendment to be debated later on Report. New clause 73 is, to a limited extent, consequential on that amendment relating to possession.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Minister confirm that all such cases —let us hope that there are very few—will be heard in a sheriff court?

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: That is a probability. I shall have to check up on that point. I will write to the hon. Member when I have done so.

The new clause is consequential because, in our view, it would be wrong to leave the maximum summary penalty for trading in obscene material at three months' imprisonment under section 51 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, when we are introducing a maximum summary penalty for simple possession of child pornography of six months' imprisonment under section 52A of that Act. So new clause 73 raises the maximum summary penalty for an offence under section 51 from three months' to six months' imprisonment. At the same time, it raises the maximum penalty on conviction on indictment from two to three years' imprisonment. Whether a case is in the sheriff court or a higher court will depend on the severity of the circumstances. Were the law officers to consider that a case merited an indictment, of course it would go to a higher court.

The new penalties are in line with the penalties that already exist in England and Wales for similar offences under the Obscene Publications Act 1959. The equalisation of penalties for such offences north and south of the border is, in our view, sensible. It provides the second reason for new clause 73. We do not want to provide any incentive to set up this sort of business north of the border. Such an incentive might be provided if Scotland continued to have lower penalties than England and Wales.

The third reason for the new clause rests simply on its merits. We believe that the trade in obscene material is loathsome. I know that that view is shared by Opposition Members and the House as a whole. Children must not be exploited. They must be suitably protected in the interests of the well-being of our country. We believe that the new penalties will signal Parliament's revulsion, deter some who might otherwise be tempted to engage in that trade, and enable the courts in Scotland to deal appropriately with the worst offenders. So I strongly commend the new clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 74

COST OF SECURE ACCOMMODATION

'. After section 61 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 there shall be inserted the following section—"Cost of secure accommodation. 61A.—(1) The Secretary of State may, in relation to any costs incurred by a local authority in discharging their duty under section 61(1) above—

(a) defray such costs to such extent as he considers appropriate in any particular case;

(b) defray a proportion to be determined by him from time to time of such costs; and

(c) defray or contribute to such costs in accordance with a tariff to be determined by him from time to time.

(2) The Secretary of State may require any person providing secure accommodation to transmit to him, at such times and in such form as he may direct, such particulars as he may require with respect to any costs to which this section applies.

(3) Payments under this section shall be made out of money provided by Parliament.".'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this it will be convenient to take the following:

Amendment (a), in line 3, leave out 'may' and insert 'shall'.

Amendment (b), in line 6, leave out

'such costs to such extent as he considers appropriate'

and insert 'all reasonable costs'.

Amendment (c), leave out lines 8 to 11. Government new clause 70 and Government amendments Nos. 53, 54, 52 and 57.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I hope that new clause 74 will command considerable support on both sides of the House. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to the proper financing of our policies. We are concerned that the normal methods of

[Mr. David Maclean]

local government finance are not necessarily the best way of distributing resources required to fund the revenue costs of local authority secure accommodation for remands.

The local authority associations have pointed out that the revenue support grant mechanism is not necessarily sensitive enough to reflect the differences between local authorities in terms of the potential numbers of young people who may in future be remanded to secure accommodation. Some local authorities might have large numbers of young people remanded in secure accommodation and others might have none. As hon. Members know, the costs of secure accommodation are high; while the Government will be taking steps to contain them, it is important that the system of financing is as effective as possible.

The purpose of new clause 74 is to give central Government a power to reimburse costs incurred by local authorities in accommodating juveniles subject to court-ordered secure remands. The Government have not yet determined how the powers will be used in practice. A decision will be made after full consultation with the local authority associations. The Government have felt it important to use this opportunity to take the necessary powers. We expect the annual cost to be about £16 million per annum.

Therefore, new clause 74 is drafted in a way which gives central Government a degree of flexibility. There may be arguments in favour of meeting the full costs or the Government may consider it more appropriate to make a contribution. A tariff may be needed to reflect different costs in different parts of the country. As I have said, we will discuss the use of the powers in detail with the local authority associations.

As hon. Members know, the Government have embarked upon a substantial expansion of the secure accommodation estate in order not only to provide sufficient places for 15 and 16-year-old boys on remand who are currently sent to prison but to accommodate 12 to 14-year-olds who will be subject to secure remands. In all, we currently intend to create an additional 170 places. The Department of Health will shortly publish a plan explaining how the places will be supplied.

I expect the new clause to be welcomed both by potential purchasers and by potential providers of additional places, as it creates a framework in which revenue costs can be provided centrally. It also creates a framework in which the mechanism for providing payments can be amended in the light of experience gained in the operation of the system—hence the need for maximum flexibility.

4.30 pm

I will try to anticipate what Opposition Members will say and comment briefly on their amendments to the new clause. Those amendments seek to restrict the degree of flexibility available to the Government in defraying the costs incurred by local authorities in complying with court-ordered remands of 12 to 16-year-olds to local authority accommodation with a security requirement. Amendment (a) would remove the Secretary of State's discretion to defray those costs, and replace it with a duty to do so. Amendment (b) would require the Secretary of State to defray all reasonable costs, instead of "costs to such extent as he considers appropriate". Amendment (c) would remove the provision for the costs to be defrayed on the basis—determined by the Secretary of State from time to time—of either a fixed proportion of the costs or a tariff.

I recognise the concern that lies behind the amendments—concern that local authorities should not be put under undue financial strain in complying with court-ordered secure remands of 12 to 16-year-olds to local authority accommodation with a security requirement. The Government are sympathetic to the need, in the case of such remands, for direct central revenue support by fee payment to individual authorities: that is why we tabled new clause 74.

The Government will discuss in detail with local authority associations the use of the powers provided in new clause 74 before they come into operation. There may be arguments in favour of meeting the full costs, or the Government may consider it more appropriate to make a contribution. As I have said, a tariff may be needed to reflect different costs in different parts of the country. What is certain is that there can be no advantage in seeking to restrict the scope of our discussions with local authorities in the way sought by the Opposition amendments, and I urge the House not to support them.

Amendment No. 52 is a technical measure to extend the scope of the expenses that could be provided for under the Bill to include those required by the Secretary of State to make payments under contracts entered into for the purpose of placing youngsters subject to secure training orders in accommodation other than secure training centres—that will be in section 2—or of the supervision by a designated person of youngsters under secure training orders after their release.

Amendment No. 53 inserts a new subsection (5A), which makes express provision for the reimbursement by the Secretary of State of the expenses of the probation committee—or, as the case may be, the local authority—in meeting its obligation to supervise an offender in accordance with clause 3 and any rules made under that clause. Amendment No. 54 adds a new subsection providing for payments to be defrayed out of money provided by Parliament. Amendment No. 57 makes an alteration to schedule 10, which amends the Probation Service Act 1993, to exclude the expenses of the probation committee incurred under clause 3 from the definition of qualifying expenses in section 17(2) of that Act. That prevents the Home Office from, in effect, paying for the supervision of offenders twice. I hope that the House will welcome the amendments as sensible measures to allow the probation service and local authorities to be paid directly by the Secretary of State.

New clause 79 is important. It would permit local authorities to contract out the management of secure accommodation in local authority and local authority controlled community homes. If he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health will respond to any substantive points that hon. Members may raise about the new clause.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I welcome the Minister's statement that he intends to provide a commitment to proper financing of the Government's policies. That makes him almost unique among Ministers. I hope that he will develop the principle

that he has enunciated when we debate crime prevention, drugs policy and many of the other important issues that the Opposition will wish to raise.

I should like to express some concern on my own behalf and on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on these issues, in the context of health and social services. While welcoming some elements of the provisions that the Minister has introduced, we are concerned about the lateness of their introduction. It would have been beneficial if the discussions to which the Minister referred had taken place well in advance. That would have enabled the nature of the provisions to be worked out better.

The Minister is anxious to gain flexibility for central Government. That sounds to me like an attempt to secure the ability to stay within cost limits. The hon. Gentleman said that there would be detailed discussion of the means of reimbursement. What we want, and what our amendments seek to achieve, is that the Minister should honour his commitment to the provision of proper financing of Government policies and that he should be constrained to do so fairly.

The Minister says that the Government have embarked on an expansion of secure accommodation, but there has been no proper consultation about what is needed or of what would be effective and the Government have taken a long time to get around to this action. The cost of secure accommodation is certainly a problem for local authorities —it may be more than £1,700 a week and even sometimes over £2,000—but availability is also a problem, as illustrated by the scandalous case reported in the press and other media over the weekend. This is a day-to-day problem for those dealing with the most difficult youngsters.

I was a member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs which dealt with the criminal justice legislation of 1991. In February that year the Committee was promised by the then Minister that secure places would be made available for the purpose of ending the scandal of youngsters aged 16 and 17 being held in adult accommodation. That promise has not yet been fulfilled, lack of cash being the main problem. My own local authority experienced a lack of capital from the Welsh Office for this purpose.

The Select Committee, in its report of last July on juvenile offenders, said:

> "While capital costs and part of the cost of commissioning of the building are met by central Government, revenue funding is met by local authorities, with authorities which do not have secure accommodation having to buy places from those who do . . . this puts a particularly heavy burden on local authorities in the start-up phase of a new unit, while the high cost of accommodation makes authorities very wary of planning secure accommodation unless they can ensure it will be filled."

At the conclusion of its comments the Committee said:

> "We do not believe that it is appropriate for local authorities to bear the security costs of accommodating youngsters committed by the courts. We recommend that the costs of holding juveniles committed by the courts to local authority accommodation should be met from central funds."

The Committee did not say that those costs should be partly met from central funds. While I welcome the action that the Minister has taken, I have to say that it is only a partial step. The new clause is a step in the right direction, but we need a commitment that the Minister will seriously consider the possibility of meeting all costs.

Government new clause 79 appears to be designed to extend privatisation of parts of homes and contractorisation of whole and of parts of places in which young people are held. We argued in Committee that clause 19 is wrong in principle and that it is not appropriate for the private sector to run secure accommodation for this most difficult group of children, who require the highest degree of expertise.

In view of the very important debates ahead of us, we do not wish to prolong this one. I therefore ask the Minister to provide in detail the information that is available. Perhaps we might be given something like notes on clauses of the kind that would have been supplied had these provisions been included at an earlier stage. Hon. Members need to be fully informed about what the Government are seeking to do. Members of another place should also be informed of the full import of the Government's intentions so that they may debate the matter properly.

It would be nice if the Government would indicate acceptance of our amendments, as they would help to meet the high principles expressed in the first sentence of the Minister's introductory speech. I do not suppose that that will happen, but I hope that the Government will proceed further down this path.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I wish to declare an interest because, as the House knows, I am a parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales.

New clause 74 is important because it deals with the provision of secure accommodation. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) referred to the discussions which have taken place over the past two years or so on the need to provide additional secure accommodation, and I confirm what he said. About two years ago, I led a deputation from the Police Federation to see the then Minister of State for Health on this very matter. The then Minister, now the Secretary of State for Health, was sympathetic to what we had to say but it was clear to me that she was considering the need to provide secure places mainly as an alternative to sending juveniles to prison. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth pointed out, we have not made the progress that we should have liked to make in providing the places that are so desperately needed.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, for what he said today about the Government's commitment to funding part of the substantial cost of providing secure accommodation. It is not right to leave it all to local authorities, and it is absolutely right that the Government should bear a share of what must be a fairly substantial expenditure item.

Additional secure accommodation is desperately needed. The thrust of the Bill is to ensure that it is provided to deal with juveniles, but I believe that the only way we shall get it is if local authorities across the country know that they can provide it in partnership with the Government. These are hard times for local authorities, for all the reasons with which we are familiar. I should like local authorities and the Government to work in partnership to fund and provide the accommodation as quickly as possible. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating and, knowing my hon. Friend the Minister as I do, I am sure that he will use his considerable energy to ensure that the programme is driven through. I therefore support the new clause.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I shall certainly take on board the points made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). Financing is something that the Government will be discussing with local authorities to ascertain how the best progress can be made.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth asked a number of specific questions about new clause 79. As the House and he will be aware, the Bill already incorporates powers of de-monopolisation of the provision of secure residential children's homes. Those powers were introduced after full consultation with local government and the voluntary and private sectors. The new clause is simply a logical extension of that provision and will enable local authorities, if they so wish, to consider contracting out the management of secure accommodation in local authority community homes and with the consent of the board of managers of local authority controlled community homes. They would, if they so wish—I stress the discretionary nature of the new clause—be able to bring to bear the philosophy and experience of the voluntary sector, or the particular skills of the private sector, on the management of these homes; the range of options would thus be extended in the search by local authorities for the most efficient and effective ways of providing the services.

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, said, we are currently discussing with local authorities the need to provide an additional 170 places nation wide to enable the Government to meet their commitment under the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to abolish penal remand for 15 and 16-year-old boys and to meet additional accommodation requirements arising from the provisions of this Bill. The discussions are going well, and we welcome the local authorities' co-operation and willingness to help to meet the Government's target. I stress that there is nothing in the new clause to frustrate the efforts of local authorities to provide additional accommodation. The choice of whether existing and new accommodation should be managed directly by local authorities or other contractors will of course be a matter entirely for the local authorities.

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): I am interested to hear what the Minister said about negotiations with local authorities going well, but may I press him on what he means? In Stockport, my local authority last year had to pay a considerable amount of money for secure accommodation for which no provision was made in the standard spending assessment. I should not have thought that local authorities would believe that things were going well unless they had received a substantive commitment from the Government about the funding of secure training orders.

Mr. Bowis: What I said is what I meant. We have a commitment to create an additional 170 places nation wide; we are in discussion with local authorities in various parts of the country and our discussions are going well. I am not able to announce today the conclusion of those discussions, but I expect the hon. Lady to be pleased with us when we are able to do so.

4.45 pm

Mr. Michael: The Minister has responded positively to some of the points that I made, but will he give an undertaking to put in writing the information that I requested? In view of the three-year delay since the promise was made to provide secure places, will he give an undertaking to set a time scale for concluding discucsions with local authorities?

Mr. Bowis: We are not in the business of holding guns to heads but I can genuinely tell the hon. Gentleman that he should just wait and see. Good progress is being made with local authorities and I think that he will be pleased when we are able to make our announcement. In response to his request for notes on clauses or briefing, I am happy to give a commitment that they will be made available.

I can also give two further assurances. First, there is nothing in our proposals to weaken the existing safeguards covering the inspection and approval of secure accommodation. Secondly, local authorities will continue to be responsible for decisions about the placement of children in their care and they will have to have proper regard for the rights and welfare of those young people.

I also make it clear that it is the Government's policy intention at some future date to enable local authorities —again, if they so wish—to contract out the management of non-secure accommodation in local authority community homes.

The new clause is a useful option for local authorities and brings with it all the safeguards that the hon. Gentleman and I seek. Homes will continue to be subject to the the regulations relating to children's homes, with all that that implies for adequate staffing levels, the provision of suitable accommodation for each child, adequate facilities, food and clothing and record keeping. The secure accommodation regulations on procedural safeguards will also apply. Social services inspections will apply, as will the Secretary of State's power to order the closure of a home that had unsuitable premises or where the conduct was in breach of the children's homes regulations. The safeguards will continue as of now. It is a discretion—and only a discretion—that we offer as a half-way house to de-monopolisation under clause 19. I am confident that the House will support it.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second Time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 75

POWER TO APPLY SECTIONS 29 TO 33 TO ARMED FORCES

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may by order direct that any provision of sections 29 to 33 of this Act shall apply, subject to such modifications as he may specify, to any proceedings to which this section applies.

(2) This section applies—

(a) to proceedings whereby a charge is dealt with summarily under Part II of the Army Act 1955;

(b) to proceedings whereby a charge is dealt with summarily under Part II of the Air Force Act 1955;

(c) to proceedings whereby a charge is summarily tried under Part II of the Naval Discipline Act 1957;

(d) to proceedings before a court martial constituted under the Army Act 1955;

(e) to proceedings before a court martial constituted under the Air Force Act 1955;

(f) to proceedings before a court martial constituted under the Naval Discipline Act 1957;

(g) to proceedings before a disciplinary court constituted under section 50 of the Naval Discipline Act 1957;

(h) to proceedings before the Courts-Martial Appeal Court;
(i) to proceedings before a Standing Civilian Court;
and it applies wherever the proceedings take place.
(3) An order under this section shall be made by statutory instrument and shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Maclean: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Ministry of Defence wishes the new rules in criminal proceedings concerning inferences to be drawn from silence in clauses 29 to 33 to apply as closely as possible to disciplinary proceedings under the service discipline Acts in order to avoid a disparity between civilian and service law. The new clause gives the Secretary of State power to apply those rules to service disciplinary proceedings and to specify whatever modifications he deems appropriate. Such modifications will be required because of the ways in which service disciplinary proceedings differ from those in the civilian courts. Those investigating offences and hearing proceedings under the service discipline Acts follow different procedures from their civilian counterparts and the application of the provisions will need to reflect that.

The disciplinary proceedings to which the clauses may be applied are summary proceedings and courts martial, constituted in accordance with the service discipline Acts: the Army Act 1955, the Air Force Act 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957. Those proceedings may take place anywhere in the world where the armed forces are situated and the rules will apply wherever they take place.

I commend the clause to the House as providing a means to ensure that service personnel are treated on a similar basis to civilians in regard to the effects of clauses 29 to 33, whether they are dealt with under service law or under the civilian criminal law.

Mr. Michael: Clearly, it would be wrong for there to be major disparities between the criminal law and the law applying to the armed forces. Having said that, it is also clear that there are major and grave deficiencies in clauses 29 to 33, which we shall highlight when we debate the clauses. It seems that it is not helpful or appropriate to pre-empt that debate. We shall seek to amend clauses 29 to 33 in due course and to delete parts of those provisions. If we are successful in those endeavours, our improvement of the Bill will also apply to new clause 75. That makes our position clear.

Having made clear our distaste for much of what is in clauses 29 to 33, I do not intend to detain the House to debate those points this afternoon.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I am surprised that the Minister should have brought forward such a measure at this stage in the proceedings without any prior discussion. I am unhappy about a measure which is highly controversial in civil proceedings and which runs against the recommendations of the Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Runciman, being imported on the say-so of the Ministry of Defence into courts martials, which operate under different rules. The rules about the inferences to be drawn from silence are controversial enough in the civilian courts and, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) has said, we shall come to that issue in due course.

It should not be thought that the new proposal is necessarily appropriate—even if clauses 29 to 33 go through—in the different circumstances of disciplinary proceedings before a court martial. So far as I am aware, questions of convincing juries do not arise in such circumstances and, if there is any case for modifying the right to silence, it is because of the effect that it may have on the attitude of juries. I do not accept that that has sufficient weight to change the long-standing law of the country and, for courts martial, no such comparable consideration would seem to arise.

Dr. Godman: I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said, but I wish to ask the Minister a couple of questions. Following the comments of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), the proposal is at best controversial and at a worst dodgy. The new clause seeks to bring clauses 29 to 33 into Scottish law by way of a military back door. It would appear that much of United Kingdom military law slavishly follows English criminal law and criminal procedures. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I see that there is some agreement.

Military law in the United Kingdom need not inevitably be completely compliant with one jurisdictional system, since there are marked differences between military law, Scottish criminal law and English criminal law. May I quote from Professor D. M. Walker's book, with which the Minister should be familiar, as he has some sort of degree in Scots law. In the book "The Scottish Legal System", published in 1992, Professor Walker said:

"While it is no doubt desirable to have a common code of service law for all personnel, it is unfortunate that the code adopted is based entirely on English criminal law, which may cause difficulties for Scottish counsel or solicitors defending and may give rise to problems of great difficulty on appeal, since Scottish judges do not profess to know English criminal law."

I suspect that officials and the Minister have not thought about the case of an appeal made by a Scottish soldier who is convicted by a court martial sitting in Edinburgh castle. Due to the divergences between the two systems, such a soldier would have a powerful case to argue against the inadequacy and, I would say, the rottenness of that law.

Scottish soldiers serving, for example, with a Scottish regiment in Scotland would be subjected to an entirely different regime than is the case for their pals in civvy street. Since the Minister said in Committee that the Government have no intention of taking away from the Scottish legal system the right to silence, what we have is bad law. It is bad law to treat military law as the merest appendage of English criminal law. It is utterly illogical in relation to Scottish personnel who are serving in Scotland and those, for example, serving with a Scottish regiment overseas. If the proposal were to go through, what would happen to a Scottish service man or woman who seeks to appeal against the decision of a court martial, given that a court martial is entirely different from a jury trial at the sheriff court or in the High Court? I remind the Minister that Professor Walker said:

"The Courts-Martial (Appeals) Act of 1951 (now the Courts-Martial (Appeals) Act 1968) constituted a Courts-Martial Appeal Court consisting in Scotland of such Lords Commissioners of Justiciary as the Lord Justice-General may nominate, being uneven in number and not less than three."

Incidentally, Professor Walker is the emeritus professor of law at Glasgow university. He goes on to say:

"A person convicted by court-martial in any of the services may, with the leave of the Appeal Court, and subject to certain conditions, appeal against his conviction."

[Dr. Godman]

Does that mean that, if the measure goes through, the Scottish soldier of whom I spoke would have to appeal to the English Court of Appeal? It is as absurd as that.

Mr. Maclennan: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, who is making a number of good points, but does he find it as objectionable as I do that no Scottish Minister is present to listen to the arguments? In Committee, there were no Scottish Ministers present, despite the fact that major parts of the Scottish criminal law were being amended. Is not that worse than discourtesy? Is not it an abuse?

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. With him, as the other Scots Member of the Committee, I have complained loud and long over the Government's failure to put a Scottish Office Minister on the Front Bench. There was a Scottish Office Minister present—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)—who moved new clause 73 and disappeared in a cloud of dust. It is a disgrace, as I have said all along. Those measures should not be introduced in Scotland by means of this useless, clumsy piece of legislation.

It is important to consider the right of a soldier, a sailor or an airman to appeal when he or she has been convicted of a military offence at a court martial set up, for example, in Edinburgh or Inverness. Professor Walker says:

"The practice at the High Court of Justiciary sitting as Court of Criminal Appeal is followed"—

in such a case—

"and the powers of the court are similar. The court will allow an appeal if it thinks that the finding of the court-martial under all the circumstances of the case is unsafe or unsatisfactory, or involves a wrong decision on a point of law, or that there was a material irregularity in the course of the trial, but the court may dismiss an appeal on a technical point if it considers that in the circumstances no miscarriage of justice has occurred."

Will that Scottish soldier have to appeal to an English Court of Appeal, given that the military law under which he is being tried at the court martial in Edinburgh is based on English law, or will such an appeal, as is the case now, be heard by members of the High Court of Justiciary? By that one example, we can show the illogicality of the proposal and its irredeemable unfairness to service personnel serving in Scotland, where we have an entirely different legal system.

Will the matter be pushed to one side, like everything else, by the odd-job lot in government? I fear that that may be the case. I should like to hear an answer from the Minister about a convicted service man's appeal rights under the new clause.

5 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I apologise for intervening in this part of the debate as I did not hear the opening speeches. I do so to react to what I did hear, especially the comments of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). He said that clauses 29 to 33 were being introduced primarily with regard to jury trials. I disagree because the truth is quite the reverse. As everyone knows, juries have always taken silence into account. We need clauses 29 to 33 precisely to ensure that non-jury courts take silence into account. That is part of the reason why similar provisions were introduced in Northern Ireland almost six years ago. We knew that the judges in single-judge courts were not taking into account matters that common sense said that they should. The clauses are especially useful in this context.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred to clauses 29 to 33 as affecting or abolishing the right to silence. They do not. If hon. Members want to see a new clause that would affect the right to silence, they should look at my new clause 62. New clause 76 does not affect the right to silence. It concerns merely the question of inference from silence, which does not abridge the right to silence.

Mr. Maclean: In answer to the points made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), we robustly reject any suggestion that clauses 29 to 33 are improper, inadequate or badly drafted. As we said in Committee, they have received widespread support and we look forward to a robust debate on them.

It is clear that service law needs to mirror and closely to follow the changes that we have made in civilian law. I do not know when military law was invented. There is no point in raking over the historical coals that decided that the manual of military law would be based initially on principles of English law rather than Scots law. That is clearly a fait accompli. It is, therefore, incumbent on us to ensure that the manual of military law keeps pace with the civilian law on which that manual was based. All hon. Members will agree that the military must operate by the same code of practice and by the same manual of military law throughout the United Kingdom. Unique and distinctive as is the contribution of the Scots to the British armed forces, it would be absolutely impossible and impractical to try now to operate a separate code of military law based on Scottish principles of law.

Dr. Godman: I seek an assurance from the Minister that, in the example I gave, someone convicted by a court martial in Scotland would have the right, as is the case now, to appeal to an Appeal Court in Edinburgh.

Mr. Maclean: I can absolutely give that assurance. The point is that the Appeal Court in Edinburgh will implement whatever law it is deciding on at the time. The Appeal Court in Edinburgh may implement much mercantile law; much world mercantile law is based on principles of English law. The Appeal Court may implement European Community laws, and is perfectly able to do that. At the moment, the Appeal Court is making an appeal decision based on the manual of military law, which the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) says is based on English principles. As an Englishman, he does not like that. As a Scot, I am happy to accept that state of affairs.

The Appeal Court in Edinburgh is perfectly capable of coming to judgments based on the manual of military law, whoever invented it and whichever principles it contains. The fact that the manual may be amended and adapted to take in the principles enshrined in clauses 29 to 33 does not invalidate the case for the Appeal Court in Edinburgh to hear any appeals from any soldiers tried in courts martial in Scotland. Of course the Appeal Court in Edinburgh can do so just as excellently as it does now.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) was absolutely right in his brief contribution because he mentioned the Diplock courts. That has pulled the rug from under the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). It is possible

to proceed with new clause 75 now, as my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Ministry of Defence wish, because it will merely implement the sensible changes in the manual of military law which are included in clauses 29 to 33. No discourtesy was intended. The House would take it amiss if I told it that the Ministry of Defence had noticed that the change would be necessary for military law, but that we intended to do nothing about it. Of course it was right to so something about it. I commend the new clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 76

POLICE DETENTION AFTER CHARGE

'.—(1) Section 38 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (which requires an arrested person charged with an offence to be released except in specified circumstances) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1)(a), for sub-paragraphs (ii) and (iii) there shall be substituted the following sub-paragraphs—

"(ii) the custody officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the person arrested will fail to appear in court to answer to bail;

(iii) in the case of a person arrested for an imprisonable offence, the custody officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the detention of the person arrested is necessary to prevent him from committing an offence;

(iv) in the case of a person arrested for an offence which is not an imprisonable offence, the custody officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the detention of the person arrested is necessary to prevent him from causing physical injury to any other person or from causing loss of or damage to property;

(v) the custody officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the detention of the person arrested is necessary to prevent him from interfering with the administration of justice or with the investigation of offences or of a particular offence; or

(vi) the custody officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the detention of the person arrested is necessary for his own protection;".

(3) After subsection (2), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) The custody officer, in taking the decisions required by subsection (1)(a) and (b) above (except (a)(i) and (vi) and (b)(ii)), shall have regard to the same considerations as those which a court is required to have regard to in taking the corresponding decisions under paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 1 to the Bail Act 1976."

(4) After subsection (7), there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(7A) In this section "imprisonable offence", has the same meaning as in Schedule 1 to the Bail Act 1976.".'.

—[Mr. Maclean.]

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Maclean: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss the following: Amendment No. 29, in page 13, line 32, at end insert—

'( ) infanticide

( ) attempted infanticide'.

Government amendments Nos. 105 to 107.

Mr. Maclean: The Government gave an undertaking in Committee to consider amending the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to enable a custody officer to detain a person after charge to prevent him from committing an offence. New clause 76 is a result of that consideration. We believe that it achieves what the police service seeks, which is to have set out in legislation in the clearest terms the powers of a police custody officer to detain when he believes such detention is necessary to prevent offending.

The new clause does more. It would be irresponsible not to think about the considerations that it might be appropriate to add to ensure the proper use of the new power. In Committee, the Opposition tabled an amendment in which they sought to give the police the power to detain a person charged with any offence to prevent offending. In our view, that power would be far too wide ranging as it would apply to people charged with a minor offence. We believe that it is sensible to make the same sort of distinctions as are made in the Bail Act 1976 and to require a custody officer to have regard to wider considerations when he decides whether to detain or to release a person.

At present, the police can detain an individual after charge to prevent him from causing physical injury, or loss of or damage to property. There are offences, such as those involving drug dealing, which do not sit easily within that definition but which can cause considerable harm. The police need to be certain that they have the power to detain people who are likely to commit such offences; at the moment they are uncertain.

We propose to give the police the power to detain an individual to prevent any type of offending. However, the new power will apply only when a person has been charged with an imprisonable offence. The Bail Act, which governs court bail, also makes a careful distinction between individuals charged with imprisonable offences and individuals charged with non-imprisonable offences. The Government want the police to be certain of the basis on which they make decisions to detain or to release. To that end, we propose that they be required to have regard to a number of relevant considerations, as the courts are required to do under the Bail Act. Those considerations are the nature and seriousness of the offence, the person's character, antecedents and community ties, the person's record under previous grants of bail and the strength of the evidence against him.

I do not propose to alter the grounds for detention where a person has been charged with a non-imprisonable offence. It is essential that police keep their power to detain a person to prevent physical injury, loss or damage to deal with those who represent a threat to persons or property. In taking that and other decisions under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the custody officer will also be required to have regard to the wider considerations that I have mentioned. I hope that the House will accept the new clause, which confirms the Government's determination to tackle reoffending, while recognising that there might be circumstances in which detention is not appropriate or justified.

On amendments Nos. 105 and 106, the Government believe that bail hostels offer the courts an important option when taking the decision to remand. If the courts are unwilling to release a person unconditionally back into the community, the requirement to reside at a bail hostel and observe its rules may be enough to ensure that the defendant keeps to his bail and out of trouble. But bail to a bail hostel is very much a last alternative to custody and ranks close behind a remand to prison in terms of level of restriction. In coming to such a decision, the court will draw on advice and its understanding of bail hostel provision. The views of the probation service, the

[Mr. Maclean]

prosecution and the defence will be sought. The magistrates will probably have visited a bail hostel and will be aware of the regime operated there. The nature of that decision-making process and the fact that bail hostels are one step down from a remand prison has caused the Government to consider whether it would be appropriate to allow the police the power to impose the condition as part of police bail.

The workings of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act require custody officers to make a bail decision very early on, hours after an arrest, with little information and without the benefit of the advice that is available to the courts. The Government are taking steps to improve the information available to custody officers—for example, information about previous behaviour on bail. But there is a world of difference between the deliberations of the courtroom and the decision made in a custody suite of an inner-city police station at 1 o'clock in the morning. As I said, remand to a bail hostel is a fairly serious step. It is not in the same category of restriction as having to keep away from prosecution witness "x" or address "y".

As the House will know, the Government have moved quickly to implement the recommendation of the royal commission that the police be allowed to attach conditions to bail once a person has been charged. We believe that the police will impose sensible conditions to ensure that individuals do not abscond, commit an offence on bail, interfere with witnesses or obstruct the course of justice. We do not think that the power to impose, as a condition of bail, residency at a bail hostel is an appropriate one for the police. That does not mean that remand to a bail hostel is ruled out entirely when the custody officer believes it to be an appropriate condition. The officer can detain the person overnight if he has reasonable grounds under PACE and pass on his view on the suitability of a bail hostel condition to the prosecution to put before the court. In such cases, I have little doubt that courts will incline towards such a condition, but it remains a decision that the court alone should take, not the police.

I shall say a word or two about amendment No. 107, in response to a discussion in Committee on clause 26, which relates to amendment No. 107. My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) asked for the removal of the phrase

"in the hands of the prosecutor"

which in his view was ambiguous and unnecessary. We undertook to reflect further on that. Having considered the wording again, we are prepared to make the amendments sought in Committee by my hon. Friend. It is clear from subsection (1) that it is the prosecutor who makes an application. It is implicit in that the prosecutor will decide whether an application is justified and, if so, what information he requires to support the application. I know that my hon. Friend will regard that as one less constitutional outrage that he has encountered in the Bill. I hope that he is content with the amendment, which removes the ambiguity that gave him concern. I commend the amendments and the Government new clause to the House.

5.15 pm

Mr. Michael: I am sure that the Minister was disappointed that the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) was not here to applaud his final comments, but at least I am able to welcome the Minister's response to the arguments advanced by the Opposition in Committee.

I do not wish to delay the House, but the Minister has made it clear that there have been detailed considerations.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, as he did very generously in Committee. Does he agree that a number of Conservative Members adavanced the same arguments in Committee, including myself?

Mr. Michael: I noticed the hon. Gentleman's presence in Committee from time to time, and indeed members on both sides of the Committee commented on the issue. However, I speak for the Opposition, not for the hon. Gentleman.

I shall not delay the House on a point of detail, but the Minister acknowledged the fact that there had been detailed consideration and that there are complexities in the proposals that he has advanced following consideration of the points that we made. Therefore, will the Minister agree to provide information on the way in which the new clause will affect the position—in effect, the note on the new clause that would have been available had the proposal been included in the Bill before it went into Committee? Will he at least do so for Committee members who have taken an interest in the issue?

I gained some knowledge of bail hostels during my period as a member of a probation committee. I understand the sensitivity with which the Minister approaches the matter. I recognise that there are difficulties, but there may be circumstances, for instance when a person has been resident in a bail hostel, when consultation with the probation service is immediately available. I recognise, however, that the Minister's suggestion that the matter should be decided by a court has merit. After today's deliberations, could he provide information on the reasoning that led him to introduce the new clause? That would assist us in considering the matter further. It is a delicate matter, but it would be a good thing if conditions could be imposed to allow for those rare circumstances in which someone should not be held in custody. I do not seek, however, to divide the House on that matter or to delay the Minister further in the debate.

Mr. Shersby: I warmly welcome the new clause. It is very important that a custody officer has at his disposal the clearest possible guidance on the grounds on which a person can be detained. The new clause will be extremely valuable in making that possible.

Most hon. Members know that the job of the custody officer is one of the most difficult and responsible jobs carried out by a member of the police service. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, decisions often have to be made in the middle of the night and those decisions have to be the right ones. It is essential that the custody officer is absolutely clear about the decisions that he makes and is fully informed about how the law is intended to operate. The new clause is a great improvement and I welcome it without reservation.

The new clause is a major step forward. I hope that it will bring to an end the reoffending on bail which has been

the cause of such great concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on ensuring that the matter has been dealt with in the new clause.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I endorse all that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) has said. The measure is long overdue. There is nothing more disheartening for our policemen and policewomen than to arrest criminals, only to see them released on bail hours later and then to discover that they have interfered with witnesses or committed further offences. The new clause provides a much better balance than has existed under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. When the matter is considered in another place, I hope that the warm support for the new clause will be noted.

Mr. Maclean: I thank my hon. Friends for their warm welcome for the new clause. Of course, I am willing to write to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) with some of the details that he requested.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 79

MANAGEMENT OF SECURE ACCOMMODATION

'.—(1) The Children Act 1989 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 53 (provision and management of community homes)—

(a) in subsection (3) (homes which may be community homes)—

(i) in paragraph (a), for the words "managed, equipped and maintained" there shall be substituted the words "equipped, maintained and (subject to subsection (3A)) managed"; and

(ii) in paragraph (b)(i), for the words "management, equipment and maintenance" there shall be substituted the words "equipment, maintenance and (subject to subsection (3B)) management"; and

(b) after subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(3A) A local authority may make arrangements for the management by another person of accommodation provided by the local authority for the purpose of restricting the liberty of children.

(3B) Where a local authority are to be responsible for the management of a community home provided by a voluntary organisation, the local authority may, with the consent of the body of managers constituted by the instrument of management for the home, make arrangements for the management by another person of accommodation provided for the purpose of restricting the liberty of children.".

(3) In Part II of Schedule 4 (management of controlled and assisted community homes)—

(a) in paragraph 3(4), after the word "managers" there shall be inserted the words ", except in so far as, under section 53(3B), any of the accommodation is to be managed by another person."; and

(b) in paragraph 5(5), after the word "body" there shall be inserted the words "; and similarly, to the extent that a contract so provides, as respects anything done, liability incurred or property acquired by a person by whom, under section 53(3B), any of the accommodation is to be managed".'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION

'Her Majesty's Government shall not bring into effect a new Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme unless and until the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 shall have been repealed and a new scheme introduced not by executive order pursuant to the Royal Prerogative but by Act of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Blair.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: amendment (a) to the new clause, after 'Compensation Scheme', insert

'in any part of the United Kingdom and based upon any system of fixed levels of award for particular types of injury.'.

New clause 48—*Criminal Injuries Compensation Board*—

' . In section 171 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, for subsection (2) there is substituted the following subsection—

"Sections 108 to 117 of and Schedules 6 and 7 to this Act (as amended by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994) shall come into force six months after that Act is passed."'

New clause 49—*Factors to be considered in determining compensation*—

' . Schedule 7 to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 is amended as follows:—

(a) in paragraph 4(3), after "cases", there shall be inserted the words

"but may not determine particular amounts for particular cases"; and

(b) the following new paragraph is inserted after paragraph 10—

"10(A) In determining the amount of compensation available under this Part of this Act, the Board may take into account any factors which appear to it to be appropriate.".'.

Mr. Blair: The new clause deals with the new criminal injuries compensation scheme. Nothing so completely exposes the hollowness of the Government's claims on law and order than scrapping the existing system of compensation for criminal injuries.

We have one of the finest systems in the world for the individual compensation of victims. It is a model that other countries have agreed to and followed. That system is to be replaced by a wholly different one, based on a crude tariff drawn up by the Government, which will ignore the circumstances of victims when compensating them for their injury.

The new scheme was introduced after a sham consultation, and was denounced by Victim Support, the police and organisations representing the criminally injured. The chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board—a distinguished former Cabinet Minister—described it as "fundamentally flawed" and "manifestly unfair", and two former Law Lords said that it was illegal. It was also introduced with a deplorable lack of candour about its true motivation. Even for this Government and their legislation, that is quite a record.

Of the people whose views were sought, I know no one who supported the new scheme, and it is the subject of a case for judicial review in the courts, which is to be heard in May.

The present scheme was introduced in 1964, and compensates victims of violent crime on roughly the same basis as the civil law—compensation is based on the loss to the individual, which is the very nature of the criminal injuries compensation scheme. The present scheme therefore takes into account any future loss of earnings, as well as loss of amenity. In the case of a fatal injury,

[Mr. Blair]

compensation is assessed on the same basis as that provided by the Fatal Accidents Act 1976—with some measure for the dead person's loss of income.

When the present scheme was introduced, payments were made on an ex gratia, non-statutory basis, but from a very early stage in its development it was anticipated that it would be given a proper statutory basis. That anticipation became firmer following a royal commission report in 1979; and in 1988, during proceedings on the Criminal Justice Bill, the intention to make the scheme statutory so that payments were no longer ex gratia but of right was reaffirmed.

Section 171 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 thus placed a specific duty on the Home Secretary to introduce the scheme in a statutory form. Discretion was allowed as to when the scheme should come into effect on a statutory basis, but not whether it should do so. For various reasons, that duty was not carried out, and the Government used that fact to try to introduce the new scheme, using prerogative powers rather than by seeking the proper consent of Parliament.

It is true that, under the new tariff system, awards will often be roughly the same as under the present scheme. However, thousands of people every year—a significant number—will lose, and, according to parliamentary answers given by Ministers, about 25 per cent. will lose substantially. The victims of violent crime who lose will often be those with the worst injuries. The new scheme, therefore, hits hardest those people who are most in need.

There are four principal objections to the new scheme. First, it fails to take proper account of any loss of future earnings, although that is often the major element of any award. For example, 18-year-olds may suffer criminal injuries identical to those of 80-year-olds, but because the former would go out to work and would hopefully have a lifetime of earnings in front of them, their circumstances are plainly entirely different from those of elderly people. Yet they will receive the same awards, irrespective of their circumstances.

Recently, a nurse was badly injured and received about £126,000 as compensation, of which £17,000 only was for loss of amenity. If her case came up under the new scheme, she would receive only £5,000. The police officer who was criminally injured while carrying out his duties and received £120,000 would, in similar circumstances under the new scheme, receive only £7,500.

Although civil law will still compensate for negligence on the basis of loss, where criminal injuries occur, the connection between injury and loss—based on the future earnings capacity of the injured person—will be broken as a result of the Government's changes.

The same will apply to fatal awards. Dependency awards will go. For example—to take another recent case—in the Slater case in June last year, a woman who witnessed her husband's fatal stabbing, which took place in front of her children, received £170,000. Under the new system, she would receive only £17,000.

The examples that I have given are of real cases of loss suffered by some of the most needy people and by the victims of the most serious and violent crimes. The Government cannot expect us to take their protestations about victims of crime seriously while they are undermining the basis of compensation for those victims—the money they desperately need to rebuild their lives.

Secondly, as the noble Lord Carlisle pointed out in another place, the new system will often be unworkable. For example, the psychological effects of rape or armed robbery on the criminally injured will vary enormously, yet they are effectively to be treated as the same in many cases. The scheme is not merely wrong in principle, but unworkable in practice.

Thirdly, some of the judgments under the tariff system are extraordinary. Details of the system were issued in a White Paper at the end of the parliamentary Session last year. One suspects that it was announced then for news management purposes rather than for any other reason. As far as I can see, the system outlined in that White Paper has changed very little.

I shall give the House some examples of the tariffs in the system that the Government intend to drive through. Sexual abuse of a child is apparently to be worth about £1,000, and loss of a front tooth about £1,500. Heaven only knows how any sensible person could reach such a conclusion. Rape or buggery will be worth £7,500, as will a fractured kneecap. A fatality might result in an award of about £10,000 to the dependants of the deceased, which will be the same as compensation for the loss of an ear.

The new tariff system is not merely unworkable and wrong in principle because it fails to take future earnings into account; in some circumstances, it will be entirely unfair and arbitrary.

Finally, the basis for the introduction of the new scheme has changed completely, and the House is entitled to feel some anger at the way in which that has been done. When the then Home Secretary announced the new criminal injuries compensation scheme on 23 November 1992, it was said to be necessary, not to cut costs but because it offered the

"best prospect of providing quicker payments to claimants through a means that is fair, straightforward and understandable."

That deception, which is what it was, was carried on until the White Paper was issued in December last year, when the Government claimed that the purpose of the new scheme was to offer a "better service to victims". No mention was made of the fact that the purpose of the proposal was to cut the costs of the scheme; rather, the Government claimed that it would make the scheme more administratively efficient, fairer and more easily understandable. One would have thought that the primary purpose of introducing the new proposal was merely to provide a better type of service to victims.

5.30 pm

A few weeks ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) had an Adjournment debate on the issue, when the Minister dismissed as cynical those who said that the Government's proposal was about cost cutting. He said that those people did not understand the true basis of the Government's thinking. It was Ministry of Truth stuff, because it is now absolutely clear that the basis of the new scheme has nothing to do with providing a better service for victims.

The Home Secretary may frown, but that suggestion cannot seriously be maintained, since not a single organisation that supports victims has come out in favour of his new scheme. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman would care to mention one. I may be wrong,

and I do not want to overstate the case, but I think that I am right to suggest that not a single organisation of any nature has come out in favour of the new scheme.

The way in which the scheme has been driven through is quite extraordinary. It has been done on the basis of providing a better system for victims, but the fact that victim organisations have contradicted that claim and that no one has stepped forward to support it simply exposes the entirely sham nature of the consultation exercise.

The original reason for the Government's proposal, which was first given in another place and will no doubt be repeated here tonight, is that costs are spiralling out of control. That reason has never been part of the consultation process. The Government have never attempted to spell out why those costs will spiral out of control. On what basis do they suggest that costs will rise from between £170 million and £200 million to £500 million? The reason for the Government's assertion has never been published in any consultation paper so that we can assess whether it is right or wrong. That figure was simply plucked out of the air to justify a decision taken once the original justification was blown apart.

Upon what putative crime figures is the suggested cost based? If it is the case that the cost of the scheme is set to double in the next few years, I assume that that is because the Government take a rather less than sanguine view of how crime and violence are set to develop. Whether the figure is genuine or not we simply do not know, but it is quite wrong for it to be dragged out of the Government under duress, without any proper consultation. They have made no attempt to consult people properly to reach the best and fairest solution.

This is a necessarily short debate, and I know that a number of my hon. Friends, and perhaps one or two Conservative Members would like to speak. The introduction of the new scheme exemplifies the sorry mixture of incompetence and arrogance that sometimes cover the conduct of the Government. If they were serious in their protestations of support for victims of crime, it is contradictory to introduce the scheme, without proper consultation, when it will damage the interests of many thousands of victims a year.

The Government should withdraw their proposal until they have a proper scheme, subject to proper consultation, which protects the interests of the victim in a way that the British people wish to see.

Mr. Maclennan: The Home Secretary, by proposing a tariff-based scheme of compensation for victims, departs from the clear statutory duty that was placed upon him by Parliament in the Criminal Justice Act 1988. In doing so, he follows the lead of his predecessor, his right hon. and learned Friend who is now Chancellor of the Exchequer. He would have been wise mostly to ignore that lead in matters concerning his right hon. and learned Friend's conduct of the criminal justice system, because his White Papers have led to extensive criticism by all those who must deal with the criminal justice system.

The manner in which the Government have brought forward the proposals for compensation for the victims of crime is an example of how not to proceed. In a debate in another place, the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Lord Carlisle of Bucklow, made it plain that neither he nor his colleagues on the board had been consulted about the principles that underlay the Government's proposals before they were announced.

That seems to me to be not merely a discourtesy, but a serious abuse, for no one better than that board could know of the practicality—or, as it believes, the impracticality—of the scheme that the Home Secretary has proposed. No one could know better than that board the practical consequences and injustices that will be wrought by a tariff scheme along the lines that the Home Secretary has proposed to introduce as at 1 April—originally without any parliamentary discussion.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): On the hon. Gentleman's introductory remarks, perhaps he should take into account the reply given by Lord Elwyn-Jones to a parliamentary question about the Road Traffic Act 1974:

"if the Act states that it shall come into force on a date to be fixed by order made by the Minister, and provides no more than that, it is within the discretion of the Minister as to when he brings the Act into force. Parliament may, of course, bring pressure to bear on him and require him to justify any inactivity. But, short of another Act, there is no way in which the Minister can be compelled by Parliament to bring that Act into operation."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 29 June 1977; Vol. 384, c. 1110.]

Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Mr. Maclennan: No doubt it is open to a Minister to decide at what date he may discharge an obligation imposed upon him by Act of Parliament, but this is a very different matter. This is not a proposal to discharge an obligation imposed upon the Home Secretary by Act of Parliament; it is an announced proposal to repeal the very Act that imposed that duty upon him. The case that the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) had in mind is not in pari materia with what the Home Secretary is doing.

The proposal is the more remarkable because, in the past, the Conservative Government have felt it appropriate to praise the criminal injuries compensation scheme and to draw to people's attention its exemplary work. Previous Home Secretaries have repeatedly undertaken to put it on a statutory basis. If one goes back to when the Government took office, when the Pearson commission on civil liability reported, indications were given then that the scheme would be put on a statutory basis.

That was not done originally, when the scheme was introduced by a Conservative Government—that led by Sir Alec Douglas-Home—because the consequences of the scheme could not be known. It was thought that it would be sensible to try it out to see if it worked fairly and in a manner which should be rendered firm in statute. In 1983 and 1988, following the Pearson commission, progress reports were given by Home Secretaries. Candidly, the Minister, in proposing to proceed in the way he has, has acted high-handedly, and, I believe, possibly illegally. That matter will be tested at a later date.

The contents of what is proposed must also raise questions about whether the Government have violated the provisions of the European convention on the compensation of victims of violent crimes. Article 4 of that convention requires us to provide compensation which covers

"according to the case under consideration"—

that is, according to the specific circumstances of the individual case—

"at least . . . loss of earnings . . . and, as regards dependants, loss of maintenance."

If the Government intend to derogate from provisions of

[Mr. Maclennan]

international conventions to which they have subscribed, they would do well to inform the House of their intentions. That has been normal in other spheres.

The hardship it is proposed to seek to dismiss is undoubted. The Government gave no sign of their true purpose in making the proposal. As Lord Ackner, an experienced former Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, said:

"This is a cost-cutting exercise."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 2 March 1994; Vol. 552, c. 1072.]

He also regarded it as "an abuse of power", as did a number of other learned Lords in the debate which, thankfully, was held in another place—thankfully, because they turned a spotlight on what the Government were planning to do. In a debate in which there were, I believe, 16 participants, I do not think that a single one who was not a member of the Government thought it right to support the Government.

The nature of the compensation at present available under the scheme is closely related to the circumstances of the individuals who are adversely affected by crimes of violence. Principles of the common law, and of the statute law in the case of the Fatal Accidents Act 1976, are imported into the individual deliberations to ensure that the reality of the consequence of the sufferings by the victims of crime is reflected. It is there that the Government seem most disingenuous, for they have suggested in their White Paper that all that is necessary is for society to give some token of its concern about the consequence of violence on victims.

Hitherto, a genuine attempt has been made by the distinguished lawyers—40 of them—who sit as part-time servants of the public in determining those cases, to measure the reality of the suffering and the losses that it is to be anticipated will flow from it. The trouble with the new scheme is that the standard tariff leaves wholly out of account many of the matters that are most burdensome on the victims.

The people who suffer serious injury will be hardest hit —those who have to alter their homes and their way of life as a result of injury, those who have to confront the prospect of years of medical treatment, those who face loss of earnings, the dependants of those who have been murdered, or those who have suffered through manslaughter of their spouse. Their maintenance will not be taken into consideration. Those are serious changes that are proposed. Although it is possible, by averaging out. to say that some people may prove better off, it is incontrovertibly true that those who suffer most will be the hardest hit.

New clause 1 and the related amendments give the Government an opportunity to reconsider their position. I hope that they will take it, for, if they do not, they will stand accused of paying no attention to the victims of violent crimes and controvert allegations that they have made that the victims are more in their mind than the criminals in the criminal justice system.

5.45 pm

I appeal to the Minister to reconsider, to listen to the wise advice of the people who have administered the scheme as it operates and, if it is thought necessary to modify the statutory scheme for Treasury reasons, to enter into genuine consultations before abandoning the operative scheme.

The Government appear to speak with two voices on the subject, for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has announced consultations. If he were to proceed on different lines from the Home Secretary, we could find ourselves in the strangely anomalous position in which the victims of violent crimes in Northern Ireland were treated according to a system that operated common law principles or statutory principles, but not the victims of comparable offences in Great Britain.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Why in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Maclennan: Because there is already a scheme there, as I understand it, which is statutory and which the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland apparently has it in mind to modify. Those are grave matters, and the present proposals of the Government will wreak great injustice.

May I recall to the Home Secretary the fate of the wife of one of the former members of the Conservative Government, Lady Tebbit, who was gravely injured for life, in circumstances that must come very close to his memory? That type of case is the type that will be adversely affected by what he has proposed. I do not think that it is defensible and I hope that he will not try to defend it.

Mrs. Gillan: I am pleased to have an opportunity to contribute to the debate on new clause 1.

The scheme that we operate in the United Kingdom not only was the first of its type in Europe, but has remained—

Mr. Trimble: I heard the hon. Lady refer to the scheme that we operate being the first in the United Kingdom, but the scheme that operates in Great Britain was not the first. Schemes operated in Ireland and Northern Ireland on a statutory basis for decades, if not centuries. I give the hon. Lady the opportunity to correct herself.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, but Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom; this was one of the first schemes to operate in Europe and it certainly remains the most generous.

Even in the United States of America, in the most recent year for which figures were available the amount paid under compensation schemes was only marginally more than the total paid out in the United Kingdom. It is somewhat disingenuous for Opposition Members to say that we may be in contravention of European legislation because, as I understand it, Italy does not even have a compensation scheme. Indeed, during 1992 and 1993 the compensation scheme in the United Kingdom paid out more than those in all the other countries of the European Union put together.

The changes being made to move to a tariff-based scheme are necessary. There are inherent disadvantages in a scheme which operates under common law. Moreover, as everyone will agree, the number of claimants has, sadly, greatly increased. The projected figure for next year is some 70,000 claims.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): If I were working on a building site and dropped a sledgehammer on the hon. Lady's leg and broke it, she would get the necessary civil compensation. She would receive compensation if she could no longer dance and for any drop in earnings. But if I became so angry that I smashed the sledgehammer into your leg in a criminal way, you would not get all that compensation. Is there any justification in that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not saying that he would get angry with me.

Mrs. Gillan: The thought of the hon. Member wielding a hammer on a building site leaves me speechless.

There have been great and unacceptable delays in awarding compensation to victims of crime. In December 1993 Roger Pannone, president of the Law Society, admitted that the average claim turnaround was 18 months. Most reasonable people would agree that that is far too long to wait for compensation.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gillan: No, I wish to make some progress now.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the hon. Lady give way on that point?

Mrs. Gillan: Very well.

Mr. Maclennan: She must know that the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board has made it plain that 80 per cent. of cases are dealt with within nine months.

Mrs. Gillan: I made it clear that I was quoting the president of the Law Society.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Central Office brief.

Mrs. Gillan: For the hon. Gentleman's information, I have no Central Office brief in my hand.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) also underestimated the current position when he referred to approximately £500 million being available as it was made clear in a House of Lords reply that over the next three years £558 million will be available for the scheme.

People who claim against the scheme do not have to identify their attackers, consider their prospects for success or run the risk of having costs awarded, as they would under a civil scheme. That will continue. Moreover, 94 per cent. of all claims are for less than £10,000; 59 per cent. are for less than £3,000; and 48 per cent. are for less than £2,000. The new tariff-based scheme has been arrived at by taking the median figure, not the mean figure, which reflects more closely the value of pain and suffering as an element of the award.

Some of the objections voiced by people such as the president of the Law Society may reflect the fact that, under the new scheme, the costly skills of specialist lawyers will no longer be needed.

I welcome the tariff-based scheme. It will produce awards reasonably quickly and in an understandable and predictable manner, which will be much better for victims of crime.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sponsored by Unison, which means that I, personally, receive no moneys from Unison; they are paid to my constituency party.

Unison is extremely angry with this proposal because its members—mainly nurses—are often the subject of attacks at the workplace. Public sector workers such as Unison members risk suffering criminal assaults at work. The tariff scheme is therefore likely to lead to considerable injustice to Unison members in the amount of payment. No weight can be given to the effect that an incident will have on an individual victim. Individuals will receive "the average award" for their injuries, irrespective of the consequences that the injury has had on them.

One Unison member received compensation by presenting evidence of her physiological discomfort following a modest physical injury sustained while on duty in a locked psychiatric ward. The award was initially rejected on the basis that it was below the £1,000 threshold for compensation. On appeal, under the present scheme, however, evidence was heard that the individual had experienced enormous psychological suffering on her return to work in the same closed environment and on having to deal with her assailant. Under the new system, that evidence would be discounted and the member would not qualify for compensation.

I will give a little more detail about the case to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referred. The exclusion of financial loss from the scheme will have a dramatic effect on the value of awards. For instance, compensation received by a Unison nursing sister who had to retire in her early thirties as a result of criminal injury was made up largely of financial loss. Of a total award of £126,943, £11,000 related to loss of wages up to the date of the hearing, £20,000 related to loss of pension rights and £63,162 related to future loss of earnings. Under the new arrangement, the nursing sister could recover no compensation for financial loss.

Unison members, especially nurses, will be placed at a grave disadvantage. I therefore place on record, on behalf of the union, its members' strong resentment of the fact that the policy was developed in a forum where the unions had almost no input and that they are now faced with the framing of poor legislation.

Mr. Shersby: As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will know, I am not an enthusiast of the tariff-based scheme. I made my views on the matter extremely clear in an Adjournment debate on 18 March 1993, when I covered many of the points mentioned today. It so happens that, among my many interests, I am president of the Uxbridge victim support scheme and therefore take a special interest in victim compensation and the terrible injuries sustained by members of the public.

Some 90 per cent. of victims of crime are innocent. When the Government announced about 12 months ago that they intended to introduce this tariff-based scheme, they argued that it would provide the best prospect of quicker payment to claimants by clear, straightforward and understandable means. Following their announcement, I decided to raise the matter in an Adjournment debate because I believe that compensation by the state for criminal injustice is a vital part of our British way of life and that we should take care before moving away from the present satisfactory scheme. Although the proposed scheme may be quicker, it may provide claimants with what I can only describe, and what has been described to me, as rough justice.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Is my hon. Friend aware that about 8.5 per cent. of all the money that the Government put into the criminal injuries compensation scheme goes on lawyers' fees and administrative costs? Would he not be in favour of a system which ensured that most, if not all, of the money went to the victims themselves?

Mr. Shersby: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but I suggest that there are good reasons why that 8.5 per cent. is deployed on lawyers' fees. Under the present scheme,

[Mr. Shersby]

each case is carefully considered by a highly competent lawyer to determine the exact compensation that ought to be paid.

6 pm

It is worth considering why the criminal injuries compensation scheme was brought into existence by a Conservative Government in 1964. It was realised that most of the victims of crime could not bring civil proceedings for compensation against their assailants because those assailants would be without funds. The Government of the day recognised that there was an increasing number of crimes, and the scheme was a recognition of how society had failed the victim by allowing him or her to be assaulted. That being so, it was only right that Governments should ensure that victims received compensation, and they have done so ever since the scheme was introduced.

Compensation is treated by victims as an important part of their recovery, fulfilling their desire for some sort of justice. The payment of compensation, coupled with successful prosecution of the offender, is usually a large factor in a person's recovery.

One important feature of the tariff-based scheme is the fact that it prohibits the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board from making awards for the loss of past or future earnings. I hope that I am wrong, but if not, that means that 90 per cent. of civilian applicants who suffer injuries so serious that they are unable to earn their livelihood will be obliged to rely on social security benefits, which would not usually make up the shortfall in their income. It would not be right for any new scheme to deprive the innocent victims of crime of the right to recover income lost due to violent crime. Indeed, that is one of the cardinal reasons why the current scheme has been well regarded throughout the country.

The essence of the tariff-based scheme is that it identifies types of injury, giving standard figures for damages for each injury—rather like the Northern Ireland model, which was mentioned earlier and which has been in existence for some time.

Mr. Trimble *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Shersby: That is certainly the advice that I have received from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. My concern, therefore, is that if we move to a tariff-based scheme a number of anomalies will appear.

In the guidance given to the CICB by the Judicial Studies Board, types of injury are identified and, according the seriousness of the injury, given a bracket within which compensation would be appropriate. Those brackets are often wide, because it is recognised that each individual experiences a different type of injury, and the compensation received should take account of that. One broken arm can be quite different from another, depending on the circumstances in which it was broken—as the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) was at pains to point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Ms Gillan). The present scheme allows experienced lawyers to study all aspects of a case. That is the job that they are paid for and they do it very well. The scheme over which they have presided is fair and puts the victim of a criminal in roughly the same position as a civil claimant.

It must be remembered that there can be no duplication of state benefits. All benefits paid by the state, all private pensions and much private insurance are counted as credit against damages, to reduce the state's outlay under the present system. If a victim is injured by a motor car used as a weapon—in other words, the person is deliberately run down—he can apply to the Motor Insurers Bureau for compensation under common law. But if a victim is injured by a very different piece of metal such as a crowbar—we would all deplore that, but it happens all too frequently these days—he would have to apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and he would obtain much less by way of damages. Can that be justified? We should at the very least be concerned about it.

My other worry derives form the fact that it would be impossible to provide any meaningful tariff for many of the types of injury that people incur. Let us take, for instance, the horrible experiences of facial and bodily scarring, post-traumatic stress disorder, or sexual abuse, including rape—these are all obvious examples of what I am talking about. How can any standard figure be set for such injuries? Why should not the present system continue, under which the damages are assessed by one of the lawyers to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) referred? I remind the House that the lawyers concerned are usually Queen's Counsel and very experienced in their jobs.

What is the basic reason for the tariff-based scheme that my right hon. and learned Friend wishes to introduce? It is to save money, a perfectly respectable objective for any Home Secretary. There is no doubt that the cost of compensating victims for criminal injuries has been rising inexorably in the past few years, and is set to continue rising. A tariff-based scheme will ensure that the costs of compensation gradually flatten out and do not increase in line with the projections made for the present scheme. Obviously any Cabinet Minister has to take account of these matters and must listen to what the Treasury says about them. I have no objection to that. My right hon. and learned Friend has given many fine demonstrations of standing up to the Treasury, and I believe that on this occasion it is important that he do so again and say, "I am sorry, but we cannot go down this path."

If the Treasury wants to save money, I invite Treasury Ministers to come to any meeting of the Public Accounts Committee, on which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and I have the pleasure of serving. We could have offered my right hon. and learned Friend £48 million a couple of weeks ago from the Department of Employment's Field system, £43 million from the Wessex health authority, or a few hundred thousand pounds from the Development Board for Rural Wales. The list is endless. The PAC has identified savings of about £208 million a year; that is not chicken feed, and it would go quite a long way towards keeping the present scheme going.

All hon. Members who have spoken today have approached this difficult issue on what I would call a House of Commons basis. What we are considering is fundamental to the way in which victims are compensated and we should be very careful before we move away from the scheme that we have.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham spoke of delays in settling claims. I have been reading the reports of the CICB; The figures for the year ending 31 March 1992 show that the board received about

61,400 applications, as against 50,820 in 1990-91. As the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland pointed out, 80 per cent. of those claims were settled within nine months. That is a fine record.

I do not for a moment accept that the argument that a tariff-based scheme will lead to much quicker settlement of claims is sufficient to justify the diminution of available benefits. A parent came to see me in my constituency the other night whose son had lost the sight of his eye because he had been stabbed by a youth. He received £18,000 compensation. Would he have got that much under the tariff-based scheme? I think not.

I am sorry to have to disagree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. On many occasions recently I have given him my full and unqualified support for just about every feature of the Bill, but I regret that I am unable to be enthusiastic about his proposed scheme and I shall find it difficult to support it.

Mr. Bermingham: I start by posing again the question that I put to the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) in whose speech I intervened. I asked why the compensation paid to a person for criminal injury should be different from that paid to someone who suffers a civil injury.

I declare two interests. First, I am sponsored by the GMB which merely contributes towards my election expenses and pays a small sum per year towards constituency costs. Secondly, I am a practising lawyer.

Many members of the union that sponsors me work in jobs in which assaults take place. Members of the union that sponsors my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) are also regularly assaulted.

Sometimes one cannot immediately assess or "tarrify" —whatever word one wants to use—an injury because some injuries are stress related, and how can one assess continuing damage? For some people who are injured as a result of criminal assaults there is no recovery. That is sad, but it shows the sort of world in which we live. The Government are dedicated to the fight against—or rather the fight for law and order and against crime.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): My hon. Friend was right first time.

Mr. Bermingham: I know. It was a Freudian slip.

The Government say that they are dedicated to defeating crime, but their proposals make it appear that they are dedicated to penalising the victim. The hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) said that 8.5 per cent. of compensation scheme money went to lawyers. If the hon. Gentleman had any knowledge of what has to be done in the preparation of a criminal injuries compensation claim he would not make such a statement. Sometimes the forms are complicated and a great deal of information is required. There is no legal aid and costs are not paid. Therefore, the victims often pay the cost of assembling the evidence to substantiate their claims.

Injuries may be complex. I shall give an example of many years ago from my own knowledge. A young lady was struck with an iron bar outside a night club. On the face of it, there appeared to be a tiny fracture to her skull. No doubt on the tariff system a small sum would have been paid. But it was later discovered that she also had a fracture to the base of the skull and brain fluid was leaking down into the spinal column, causing infection. The ultimate injury to her was massive. Her loss of amenity was effectively the destruction of her life, because she could no longer work, dance or look after her family. Under the proposals, a straight tariff would be paid. Under the present system, such loss of amenities is added to the claim and covered.

Can the Government justifiably say that, although someone injured in a civil accident should be properly compensated, a person injured in a criminal attack should not? I know from the report some years ago on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board by the Select Committee on Home Affairs, on which I sat, that most of the claims are for small amounts. Most are settled rapidly because the injuries are readily identifiable. However, for the small proportion of claims that cannot be readily identified or readily quantified, delay is not a problem. There are interim payments.

I can tell the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham that, unless one wishes to be negligent, a motor accident claim is never settled until the full extent of the loss is known. Hon. Members should not pray in aid delay as a reason for destroying the rights of citizens to proper compensation when they have been criminally injured. A civilised society tends to look after the victim. The Home Secretary's proposal is not in aid of the victim but against him. It is a disgrace and it ought to be stopped.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I had not intended to speak, but, as the debate seems to be one sided, for the sake of fairness something should be said about the Government's justifiable reasons for taking this step. We are debating victims, and no Government have ever done as much for victims as this one. Not only have we paid out and helped in numerous ways more victims than ever before, but, compared with other countries, our help for victims is outstanding. We provide 20 times the rate provided by the Germans and about seven times as much as that provided by the French. The Italians do not even have a scheme.

6.15 pm

We should not get too worked up on the premise that nothing is being done for victims. Not only do we give them money and support, but there is a victims charter to make sure that they are much better cared for than ever before. We have advice and counselling systems and we give substantial sums for victim support. I think that the figure this year approaches £10 million. Victim support agencies are not wholly opposed to the proposal because they see that there is an advantage in speeding up delivery of the system.

One result of all that the Government are doing for victims is showing forth. It is that more people than ever are reporting crime, for the simple reason that we have a much better attitude towards victims than has ever been displayed by any previous Government. I now come to the main point of contention.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): If we are doing so well and if the compensation is so honourable and decent, why are we making changes?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am about to deal with the system. I said that I would do that and the hon. Gentleman, who has not been here for most of the debate, suddenly got up and asked questions *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Barnes *rose—*

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Very well, I concede that the hon. Gentleman has been here from beginning to end.

If hon. Members listen, perhaps they will hear the answers to their questions. The principal attack is that the tariff system which is to be imposed will somehow cause an injustice. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) conceded that most victims will be as well, or perhaps even better, off, but he said that thousands would lose. There are two ways in which one can lose. There is a loss if the amount of money a victim is to receive now is cut. There is also a loss if a victim has to wait indefinitely for a payment that is due. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) shakes his head and winces. I am delighted that he is here to take part in the debate, because I know, as he knows, that one of the greatest complaints from both of us over the years is about the slowness of the payment of legal aid fees. He and I would much rather go to a cash delivery desk immediately we have finished a case and say, "Pay out £100" than wait for 12 or 18 months for £150 *[Interruption.]* I assure the hon. Gentleman that under that system that was all I got.

People would rather have the money in their hands now than have to wait indefinitely for perhaps a larger sum. I agree that having to wait for 18 months for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to pay out is a disgrace. Even if 80 per cent. is paid out in nine months, it is still a disgrace. That disgrace comes about because there is a backlog of 81,000 people waiting for some payment. The system has become overweight and inefficient. It is not delivering justice because people have to wait too long for payment.

Opposition Members say that there is something horrible, unpleasant and unacceptable about a tariff system but all these payments are made according to a tariff system. That is how it works. The courts use a tariff system, as does the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. We are not substituting a tariff for a non-tariff system but a statutory tariff system for a judicial tariff system, which is not the same objection. If a statutory tariff system delivers more money, more quickly to more people, that will be the justification for my right hon. and learned Friend's plan.

The proposal will not cut the money paid out. My right hon. and learned Friend has already given an undertaking that the new scheme will pay out £500 million more over the next three years. It will make payment quicker and more certain. Recipients will be able to make disposition as to how they will spend the money because they will know months, sometimes years, in advance how much it will be.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Is the hon. and learned Gentleman, as a respected lawyer, saying that he does not see the relevance to applicants under the CICB scheme of damages for handicap in the labour market?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I have not mentioned handicap in the labour market. I was arguing that if we can devise a tariff system that will deliver more benefit to more people more quickly, that is its justification. The judicial way of making assessments is not necessarily the best, because it is the slower way and does not necessarily deliver more ultimately.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield made a specific complaint about loss of earnings not being taken into account, but it will, indirectly, because the new tariffs will be assessed—there is a mathematical calculation—according to what the tariffs have been over a period. Those tariffs take into account awards that were made, including loss of earnings. As the new assessment will be based on the old assessment, which included loss of earnings, that element will be included. I agree that the new system may not be perfect. I do not like it—I like more work for lawyers. At the end of the day, however, more work for lawyers is less important than providing a benefit to victims.

After a year or two, there may be a few pounds more in loss of earnings, but that accounts for a small proportion of total awards made. Loss of earnings have not accounted for half the value of an award, but only a minute proportion —some of which, perhaps the larger part, will indirectly be taken into account by the new tariff.

It is easy for lawyers, pressure groups and Opposition Members, who always have an axe to grind—I do not blame them—to oppose the scheme. In a perfect world, such a scheme would not be needed. In a perfect world, more lawyers could do more work and earn more money, and awards could be tailored to the needs of the individual. But it is not a perfect world. What is most imperfect is that victims do not receive their payments for months and months. Almost anything that we can do in a reasonable system to speed the delivery of more money to more people is justified. All those who agree with that proposition will support my right hon. and learned Friend in the Lobby.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) tried to defend the Government's proposal, partly on the ground that it will cut delay—but that is often caused by the need to ascertain the extent of the injury and to be certain of an injured person's prognosis. Consequently, an element of delay is inevitable. If one compares delay in the payment of criminal injuries compensation with the delay that occurs in civil actions, it is clear that the latter is greater. While it is desirable to reduce delay, it is an inevitable element, so that point is overdone.

The hon. and learned Gentleman stated accurately that courts operate a tariff system with regard to loss of amenity, pain and suffering—but there is no tariff system with regard to loss of earnings. The hon. and learned Gentleman said that it played only a small part in criminal injury compensation in the past. That must be because the injuries were largely non-incapacitating. Where there is serious injury leading to loss of earnings, the need for fair compensation is greatest.

While some elements of the scheme must be conventional and have a tariff element, with other aspects of it a tariff is totally inappropriate. Justice demands that individual circumstances are properly taken into account. It must be obvious from my remarks that I consider the Government's proposals to be retrograde.

I am almost entirely in agreement with the criticisms and remarks of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), except when he said that the scheme operating in England and Scotland is the best in the world. It is not as good as that which operates in Northern Ireland. I must point out to the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) that the Northern Ireland scheme is quite different. It is a statutory scheme and has a tariff element—

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does it?

Mr. Trimble: Of course it does, but it also offers compensation for loss of earnings. As a statutory scheme, it also offers the right to compensation. It has always been a statutory scheme, dating back to the 18th century. It offers a right of appeal to the courts. On all three counts, and certainly the last two, it is preferable to the English and Scottish scheme.

While I appreciate that the Home Secretary's scheme would operate only in Great Britain and would not immediately be applicable to Northern Ireland, the scheme's announcement and nature are causing considerable alarm in Northern Ireland. I use the word "alarm" consciously and without exaggeration. As far as I am aware, all relevant bodies in Northern Ireland are worried in case the new scheme is introduced there. They are anxious to ensure that that does not happen. Among those most concerned are members of the security forces, police, Royal Irish Regiment, prison service and so on—many of whom have suffered severe incapacitating injuries over the past few decades. They are anxious that if the new scheme comes to Northern Ireland, they will be left with wholly inadequate compensation to cover their financial loss.

I was interested to note that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland going out to consultation. My memory must be at fault, because I cannot recall the Secretary of State saying anything on that matter, and nor can the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). That might reflect the way that the Northern Ireland Office habitually works. I wrote to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland nearly two months ago, but have not yet received a reply.

Mr. Barnes: In response to my written question to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) replied that the Government are

"currently considering what lessons might be learnt for Northern Ireland from the forthcoming changes in the criminal injuries compensation scheme in Great Britain."—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. *844*.]

So it is likely that the scheme is under serious consideration. The right hon. Gentleman said that, prior to the scheme being introduced in Northern Ireland, it will go out for consultation—which did not happen in Great Britain.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that information, which reflects on the way in which the Northern Ireland Office works. Things often happen without Northern Ireland Members being informed. It is interesting to know the identity of the Minister who replied to the hon. Gentleman's question, because it confirms the suspicions of those who have to deal with the Northern Ireland Office about who is the villain of the piece in attempts to cut compensation in Northern Ireland.

I think that I have said enough to show the anxiety that exists and to make it clear to the Home Secretary that there is real worry about changes to the Northern Ireland system. There will be substantial opposition among members of the Ulster Unionist party and all Northern Ireland Members to any attempt to degrade the system that operates in Northern Ireland by reducing it even to the level of the existing system in England and Wales, let alone to the level of the system that he now proposes.

The best thing that the Home Secretary can do is extend the statutory Northern Ireland scheme to the rest of the United Kingdom. It would benefit everyone. If the Home Secretary wishes to cut costs—as the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) said, it is perfectly legitimate to wish to cut costs—the first thing that he should consider is recovering more from criminals by way of reparation. Not enough is done in that respect.

Many criminals are able to compensate. Many criminals' gains from their criminal activities could be recovered by the state. It is not appropriate or fair to leave it to the victim to pursue the criminal by civil actions. The state can and should do much more. It could recover sums that would go a long way toward defraying the compensation bill. Such a system would probably save as much as, if not more than, the proposed scheme.

6.30 pm

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Can the hon. Gentleman tell me of a single case in which someone involved in a diamond robbery, a bank robbery or any other major robbery who is convicted has been made to pay compensation to anyone?

Mr. Trimble: I thank the hon. and learned Member for that intervention. I am not in a position to answer his question. I am sure that the Home Secretary has heard it and will give him an answer when he replies to the debate.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): I declare an interest as a parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation. Police officers are among the people who will be most affected by the changes. One in 12 applicants to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board are police officers who have often suffered from the rising toll of assaults with which police officers have to cope.

Criminal injuries compensation is a permanent and substantial programme of public expenditure. Therefore, as a matter of parliamentary propriety, it ought to have statutory authority. The Royal Commission on civil liability and compensation for personal injury and the Public Accounts Committee have made that point. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 made an attempt to put compensation on a statutory basis. The view of Parliament was clear: it wanted a statutory basis. That was expressed in the 1988 Act. The Government have failed for various reasons to implement that provision. Yet Parliament's view is clear. The Government's neglect of the clear view expressed by Parliament, and their attempt to introduce instead an administrative scheme when an Act of Parliament is still on the statute book to deal with the matter, amounts to contemptuous disregard of Parliament and parliamentary propriety.

We are changing the system from one that is commonly regarded, although it has some delays, as attaining a standard of fairness. Parliament should give the full consideration that it gives to a statute to such important changes that would lead to unfairness. Fairness in dealing with the widely differing circumstances of victims is important if victims are not also to see themselves as victims of the unfairness of the system of compensation.

Each case is different; it has its own factors. A 24-year-old person blinded in a criminal attack, who has a family and two children to support, and is unlikely to be able to carry on his livelihood is in a different position from that of an 80-year-old in an old folks' home who has been injured. The injury may be the same, but the impact on the people injured is different. The law recognises that

[Mr. Mike O'Brien]

difference and seeks to regard it with fairness. The system of varying tariffs in the common law system recognises the different circumstances of assaults.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Does my hon. Friend agree with the representations made by the CICB to Ministers that the intention throughout the history of the criminal injuries compensation scheme has been to compensate a victim of a crime of violence in exactly the same way as he would have been compensated if he had sued his assailant in the civil courts? It suggested that, instead of moving towards a scratch-card system of compensation payments, it would be much better to tailor the payment on a structured settlement basis which took precisely the account that my hon. Friend suggested of differences in the impact of injuries throughout a person's life and according to the stage in a person's life at which the injuries occurred.

Mr. O'Brien: That is a much fairer system than that proposed by the Government. When the Home Secretary replies to the debate, will he explain why a person who has been injured by a hit-and-run driver and is entitled to claim against the Motor Insurers Bureau should receive compensation under common law principles that would be denied to a victim of a criminal attack with an iron bar? What is the moral difference? The system that the Home Secretary intends to create would result in those two victims receiving different amounts of compensation.

The Government's proposed scheme is about the Treasury saying that it wants money at the expense of the victims of crime. It is about compensation without compassion for victims.

Ms Corston: Does my hon. Friend agree that the game was given away in a letter written on 31 March 1993 by the Minister of State's predecessor, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), to the chairman of the CICB, Lord Carlisle, in which he said:

"The tariff scheme will not therefore aim to 'compensate' people in the same way as before. It will however maintain the underlying purpose of the scheme which is to provide a tangible recognition of Society's sympathy and concern for the victim"?

Does my hon. Friend agree that "sympathy and concern" do not pay the mortgage? Is he aware that a Conservative Member who saw me reading a brief from the CICB expressed the view that the new scheme would have the same effect on the Government as the Child Support Agency—the new scheme would go through and the Government would live to regret it?

Mr. O'Brien: I hope that the Government do regret it. The proposals are a betrayal of the people about whom the Government have trumpeted their concern for so many months. They will rob those who have suffered the worst and most serious injuries of the fair compensation that was part of a criminal justice system which otherwise does little or nothing for victims.

Although speed of delivery is important, it should not be bought at the price of unfairness and injustice in the quality of what is delivered. Speeding up the process can be done without arbitrary tariffs. The Government say that the new scheme will be much quicker, but that is not necessarily the case. The main cause of delay is often the receipt of medical reports, police reports and certificates. The Government's scheme will do little or nothing about that. The very small savings in time will not be sufficient to justify the increased unfairness that the system creates.

I shall give a few examples of unfairness. I have many examples, but I shall give only a few because I do not want to delay the House. In the case of Storier, a 34-year-old police constable was assaulted in April 1988 and suffered permanent damage to the base of his spine. He lost his job in December 1990 and was unable to work again. He received damages of £21,000 under the old scheme, but would receive £7,500 under the Government's new scheme.

In the case of Parslow, a Birmingham security officer was assaulted by robbers and received severe leg injuries. His compensation under the old scheme was £74,500. Under the new scheme, it would be £5,000. In the case of Burleigh, a man received a brain injury after being hit with a snooker cue. The compensation under the old scheme was £500,000. Under the new scheme, it would be less than half that.

A recent analysis of the case of Colin Hickman, a solicitor who was recently stabbed to death, shows that under the old scheme his compensation would have amounted, because of his earnings and circumstances, to about £100,000. Under the new scheme, a fatality amounts to £10,000. The new scheme is a betrayal of victims and victims' families.

The tariffs were arrived at by studying the median award for each case. The median was used because it did not, in the words of the White Paper,

"distort by factors such as loss of earnings".

In other words, the scheme will say to future victims of crime who are unable to work for lengthy periods—perhaps never again—"Tough luck, mate". In a sense, that is precisely the message that the Home Secretary is sending victims: "Tough luck—my mates down at the Treasury want some more money, and you are going to have to pay the price".

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): The new clauses have a common theme: in one way or another, they are designed to prevent the introduction of our new tariff scheme for criminal injuries compensation on 1 April.

I remind the House that the present scheme for compensating victims of crime was designed no fewer than 30 years ago. In 1965-66, the first full year of the scheme, 2,452 applications were made to the board, and the amount of compensation paid totalled £400,000. Since then, there has been a staggering increase in both the number of new applications and the compensation paid.

For example, by 1987-88—when the Criminal Justice Bill that included provisions to make the present scheme statutory was passing through Parliament—there were 43,000 applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, and the amount of compensation paid had risen from £400,000 to £52 million. By 1992-93, the number of applications had increased by a further 50 per cent. to 66,000, and the amount of compensation had increased threefold from the 1987-88 figure to £152 million. In 1993-94, that figure will be around £170 million—a further increase of 12 per cent.

The current scheme was not intended to cope with that volume of business. Change is, therefore, needed to provide a simpler, faster and more transparent service for victims.

If we are talking of the speed with which claims are settled, we should at least proceed on an accurate basis. I do not know the origin of the figure introduced into the debate by, I think, the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), who suggested that 80 per cent. of claims were settled within nine months. I have the board's latest report in front of me: it gives the percentage of cases resolved within three, six and nine months. The figure given for claims settled within nine months is 30.6 per cent. That is an improvement on the 1991-92 figure, which was only 26.8 per cent., but it falls far short of the 80 per cent. cited, for some reason, by the hon. Gentleman. Clearly, it leaves considerable room for further improvement.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South) *rose—*

Mr. Howard: I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman, while the hon. Member for St. Helens, South is thinking about what I have said.

Mr. Gunnell: The Home Secretary has complained about the increase in volume and cost. Would he say that that was out of proportion to the increase in crime that has occurred over the same period, along with an increase in inflation?

Mr. Howard: It is hugely out of proportion to the increase in crime. Between 1965-66 and 1992-93, violent crime increased fivefold—an appalling statistic. The number of applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board increased by a multiple of 27, and the amount of compensation from the board increased by a multiple of 378.

Mr. Blair: As far as I know, the authority for the statistic that a decision is given within nine months in 80 per cent. of cases can be found in a speech made by Lord Carlisle in the other place. He is, after all, chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, and that is precisely what he said.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman consults paragraph 6.2 of the board's 29th report, entitled "Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1993", he will see a table, very clearly set out, showing the time taken to process applications to the relevant stage for each year that is given. I hope that he will then see that my arithmetic—the calculation that I have made during the debate—is accurate.

Mr. Maclennan: Perhaps the Home Secretary will tell us what period is covered by that report. Lord Carlisle was absolutely clear about the matter when he said:

"I remind the Minister that that has now dramatically changed and that in 80 per cent. of all our applications a decision is now given to the victim within a nine-month period."— [*Official Report, House of Lords,* 2 March 1994; Vol. 552, c. 1083.]

6.45 pm

Mr. Howard: The year that I quoted was 1992-93, the latest for which full figures are available. The calculation that I made was accurate for that year.

Mr. Bermingham: Given that I caused all this discussion, let me remind the Home Secretary that figures in reports are often misleading. It is a question of the decision that is made, rather than the sum paid. The decision that someone is entitled to an award is crucial, rather than the date on which the sum is paid. I think that Lord Carlisle would agree. I merely suggest that the Home Secretary should be wary of figures, which can often cause problems even for Home Secretaries.

Mr. Howard: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, they have not done so on this occasion. Paragraph 6.1 provides the following definition of the time involved:

"A case is considered to have been resolved either when the applicant accepts the Board's assessment or, in the case of applications which have been disallowed and no application for a hearing has been lodged, three months after the date of notification of the decision."

There is no question of taking the date of payment as the relevant decision, as the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr. Bermingham: That is not what I am saying. I am saying, very simply, that it is a case of the decision. The decision may be to refuse, which is non-appealed; a decision to grant compensation may be further delayed because of assessment. Those are the dates that I am taking into account, not the date of payment.

Mr. Howard: As I have made plain to the hon. Gentleman, the date of payment does not enter into the matter; it is not part of the definition set out in paragraph 6.1 of the report, which is the definition that I am using. The reference to payment is a complete irrelevance, as it was never part of the figures that I cited.

I make no bones about the fact that change is also needed to control the costs of compensation, which are becoming unsustainable. We estimate that, without reform, the annual cost of the present arrangements could be in the region of £500 million by the end of the decade. Under the new tariff scheme, the cost is likely to be about £250 million—still a very large sum by the standards of any other state scheme. My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) gave the figures for some other countries; my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) pointed out that Italy has no scheme at all.

Our scheme will remain the most generous state scheme anywhere, as it is now. We pay more compensation than all the other European Union countries put together—and that will continue under our proposed new arrangements.

We all know that, in the real world, resources are not unlimited. If we retained the present arrangements, the amount spent on compensation between now and the year 2001 would be about £2.5 billion. That level of expenditure is simply not sustainable, which is one of the reasons why we need a radically different approach—and why we need it quickly. The tariff scheme will achieve that.

Under the tariff scheme, about £1.4 billion is expected to be spent on compensation between now and the year 2001—over £1 billion less than under the current scheme. I make no apologies for stating that bluntly. It is vital to secure the best value for what is, after all, still a huge amount of taxpayers' money. That is an objective which any prudent and responsible Government should always bear in mind.

If the current scheme continued, the taxpayer would have to provide an extra £250 million a year by the end of the century. Is the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) committing the Labour party to that extra expenditure? He should choose his words with care. He should remember that under the Dunfermline doctrine, which was laid down by the shadow Chancellor, even though nothing said outside this Chamber counts, anything that is said here does count. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues can

[Mr. Howard]

traipse around the broadcasting studios making pledge after pledge, but they will not count for a bean under the Dunfermline doctrine. On the other hand, anything that is said here will be used in evidence, as even the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) concedes.

The Government want a scheme that is generous, as ours is and will continue to be, while ensuring that it offers victims an effective service. That means an efficient scheme that will remain affordable in the future. A scheme based on common law damages, which is time consuming and complex to administer, and under which the average award has risen each year by 5 per cent. more than the rate of inflation, can no longer provide that service. The time has come for a simpler, more straightforward scheme that is easier to administer, gets awards to claimants more quickly, and does all that within a realistic and controllable budget. That is exactly what our tariff scheme aims to do.

In future, as hon. Members know, payments will be made from a tariff of awards for injuries of comparable severity. All eligible applicants with the same injury will receive the same award. They will be able to see from the tariff how much that award is likely to be, and they will receive their compensation more quickly and with less fuss. It is inevitable that some people will get less under the new scheme than under the present one, but most claimants will receive as much as, or more than, they would under the current arrangements. At least 54 per cent. will be in that position when the tariff scheme is introduced. A further 16 per cent. will lose £500 or less, and—an important consideration to many victims—they will get their awards more quickly.

Much has been made of the few cases in which applicants will not receive large sums for loss of earnings and future medical care, which might have been payable under the existing scheme.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: There are two matters that I should like my right hon. and learned Friend to address. First, what burden of proof is required to establish that injuries are genuine and claims are not false? Secondly, would not a system of appeal—by the Crown in the case of the effects of injury becoming less severe, and by the victim in the case of the effects of injury worsening—get over the difficulty caused by payments being made too quickly?

Mr. Howard: I do not quite follow the logic of my hon. and learned Friend's second point. With regard to the first, the burden of proof is the balance of probabilities.

I was explaining that we have set a generous upper limit of £250,000 for awards. In the past three years, out of a total of 180,000 applications, just seven awards a year have, on average, exceeded that sum. Nor should it be forgotten that the criminal injuries compensation scheme is not the only source of state aid for those who have suffered criminal injuries. Such people also receive generous and long-term support from the national health service and from the Department of Social Security, and many occupational groups benefit from generous sick pay and pension schemes. Nor should we forget that there are many other kinds of injury or misfortune for which there is not and never has been a special state scheme of help.

From what I have said, it will be clear that we do not accept the thrust of the amendments. Nor do we accept the argument that, in seeking to change the basis of the criminal injuries compensation scheme while the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1980 remain unimplemented, we have in some way acted improperly or unlawfully. As that matter is currently before the courts, it would not be proper for me to comment further on it.

I do not say that the tariff scheme may not be capable of improvement. We have already made it clear that we shall monitor very closely the way it works and will be ready to listen to the views of responsible bodies and practitioners about how it might be improved. If we need to make changes or refinements, we will. Once the new scheme has settled down and can be seen to be working effectively, we shall be better placed to consider giving statutory force to the new arrangements. But the new arrangements constitute a framework within which claims will be quantified more simply, settled more speedily, ensure that more than 50 per cent. of claimants get at least as much as they do under the present scheme and yet cost the taxpayer substantially less than would have been the case had the present arrangements continued.

On that basis, I ask the House to reject the new clauses.

Mr. Blair: My reply will be very brief. The Home Secretary has given only two reasons for proceeding with the new scheme. The first is that it will be simpler, faster and more transparent for victims. That argument has been rejected by every victims' organisation. It is absurd to pretend that the scheme is being introduced for the benefit of victims, when the organisations that deal with victims unanimously decry its nature.

The second reason is that this is all about cutting costs. If that is the real reason—and I suggest that it is—the wretchedly deceptive White Paper should never have been issued, and we should have had proper consultation with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and others to work out some better type of scheme.

The introduction of the scheme in this way is, in our view, wholly reprehensible. If the number of applications for criminal injuries compensation has soared, the answer is not to cut support for victims but to take measures to cut the crime that gives rise to the applications. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has entirely failed to answer our case. We shall press the new clause to a Division, and I ask my hon. Friends and others who believe in the case of victims to support it.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 269, Noes 296.

Division No. 181] **[6.56 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Benton, Joe
Adams, Mrs Irene	Bermingham, Gerald
Ainger, Nick	Berry, Roger
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Betts, Clive
Allen, Graham	Blair, Tony
Alton, David	Blunkett, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Boateng, Paul
Armstrong, Hilary	Boyes, Roland
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Ashton, Joe	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Austin-Walker, John	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Burden, Richard
Barnes, Harry	Byers, Stephen
Barron, Kevin	Cabom, Richard
Battle, John	Callaghan, Jim
Bayley, Hugh	Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Bennett, Andrew F.	Campbell-Savours, D. N.

Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmors)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'l'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh

Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 4

PREVENTION OF MISUSE OF DRUGS BY YOUNG PEOPLE

'.—(1) It shall be the duty of each authority, in co-operation with the police, probation service and such other agencies as it thinks fit, to assess the need for education to prevent the misuse of drugs and other drug-related crime among persons under the age of 18 years in its area.

(2) The Secretary of State may make grants to authorities in order for them—

(a) to fulfil their duty under subsection (1) above, and

(b) to provide the education which, having made the assessment under subsection (1) above, they deem necessary.

(3) In this section, "authority" means—

(a) the council of any county so far as they are the council for an area for which there are no district councils,

(b) the council of any district comprised in an area for which there is no district council,

(c) a London borough council,

(d) the Common Council of the City of London, or

(e) the Council of the Isles of Scilly.'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this we may discuss the following: new clause 5—*National drug prevention strategy*—

'.—(1) The Secretary of State shall publish a national strategy for drug prevention.

(2) In drawing up the strategy under subsection (1) above, the Secretary of State shall have regard to the needs of

(a) persons who are detained in prisons, young offender institutions, remand centres and secure training centres, and

(b) children in the care of local authorities.'.

New Clause 51—*Misuse of drugs*—

'The third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh columns of Schedule 4 to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (which prescribes the maximum punishment by way of a fine or imprisonment for offences under the Act) shall be amended as follows—

(1) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 4(2) (production, or being concerned in the production, of a controlled drug) the words "(a) Summary" in column three, "6

months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column four, "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column 5 and "3 months or £500; or both" in column six shall be omitted; and for the words "Life or a fine; or both" in column four shall be substituted the words "50 years" and for the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column five shall be substituted the words "25 years"; and for the words "5 years of a fine; or both" in column six there shall be substituted the words "10 years".

(2) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 4(3) (supplying or offering to supply a controlled drug or being concerned in the doing of either activity by another) the words "(a) Summary" in column three, the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column four, "six months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column five and "3 months or £500; or both" in column six shall be omitted; and for the words "Life or a fine or both" in column four shall be substituted the words "50 years", for the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column five shall be substituted the words "25 years", and for the words "5 years or a fine; or both" in column six shall be substituted the words "10 years".

(3) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 5(2) (having possession of a controlled drug) for the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" and "7 years and a fine; or both" in column four shall be substituted the words "Detention in a rehabilitation centre for a term at the court's discretion"; for the words "3 months or £500; or both" and "5 years or a fine; of both" in column five shall be substituted the words "Detention in a rehabilitation centre for a term at the court's discretion"; and for the words "3 months or £200; or both" and "2 years or a fine; or both" in column six shall be substituted the words "Detention in a rehabilitation centre for a term at the court's discretion".

(4) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 5(3) (having possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply it to another) the words "(a) Summary" in column three, the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column four, "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column five, and "3 months or £500; or both" in column six shall be omitted; and for the words "Life or a fine; or both" in column four shall be substituted the words "50 years", for the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column five shall be substituted the words "25 years", and for the words "5 years or a fine; or both" in column six shall be substituted the words "10 years".

(5) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 6(2) (cultivation of cannabis plant) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" shall be omitted. For the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column seven shall be substituted the words "25 years".

(6) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 8 (being the occupier, or concerned in the management, of premises and permitting or suffering certain activities to take place there) the words "(a) Summary" in column three, the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column four, the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column five, and "3 months or £500; or both" in column six shall be omitted; and for the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column four shall be substituted the words "25 years", for the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column five shall be substituted the words "25 years", and for the words "5 years or a fine; or both" in column six shall be substituted the words "10 years".

(7) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 9 (offences relating to opium) the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column seven shall be omitted; and for the words "14 years or a fine or both" in column seven shall be substituted the words "25 years".

(8) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 9A (Prohibition of supply etc. of articles for administering or preparing controlled drugs) for the word "Summary" in column three there shall be substituted the words "On indictment" and for the words "6 months or level 5 on the standard scale; or both" shall be substituted the words "5 years".

(9) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 11(2) (contravention of direction relating to safe custody of controlled drugs) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and the words "6 months or level 5 on the standard scale; or both" shall be omitted; and for the words "2 years or a fine; or both" shall be substituted the words "10 years".

(10) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 12(6) (contravention of direction prohibiting practitioner etc from possessing supply etc controlled drugs) the words "(a) Summary" in column three, the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column four, the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column five, and the words "3 months or £500; or both" in column six shall be omitted; and for the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column four shall be substituted the words "25 years"; for the words "14 years or a fine; of both" in column five shall be substituted the words "25 years" and for the words "5 years or a fine; or both" in column six shall be substituted the words "10 years".

(11) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 13(3) (contravention of direction prohibiting practitioner etc from prescribing supply etc controlled drugs) the words "(a) Summary" in column three, the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column four, the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column five, and the words "3 months or £500; or both" in column six shall be omitted; and for the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column four shall be substituted the words "25 years", for the words "14 years or a fine or both" in column five shall be substituted the words "25 years" and for the words "5 years or a fine; or both" in column six shall be substituted the words "10 years".

(12) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 17(3) (failure to comply with notice requiring information relating to prescribing supply etc of drugs) for the word "Summary" in column three shall be substituted the words "On indictment" and for the words "level 3 on the standard scale" in column seven shall be substituted the words "6 months".

(13) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 17(4) (giving false information in purported compliance with notice requiring information relating to prescribing supply etc drugs) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column seven shall be omitted; and for the words "2 years or a fine; or both; in column seven shall be substituted the words "4 years".

(14) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 18(1) (contravention of regulations (other than regulations relating to addicts)) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" shall be omitted. For the words "2 years or a fine; or both" in column seven shall be substituted the words "4 years".

(15) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 18(2) (contravention of terms of licence or other authority (other than licence issued under regulations relating to addicts)) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column seven shall be omitted; and for the words "2 years or a fine; or both" in column seven shall be substituted the words "4 years".

(16) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 18(3) (giving false evidence in purported compliance with obligation to give information imposed under or by virtues of regulations) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column seven shall be omitted; and for the words "2 years or a fine; or both" in column seven shall be substituted the words "4 years".

(17) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 18(4) (giving false information, or producing documents etc containing false statement etc, for purpose of obtaining issue or renewal of a licence or other authority) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column seven shall be omitted; and for the words "2 years or a fine, or both" shall be substituted the words "4 years".

(18) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 20 (assisting in or inducing commission outside United Kingdom of an offence punishable under a corresponding law) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and the words "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column seven shall be omitted; and for the words "14 years or a fine; or both" in column seven shall be substituted the words "25 years".

(19) In the entries prescribing the punishment for offences under section 23(4) (obstructing exercise of powers of search etc or concealing books, drugs etc) the words "(a) Summary" in column three and "6 months or the prescribed sum; or both" in column seven shall be omitted; and for the words "2 years or a fine; or both" shall be substituted the words "15 years.".'

New Clause 52 —*Detention in a rehabilitation centre—*

[Mr. Deputy Speaker Mr. Michael Morris]

-'In section 5 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Restrictions of possession of controlled drugs), after subsection (5) shall be inserted the following subsection:

"(5A) Anyone convicted of an offence under this section either on indictment or summarily shall be detained in a rehabilitation centre for a term at the court's discretion.".'.

New Clause 64—*Drug dependence and rehabilitation programmes in prison—*

'(1) It shall be the duty of every prison to provide drug dependence rehabilitation programmes to any prisoner who has need of them.

(2) The duty under this section shall be met if such programmes are provided by voluntary organisations.'.

New Clause 65—*Reduction in sentences for offenders willing to attend drug rehabilitation programmes—*

'(1) If a court is satisfied that misuse of drugs contributed to the offence of which an offender has been found guilty, in determining what sentence to pass on that offender, a court shall take into account his willingness to undergo a drug dependence or drug rehabilitation programme of a type specified by the Secretary of State by regulations made by Statutory Instrument.

(2) If, as a result of taking into account any matter referred to in subsection (1) above, the court imposes a punishment on the offender which is less severe than it would otherwise have done, it shall state in open court that it has done so.

(3) If a person fails to complete, or fails to complete successfully, a programme under subsection (1) when a court has reduced a sentence under subsection (2), he shall be guilty of an offence.

(4) An offence under subsection (3) shall be punishable in like manner as the offence under what that person was originally sentenced under subsection (1).'.

New Clause 67—*Decriminalisation of cannabis possession and use—*

'.—(1) The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 shall be amended in accordance with subsections (2), (3) and (4) of this section.

(2) In section 2 (controlled drugs and their classification for the purposes of this Act)—

(a) in paragraph (a) of subsection (1) for the words "Part I, II or III" there shall be substituted the words "Part I, II, III or IIIA";

(b) for paragraph (b) of subsection (1) there shall be substituted the following paragraph—

"(b) the expressions 'Class A drug', 'Class B drug', 'Class C drug' and 'Class D drug' mean any of the substances and products for the time being specified respectively in Part I, Part II, Part III, and Part IIIA of that Schedule;"

(3) Section 6 (restriction of cultivation of cannabis plant) is hereby repealed.

(4) In Schedule 2 (which lists controlled drugs for the purposes of section 2 of that Act)—

(a) in paragraph 1(a) of Part I the words "Cannabinol, except where contained in cannabis or cannabis resin" and "Cannabinol derivatives" shall be omitted;

(b) in paragraph 1(a) of Part II the words "Cannabis" and Cannabis resin" shall be omitted; and

(c) after paragraph 4 of Part III, there shall be inserted—

"Part III A

Class D Drugs

1. The following substances, namely:—
Cannabinol
Cannabis
Cannabis resin

2. Any preparation or other product containing a substance or product for the time being specified in paragraph 1 above.".

(5) The Secretary of State shall by Order made by statutory instrument make rules for the administration, use and distribution of any Class D drug and such amendments and exceptions to the Misuse of Drug Regulations 1985 as will make lawful the production, possession and supply of any Class D drug.

(6) No Order shall be made under subsection (5) above unless a draft of the Order has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament and the Secretary of State shall not lay a draft of such an Order before Parliament except after consultation with or on the recommendation of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs established under section 1 of the 1971 Act.'.

Government amendments Nos. 42, 79, and 81 to 83.

Mr. Michael: I intend to speak primarily to new clauses 4 and 5, which require, first, action to prevent drug misuse by young people and, secondly, a national strategy of drug prevention.

It is a bizarre fact that when the Bill went into Committee it contained nothing to combat the problem of drugs and drug-related crime. Bizarre is too kind a word for such an omission, given that drug-related crime is the scourge of communities up and down the country and that up to £2 billion in burglary and property theft relates to the problem. Pressure from the Labour party, which has highlighted the need to tackle the causes of crime as well as crime itself, has resulted in the Government making some response. Did Ministers recognise the craziness of cutting drug co-ordinators' posts? Did they recognise the damage that is being done by cuts in the youth service arising from Government failure to provide funds and leaving idle hands for which the devil is quick to find work? No, the Government's action was to increase the upper limit for fines for drugs offences. They did nothing to cut crime or to prevent drug misuse.

Even more telling was the method that the Minister had to use to propose that change. As the Home Secretary had missed out drugs and drug-related crime as an issue for the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, the Government had to drag it into the Bill with an amendment to the clause which increases penalties under the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967. The action that the Government propose does nothing to provide the people, the funds, the resources or the strategies to tackle the problems of drugs and drug-related crime. In Committee, the Minister introduced an increase by five times in the maximum fine level for the possession of drugs. It was not asked for and it was irrelevant to the urgent problem to be tackled. Incidentally—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. May I ask the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) to carry on her conversation elsewhere?

Mr. Michael: I was surprised, when we discussed the increase in fines for drugs in Committee, to hear that the Justices' Clerks Society had requested that rise. That was the assertion made by Conservative Members and by the Minister. They asserted it as the only example of support for their proposition that they could find. I have since been able to confirm that the Justices' Clerks Society had neither requested nor supported such an increase. The Government and their propositions ended up entirely friendless.

Frankly, increasing the upper limit of fines is irrelevant to the problem that should be addressed in the Bill. Consider the nature of that problem. The total number of notified addicts increased by five times between 1982 and 1992. The number of seizures of drugs increased by 233 per cent. between 1982 and 1992, with the number of seizures for class A drugs rising by 304 per cent.

7.15 pm

In the past week, the publication of provisional figures for drug seizures in 1993 by the National Crime Intelligence Service showed an increase of 342 per cent. in seizures at import of amphetamines compared to 1992. It

showed a 19 per cent. increase in the seizure of cannabis and a 25 per cent. increase in the seizure of heroin. The number of people found guilty of drug offences has increased by 153 per cent. since 1982. There has been an especially worrying increase in the number of offences committed by young people. Among under-17s, there has been an increase by five times in the number of drug offenders between 1982 and 1992. In the 17 to 21 age group, there has been an increase of 244 per cent. One would have thought that those increases would have concentrated the mind of Government and brought Ministers to the House with a Bill, and ultimately to the Committee with amendments, which would tackle the problem and its roots. That is not the case.

Research undertaken by Manchester university paints an alarming picture. In a sample of 800 young people aged between 15 and 16 in Merseyside and Greater Manchester, almost half had taken drugs. It appears that a new youth drug culture has developed, associated with raves and so-called dance drugs such as ecstasy, LSD and amphetamines.

It is relevant to tackle those root problems in the Bill because it is also clear that there is a link between crime and drugs. Addicts frequently steal to support their habit and the amounts of money they require to do so are truly frightening. Using a formula supplied by the Greater Manchester police, my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has estimated that property worth up to £2 billion is stolen each year by drug addicts to finance their habit. That is why there is a need for a strategy to tackle the use of drugs, especially the use of hard drugs, and the problem of drug abuse by young people.

We need a policy that hits hard at the supply side of the drugs market by combating drug traffickers and dealers. That requires effective police and customs work to deal with the major importers and manufacturing, the distributors and, at street level, the low-level dealers who can make life a total misery for local people. I shall return to that important issue in a moment. In addition, there must be severe penalties for those convicted of trafficking drugs. We must also co-operate at international level to assist developing countries where drugs are grown—an aspect of foreign policy too often ignored and overlooked.

We must also cut the demand for illicit drugs at home. That is absolutely vital because it is quite clear that it is impossible to stop imports totally, despite all the efforts of the police and the customs. That is where we need the measures set out by the Opposition in the new clauses. We seek measures to discourage young people from using drugs in the first instance—for example, education programmes in schools and youth clubs—and measures to provide a range of treatment options for those misusing drugs. The Government failed to listen to those of us who protested when they ended the ring fencing of specific grants for drug and alcohol facilities, especially residential facilities, and now they are seeing their chickens coming home to roost as the availability of those facilities is reduced.

We must have adequate treatment for those in prison, in remand centres and in secure training centres. We know that drug abuse is rife in prison. Far more must be done to provide treatment for those in institutions. I am glad to see that, in some of the other new clauses, Conservative Members are waking up to the type of new clause that has been proposed by the Opposition on previous occasions. I welcome that and I only hope that they will be able to persuade Ministers of the need for action on the fronts proposed in the measures that I put forward during the passage of what became the Criminal Justice Act 1993, before that during the passage of what became the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and during the passage of this Bill.

We need to tackle the social causes of drug misuse. Ministers have still not adequately recognised those social causes and their many detrimental impacts on our society, which often result in an output through the medium of crime. We need to provide effective sanctions for drug users who are arrested for drug-related offences.

At a local level, the importance of a partnership approach to the problems cannot be overemphasised. Just what can be achieved is shown by the King's Cross partnership. Until recently, 150 dealers in crack, cocaine and heroin operated in King's Cross. Residents felt terrorised and intimidated. A combination of robust enforcement techniques by the police, who cracked down on the dealers, and measures by the two local authorities, Camden and Islington, have produced dramatic results. The two boroughs improved street lighting, changed street design and used their licensing powers to prevent cafes from staying open all night, thereby depriving dealers of refuge. The result is that the number of dealers has been reduced to a handful in less than 18 months.

Ministers pay lip service to partnership at a local level, but those partnerships can succeed only if they have the commitment of police, local authorities and local people working together and if they have the effective support of central Government. The missing partner in so many of the equations is central Government; the people who are missing in terms of practical commitment are Ministers of the Crown.

One vital element of a co-ordinated strategy is drugs prevention education for young people. Against that background, what have the Government done about such education? Last year, they ceased funding for drugs advisers in schools. They expressed concern at the time and said that they were sure that, if drugs education was important, money would be made available by local authorities or other sources. An analysis by the National Liaison Group of Co-ordinators for Health and Drug Education shows that, whereas there were 135 drug education co-ordinators before the cuts in March 1993, now there are only 75. Those still in place are no longer able to devote most of their time to working with young people on drugs education.

No wonder the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, which was set up to advise Ministers on drugs policy, would they only listen, said in a report in June 1993:

> "We are concerned that the ending of the funding for preventative health education will mean that many local authorities will not be able to fund their health education initiatives . . . those in the more deprived areas where drugs might be more prevalent may be least able to provide financial resources to finance this work."

Tackling the drugs problem and, therefore, the crime that is related to drugs requires a co-ordinated policy. It requires co-ordination of response not just from the Home Office but from other Ministers, such as those involved with health, education and local government. We see no sign of the co-ordination and close working that is needed. Yes, there is a ministerial group, but we see no sign that it will introduce the positive action that is necessary to deal with the problems of drug-related crime and the causes of those problems. It is small wonder that the chairman of the

all-party group on drugs, the hon. Member for Lewis (Mr. Rathbone), described the ending of funding as a "near scandal".

Drugs education is vital to the fight against drugs and drug-related crime. Our new clause would place a duty on the local authority to assess the need for drugs education and would allow the Home Secretary to ensure that drug prevention education was reinstated across the country. We seek the partnership that the Government should encourage. The Government should accept the new clauses tonight.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I shall speak to the new clauses standing in my name and the names of my hon. Friends. They relate to the reduction in sentences for offenders willing to attend drug rehabilitation programmes—new clause 65—and to drug dependence and rehabilitation programmes in prison—new clause 64.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) is not alone in his concern about drugs and drug-related crime. We are all aware that property crime committed by drug addicts seeking to finance their cravings has been running at about £2 billion a year. I estimate that the cost is equal to about £114 stolen from every household in the country.

I accept that the Government are fully aware of the problem and I congratulate them on trying, among other things, to identify drug addicts. An example of that is clause 128, which empowers prison officers to take samples from an inmate on arrival in prison. However, there is no point in doing that unless it is carried through to its logical conclusion. The only way that prisoners will not reoffend is to wean them off drugs in the first place. There must be no half-hearted measures and, as in all things, it takes two to tango.

As shown in new clause 65, there must be an incentive for an offender to undertake a course in drug rehabilitation. Under the new clause, there could be a reduction in sentence if an offender were willing to undertake the drug treatment programme. My response to the cynic who might say, "Well, any prisoner would agree to promise that if he got a reduction in sentence", would be that the sting in the tail would be that if the prisoner failed to complete the course successfully, he would have to serve the whole of the original sentence.

New clause 64 is the second part of the tango. It puts the onus on the Government to provide effective drug rehabilitation services. At present, they are woefully inadequate. It is not sufficient for officials at a prison such as Whitemoor, which I visited just a few months ago, to say, "Ah, we have prison counselling services available should any prisoner ask for them." It is no wonder that every prison in the land is riddled with drugs and that the inmates leave prison high on drugs only to reoffend.

Mrs. Gillan: I agree in principle with what my hon. Friend is saying. However, does she believe that statutory provision is required? A few weeks ago, I went to look at Holloway prison. The prison governor told me that he wishes to experiment with drug-free zones within the prison. That would be successful only if the prisoners undertook to be tested on a random or regular basis for drugs. In return, they would receive extra privileges. Does my hon. Friend agree that that method, rather than going the whole hog and introducing statutory provision, might be the way in which to deal with the problem?

Lady Olga Maitland: The governor of Holloway prison should look to the example of the governor of Downview prison, who already has in place a successful drug rehabilitation programme that works exactly as my hon. Friend describes. Downview prison, which is in Banstead on the edge of my constituency, has a programme run by a voluntary agency called the Addictive Diseases Trust. The trust runs intensive courses of about 12 weeks and they are attended on a voluntary basis. Since the courses began two years ago, 200 prisoners have now either successfully completed the course or are in the process of doing so.

The success of the scheme is such that it is the only prison in the country where there is a drug-free corridor. Prisoners can qualify for that corridor only if they submit themselves to a urine test, which provides an incentive for maintaining the programme on rehabilitation. We find that having one drug-free corridor in the prison has led to other prisoners asking about it. They are applying to join it from other prisons and it will undoubtedly lead to a day when the governor will say, "I shall no longer just have a corridor; I shall have an entire wing."

I have visited Downview several times and I have sat with the inmates in the counselling area, which is called the "Serenity Shack", and seen them undergoing their counselling. Interestingly, it is conducted by a former drug addict who speaks the addicts' own language and who is able to understand their problems. In that way, he puts a lot of discipline on the prisoners to complete the programme. It was interesting that the inmates told me about their sheer relief in finding a course of treatment that was effective and that relieved them of a nightmare that had begun when they were children aged between 10 and 12 and first started to experiment with soft drugs. I have had discussions with grown men, lifers and murderers, who have broken down in tears at their wasted lives. They felt that drugs controlled their lives and caused misery for their families and themselves, and they felt that there was no stopping this terrible curse.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my hon. Friend join me in resisting all moves to legalise soft drugs, as that is the start of the slippery slope to crime and a deprived life?

7.30 pm

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for that most useful remark, which I totally support. I find it scandalous that there is a new clause that would legalise soft drugs. I cannot understand how any party can be so irresponsible.

It is interesting that those inmates now feel that a burden has been taken off their shoulders. They are fitter, healthier and have control over their lives. Most important, there is no incentive for them to reoffend when they are released from prison. That can only be of benefit to everyone.

According to a parliamentary reply that I received some weeks ago, the Government's contribution to the enormously successful programme is barely £18,000 a year. The rest of the money comes from voluntary contributions. Private discussions with the Government have not yet encouraged me to believe that they are willing to extend that programme to other prisons. They have doubts on the grounds of cost and the fact that the treatment is not fully proven. The programme at Downview prison

has meant that 20 former prisoners are now free and have successfully remained off drugs. That alone more than compensates for the cost of the programme.

It is shortsighted to say, "Let us keep watching and waiting". As the Government spend £36 million a year on the disastrous Health Education Authority, I suggest that they make a cut in the budget on pornographic sex education and put £1 million into an effective rehabilitation programme, the benefits of which have already been tried and tested at Downview prison, where the results are open for all to see. Could not that programme be extended to all prisons in this country? We have no time to waste. We should get on with the programme as a matter of urgency, and I trust that the Government will give the subject full consideration.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): This is the worst nightmare that the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) could have imagined—I rise to speak in favour of new clause 67, which proposes to decriminalise cannabis possession and use. Perhaps it is unnecessary for me to say this, but so that Conservative Members, even the most obdurate ones, understand, the proposal is not supported by those on the Front Bench of the official Opposition. It is not Labour party policy to decriminalise cannabis.

I understand that this is the first opportunity that we have had in about 15 years to decriminalise cannabis rather than just to talk about it. Despite what the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam said about how scandalous it was that anyone should even presume to urge the decriminalisation of cannabis, there is a debate going on outside the House. That debate involves not only a bunch of 1960s ex-hippies, but judges, senior police officers involved with the drug squad, the head of Interpol, the Surgeon General of the United States of America, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, *The Economist*, and a number of right-wing radical groups. The issue is not confined, therefore, to one narrow sector of society.

One of my worries was that, despite that debate outside the House, we were not able to debate the matter in the House. All I want to do is promote a debate, so that we can be sure that we are judging the situation as it should be judged—dispassionately, coolly and in the interests of the population.

I enter a personal note. I have never in my life taken or used illegal substances such as cannabis. I do not know how many Conservative Members can put their hands on their hearts and say that. *[Interruption.]* I can see three or four raised hands among Conservative Members, so I must assume that at some stage the rest have partaken.

I have done a little bit of homework. I am sorry that the Home Secretary is not at the Dispatch Box, because I have been reading about some of his wilder moments at university. I would like him to come to the Dispatch Box, put his hand on his heart and say that he has never in his life used cannabis. He might find some difficulty doing that and being honest at the same time.

I am not speaking on behalf of myself or to legalise anything that I have done in the past. That is not a moral point, but something that is worth putting on the record. Much to my regret, the permissive 1960s seem to have passed me by in all respects. I have made up for it in certain areas since then, but this is not one of them.

Between 1.5 million and 5 million of our citizens regularly use cannabis for recreational purposes. My new clause seeks to create a new category of drug, class D drugs that would, in effect, put cannabis on the same level as alcohol and tobacco. Although it is legal to purchase alcohol and tobacco, we do so under strict conditions. They are not always enforced, but the law exists to enforce them, should we wish. They must be bought from licensed premises, they should not be sold to people under a certain age; there are tax, revenue and quality considerations. My proposal would only put cannabis on the same level as alcohol and nicotine.

If one was being strictly logical, one would consider the health aspects of cannabis, nicotine and alcohol, then legalise cannabis and ban alcohol and nicotine. I have not yet been able to discover anyone who has died from using cannabis, but, every year, tens of thousands of our citizens die from, and suffer from illnesses related to, using alcohol and nicotine. We talk about drugs, but alcohol and nicotine are far more potent drugs than cannabis.

We are not even using language in the correct sense. When we talk about cannabis, we are discussing an illegal substance or drug. When we talk about tobacco and alcohol, we are discussing legal drugs.

Dr. Spink: I hope that the hon. Member will accept that, if tobacco came on to the market now, as a brand new product, no responsible Government would legalise its general use for the public. In that case, why should he now ask for two wrongs to make one right? Surely society should be protected from soft drugs, just as we would wish to protect it from tobacco, if it came on to the market as a new product.

Mr. Banks: That is an interesting point. If we decided in our wisdom and on health grounds—the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there are legitimate health grounds—to ban nicotine, we would create a large crime wave which would dwarf anything we had ever seen. Obviously, therefore, we cannot do that.

Cannabis is not as destructive of human health as nicotine. In those circumstances, I cannot accept what the hon. Member said, on two grounds, but he is right in one respect. If Sir Walter Raleigh had just returned with the new product of tobacco, I suspect that we would have banned it. Perhaps we would not even have allowed him to bring in potatoes.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): If the theory is that, by banning a drug, we protect people from it, could my hon. Friend explain the experience of a large number of my young constituents, who find themselves in no way protected from the possibility of being hooked on the drug and caught in the crime wave that goes with it?

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend is correct. Surveys show that a significant cross-section of society use cannabis for recreational purposes. Cannabis features in 90 per cent. of all drug offences. When we talk about drug offences, we are effectively talking about cannabis, and there were 42,000 offenders in 1991.

As well as the debate outside the House, the police, by their actions, are allowing cannabis use. When they pick up people who are carrying a small amount of cannabis that is clearly for personal use, they issue a caution and let them off. That is what is happening. I do not know what the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam would say about that, but it is a fact, and the House should recognise that.

[Mr. Banks]

People often say—the hon. Members for Sutton and Cheam and for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) said it—that the use of soft drugs is the slippery slope towards the chasm. For some people that may be true, but not for everyone. One could also say that, as soon as someone sips a glass of dry sherry, they are on the slippery slope to drinking meths on the Embankment. I assume that the poor unfortunates who end up hopeless alcoholics started off by drinking a dry sherry, but that does not mean that everyone who has a beer or a glass of sherry ends up a hopeless alcoholic.

In countries where cannabis has been decriminalised, such as Holland, there has been a fall in the number of hard drug users. While I am on the subject of Holland, I must point out that we are in danger of creating drugs tourism in the European Union. If different laws apply in different countries in a union, where the movement of people across national boundaries is that much easier, people who are interested in experimenting with illegal substances will obviously move to the countries where they are more freely available. We should be concerned about drugs tourism.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) mentioned the extensive criminal activity that surrounds drug supply and said that it was estimated that 50 per cent. of property crimes are associated with drug supply and demand. The police recognise that, like prostitution, the use of illegal substances is something that they can never stop, whatever resources we give them. They also maintain that we do not give them enough resources to meet the demands that the Government place on them.

The decriminalisation of cannabis will allow control and regulation and that is the way to approach the matter. It would also allow the police to use their resources more effectively in other areas where damage is being done to our citizens. I do not know whether the use of cannabis damages the people who use them or society, but much of the criminal activity surrounding the supply of such substances clearly damages us all.

I am not saying that, because we cannot beat it, we should legislate for it and legalise it. That is like saying that, because we cannot beat house burglary or car crime, we will make them legal. However, why should millions of citizens be criminalised for an activity that, according to the evidence that I have gathered, does not harm them, as the users, or harm others?

When the Home Secretary tried to whip up some grass roots support at the Conservative party conference by saying, "Let's hit them with harder penalties," it was an absurd, but typical, reaction. We are not hitting them and we are not dealing with the problem, so how on earth will stiffer penalties solve the problem? It is not surprising that a range of eminent authorities attacked the Home Secretary's proposals.

If we move from criminalisation to regulation, we can start to treat the drug-dependent—that is somewhat different from using cannabis—as patients rather than as criminals. We can also deal with drug education in a different way. It is difficult to become involved in education about drugs, because drug-taking is an illegal activity. Much HIV infection is passed on via people who use hard drugs, and we are not controlling that.

I am not advocating drug use. I have never used the stuff, nor do I intend to, although I do not object to it. If someone gave me a hash brownie, I would probably pop it down, but I would not smoke hash because I do not like smoke getting into my lungs. I am not advocating drug use, but decriminalisation would have some tangible benefits. One benefit is that it would allow up to 5 million of our citizens who use cannabis for recreational purposes to be brought within the law, rather than criminalised.

In summary, if the new clause were accepted and placed in the Bill it would: release law enforcement resources; improve police-community relations and, therefore, police effectiveness; all but eliminate revenue-raising crime to fund illegal purchases; enable effective measures to curb the spread of HIV; improve the health of people using drugs; increase the credibility of health education messages; and improve early access to treatment for those developing drug problems.

The legal trade would have tax benefits, which would no doubt appeal to some Conservative Members; would eliminate the excessive illicit profits that generate violence and corruption; and would remove a major spur to the erosion of traditional, legal safeguards.

On all those grounds, at an appropriate stage I shall urge the House to support new clause 7.

7.45 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), speaking for the Opposition, directed his comments towards the Home Office and its Ministers. I echo the tenor of many of his comments, but he should have directed them to the Secretary of State for Education rather than to the Home Secretary.

Lack of education—especially the education of young people—is an appalling chink in the Government's activities to tackle the misuse of drugs, and I say so advisedly. It is not that nothing is going on as there is much activity. Such illustrious organisations as TACADE are providing extremely well-designed material and Life Education Centres have marvellous programmes that are directed towards young children. They are doing their stuff and are supported by voluntary agencies.

However, I fear that, all too often, they are left to get on with it. The Government's decision to cut Government funding for health education co-ordinators in education authorities was appalling. As I told my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Education Ministers, I hope that they will review that decision, and I am sorry that they are not on the Front Bench for our consideration of new clauses 4 and 5.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, who has just left the Chamber, also took an unfair swipe at my hon. Friend the Minister. Home Office initiatives are one of the areas in which Government activities are excellent. A word of warning, however, as their activities are under review. The Department should not undertake a review like that conducted by Ministers for Education—to find out how best to stop excellent initiatives. I hope that it will find out how programmes can be extended to other cities, towns and regions.

Programmes work best where a co-operative venture is already in place, as was the case in Sussex. Brighton had the first drugs initiative and it was able to stitch in with the East Sussex drugs advisory council and all the good work

that it has done. That is an excellent example of what Government funding for a Government initiative can achieve, working with local people.

I must offer some words of warning about the ideas about decriminalisation put forward by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). First, he cited the director general of Interpol in support of his contention, but he was taken out of context, and has been quoted very selectively. I shall be delighted to share with the hon. Member the correspondence that I have received from the director general in recent weeks.

Like the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, I am a delegate to the Council of Europe. I should remind him that the legalisation or decriminalisation of drugs was debated extensively at the Council—I was proud to be the rapporteur for that debate. The recommendation not to legalise drugs was carried unanimously in the Council, which then embraced 26 nations—certainly no fewer—with the support of representatives from all parties of all nations.

The truth of the matter is that the decriminalisation of drugs will not work, and that cannabis has worse effects than the hon. Member for Newham, North-West suggested. It increases the likelihood of lung infection, because it increases the toxic gases in cigarettes, it affects people's brains and, most important of all, it has severe effects on young girls, because it affects their reproductive organs.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rathbone: I will not give way, because I was immensely restrained during the hon. Member's speech, and I know that the House wants to make progress.

Mr. Banks: I would have given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Rathbone: The hon. Member seemed to hang his argument on the idea that, as cannabis is only a recreational drug, it should be made legal. Those who take hard nasty drugs such as cocaine and heroin also look upon them as so-called recreational drugs. To hang the arguments about decriminalisation on allowing people to have more legal fun when they are having illegal fun now is a rather sad commentary from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

New clauses 64 and 65, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) relate to drug treatment in prisons. We do not know how many prisoners misuse drugs. We know that about 45,000 people are in prison, and we know that they are roughly representative of the population. A survey of prisoners in 1989 found that 43 per cent. said that they used drugs regularly outside prison. It is therefore likely that they could be misusing drugs inside prison.

The British Medical Association found that 40 per cent. of women prisoners in Holloway may have problems with drugs—my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam spoke about that earlier. The 1991 national prison survey reported that 41 per cent. of prisoners who were questioned said that their first confrontation with police was because of drink or drugs. That relates to the comments made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

Of the cases tried by magistrates in the London area, 80 per cent. involve drink or drugs. That highlights the need for treatment for misuse of drugs and alcohol, and the fact that one should not differentiate between them.

It is extremely difficult to provide such treatment in prisons. Those involved in the work of the Addictive Diseases Trust have said categorically:

"Admitting to a drug or alcohol problem in prison can have unpleasant consequences"

on release. That is absolutely true, but it is still essential to have the ability to offer that treatment.

In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam, I lift my hat to the Addictive Diseases Trust and to Sir Anthony Hopkins, who is more famous for other things, for his marvellous support of and deep involvement with the trust. I also commend Jonathan Wallace, the trust's director, on getting a unit going in Downview prison.

New clause 64 makes an important reference to "voluntary organisations". The Addictive Diseases Trust believes, based on its experience, that it is essential to establish with inmates that the treatment process is not part of the prison system, and that its staff are not employed directly by the Home Office or the prison service. That is not a criticism of my hon. Friend the Minister or of prison officers, but it means that such treatment must be at arm's length from the Department and the prison service to make it a credible point of contact to which prisoners may turn.

The success of that concept is endorsed by everyone who has had any experience of what has gone on in Downview prison. I know that the prison governor, the area manager and everyone from the Home Office who has visited the prison is behind that concept. They are supportive because they can see the effect on prisoners. It is also important to consider the rollover effect, because, when I visited that prison, it was clear to me—I am sure that the Minister can confirm this—that the treatment was helping not only the prisoners, but their wives and their families to come to grips with their problems outside.

The Addictive Diseases Trust says:

"We are in the business of turning liabilities into assets."

I believe that the new clauses tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam would achieve just that.

Mr. Maclennan: In common with the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), I should like briefly to discuss the three sets of amendments and new clauses that have been grouped together.

I agree with the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that the Government have not shown a co-ordinated appreciation of the serious threat that drugs are posing to society. As the hon. Member for Lewes has said, it is true that the Department for Education is primarily to blame for the recent ending of the role of health education co-ordinators. Earlier today, Ministers—most notably the Foreign Secretary, in his statement to the House—told us about the importance of collective responsibility. I believe that the Departments of Health and for Education and the Home Office should be working closely together to tackle the problem of drugs, which afflicts society.

My main concern about the Home Office is that it is not devoting sufficient resources, research and analysis to the extent of the problem. It is true that anecdotal evidence suggests that many offences can be traced to a criminal seeking to finance his drug-taking habits. The statistical evidence to support that, at least that which is available to the public, is extremely slender. With crime figures rocketing, the time has come for a much more scientific analysis of the relationship of drugs to offending.

[Mr. Maclennan]

New clauses 4 and 5 deal with cognate matters—the imposition of a duty upon local authorities, funded by Home Office grants, to pursue anti-drugs education in partnership with the police and other agencies. New clause 5 would impose a duty on the Secretary of State to

"publish a national strategy for drug prevention."

That too would focus on education and young people in custody or care.

I sympathise with and support the intention behind the clauses, and they are a useful peg on which to hang the debate, but we must recognise that education on drugs often misses the target. I give full credit to the Home Office for its responsibility for a valuable study which was prepared at Sheffield university by Marian Lightner and others. It showed that drug education was most likely to be effective among those socio-economic groups that were responsive to education generally.

Those who are least responsive to education are, broadly, those most disposed to take harder drugs, and indeed all drugs more frequently. Therefore, although it is important to educate in schools, we cannot regard even an extensive drugs education in schools as sufficient, and we require counselling services and detoxification centres outside schools to catch those who are not caught by what goes on in schools.

Another report, produced for the Department of Health on young people and illicit drug use, researched at Durham university, found that it was commonplace among young 13 to 18-year-olds in some areas to take drugs. Drug use and abuse by children is growing, and growing frighteningly. There must be very few head teachers in the land who can put their hands on their hearts and say that drugs are not being brought into their schools. I do not sense that the urgency of tackling that problem is reflected in Government thinking.

One of the group of amendments has not yet been moved by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). Perhaps he will forgive me if I mention it even before he has moved it, for there is much to be said for new clause 52, which would require the detention in rehabilitation centres of drug addicts convicted of possession under section 5 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

8 pm

It has to recommend it, first, the fact that prisons are not the best places to send people who need to kick the habit of drug-taking. Secondly, detention in a rehabilitation centre might at least prevent reoffending in the same way on release. It is extremely important that drug addicts are given rehabilitation rather than prison sentences, but we have to qualify that view by recognising that such centres do not currently exist extensively around the country.

I think that the proposal of the hon. Member for Tayside, North is almost certainly not capable of implementation on practical grounds, but the thrust of his argument is extremely important. It also has to be recognised that treatment for drug addiction is not always lasting or successful, and that lasting care for ex-addicts is necessary to prevent recidivism. The hon. Gentleman might care to consider that in the context of his thinking about those matters, for follow-up and after-care are extraordinarily important.

Many addicts who come before the courts do not do so because they are addicts. They are tried for other offences and convicted of other offences, and their addiction comes to light only once they are taken into custody.

With those reservations, I generally support the thrust of new clause 52, but I think that the intentions of the hon. Member for Tayside, North were similar to those expressed by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, who speaks with some obvious personal interest and knowledge of activities and regimes in certain prisons where drug rehabilitation programmes are being experimented with. I agree with her that it is sensible that those programmes should be tried out by other prisons and by voluntary agencies working in prisons. We need all the help and

The hon. Member for Lewes said that, although we know that drug abuse in prison is high, we cannot accurately quantify it, and certainly not all users come to the attention of the authorities. Measures to restrict the supply of drugs, even in the newest prisons, are never, as far as one can make out, completely successful. Further, a person who is already in prison may not be deterred by an extension of sentence for drug use, so I think that a strategy of drug demand reduction is required.

The treatment of drug dependence among prisoners is an important part of tackling offending behaviour generally, as they are often linked, and the availability of treatment is crucial. I therefore support the thinking of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam that lies behind the clause. I shall be interested to see whether she presses it to a Division in the face of the reluctance of the Government to move in the direction that she has in mind.

Many of the arguments which I have adduced in support of her new clause 64 would obtain in respect of new clause 65, as it allows the court to reduce the sentence of an offender where it believes that drug use contributed to the crime and where the offender is willing to go on a rehabilitation course.

I think that that power is unlikely to be frequently used because of the difficulty of proving causation, but its value would lie in the recognition that drugs can lead to crimes that would not otherwise be committed. An addict who receives treatment may be in greater danger of returning to dependence while inside prisons where drugs are more readily available than outside.

The last group of amendments which I wish to mention includes new clause 51, which would alter the sentences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to provide that all offences will be tried on indictment—most can be tried either way at present. Maximum sentences for possession, supply or production would be 50 years for class A, 25 years for class B and 10 years for class C.

Longer sentences are known to contribute little to deterring others or to preventing reoffending. In the United States, minimum sentences and an explosion in the number of convictions have not reduced the incidence of drug crime or addiction. A heavy-handed criminal justice response may even exacerbate the drugs problem by driving users further from other agencies offering rehabilitation, and by increasing the violence associated with drug-dealing.

I am less attracted to that proposal of the hon. Member for Tayside, North. The Government too often instinctively believe that one tackles criminal problems by lengthening sentences. The position of drug addicts and drug users is

quite different from that of drug dealers, who require stiff penalties. Prison is the last place that one would choose to send many addicts.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for opening up in Parliament a debate which is widely being continued outside the House of Commons. He is right to say that it is a serious debate, and it is one in which there have been powerful advocates. Among others, a leader in the *Financial Times* and a number of very senior doctors have supported the decriminalisation not only of cannabis, but of other drugs.

I do not believe that that can be contemplated at this time by Parliament. I believe that it would run completely counter to widespread public perception, and that Parliament cannot legislate too far in advance of public opinion on an issue of that type. None the less, it is an important issue, and the Government are not approaching the problem of the widespread illegal use of cannabis with any coherence or sense.

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Newham, North-West has noticed the contrast between the attitude of the Home Office, which has increased the penalty to £2,500 for cannabis-related offences in England, and that of the Scottish Office, which has introduced what it calls a fiscal fine of £25. It seems to me that that reflects what I was speaking about earlier—the lack of coherence in the Government's approach to the handling of the drug problem.

Sir Ivan Lawrence *indicated assent.*

Mr. Maclennan: I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) is agreeing with me. I am most grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Maclean: Will the hon. Gentleman look at Government amendments Nos. 79 and 82, which make exactly the same fine provisions for Scotland?

Mr. Maclennan: I have noticed those amendments, which I suspect were tabled because I and other hon. Members have drawn attention to the oddity of treating the two systems differently. They do not detract from the point that I am making about the use of fiscal fines, which are a measure of Scottish society's attitude to cannabis taking. The police have welcomed the measure, as it will avoid their efforts being diverted towards chasing up relatively minor drug-related crimes, and will enable them to concentrate their stretched resources on hard drugs dealing, which is so much more profitable.

A risk that I have not heard seriously discussed is the fact that, if the penalty for dealing in soft drugs becomes so high that the risk to dealers is unacceptable, dealers may turn to dealing in hard drugs, which are much more profitable. That would be an untoward result of the Government's approach.

I recommend the Scottish Office's approach to the Home Office, which I hope will see fit to follow suit.

Dr. Spink: What decision was taken at the Liberal Democrat party conference with regard to legalising soft drugs?

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman refers to a resolution passed at a Scottish conference of the Liberal Democrat party in 1993, which Conservative central office has helpfully furnished to Tory Members, and a copy of which has conveniently come into my hands. That proposal *was passed in Scotland and reflects the fact that the debate* about drugs in Scotland is, in some ways, more advanced. It was put forward in the spirit of the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. I have no intention of voting for his amendment and, as far as I am aware, the Liberal Democrat party has no intention of doing so.

It is not Liberal Democrat policy that cannabis or other illegal drugs should be legalised. I do not suppose that Conservative central office will subsequently circulate my speech, but I should none the less like to put on the record the fact that we have opposed the decriminalisation of cannabis because, as the hon. Member for Lewes said, the health effects are uncertain.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned some of the feared adverse health effects and I have heard similar evidence from other doctors. It is also uncertain whether legitimised cannabis dealing would lead dealers to use that drug to promote other drugs. We have supported the Scottish Office proposal to make first-time offences of possession subject to non-criminal fiscal fines. That approach should be followed south as well as north of the border.

My main message to the Home Office today is that it should get its act together and join the Departments of Health and for Education. Let us pool the talent and concerns and use them constructively to tackle the most serious problem facing this country today, which is a major factor in the rise of crime.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I wish to discuss new clauses Nos. 51 and 52. It is unusual to hear other hon. Members discuss new clauses that one has not yet had an opportunity to move.

Like the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I can say that I have had no association whatever with drugs, even though as a young man I spent some time in the bazaars of the middle east during His Majesty's pleasure. Although I frequently speak about alcohol, particularly Scotch whisky, I am teetotal. Nor do I smoke, but that does not stop me discussing smoking. Like the hon. Gentleman, my interest is to try to find a solution to the ghastly problem facing the United Kingdom and the whole of the civilised world.

8.15 pm

There is no single, simple solution. Anyone who has studied the problem realises that, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) properly said, the problem exists in our schools and any problem in our schools affects every age group in the community. It would therefore be nonsense simply to consider a narrow solution. The value of this debate is that it gives us an opportunity to address the matter in the round.

Deterrence has a part to play in dealing with the problem. I am not naive enough to imagine that it alone is a solution, but I have always believed that penalties deter some people and must therefore be part of the package. After all, given that we are faced with a fivefold increase in fines for drugs possession, we must recognise that present sentences are not enough.

New clause 51 proposes sentences to deal with not just addicts. Although one is concerned with the increase in addicts, the illegal drugs industry generates a turnover of between £2 billion and £2.5 billion per annum. It is a massive industry. Given the amount of money presently being laundered through the financial sector from the illicit

drugs trade, its effect on anyone connected with the trade, whether school boys or girls, adults involved in laundering the money or handling the products, or dealers involved in distribution, must be addressed. It is an international trade. A number of recent incidents in Scotland have revealed evidence that the drugs have been landed in the north-west of Scotland for distribution in the United Kingdom.

Our interest therefore covers much more than simply what is happening in schools, which is why we must consider carefully the sentences available to the courts. It would be far better to use the term "50 years" than the term "life". That would show anyone thinking of offending in this way that he was liable to find himself locked up for 50 years.

I immediately accept that we have to think of ways of weaning addicts off drugs. My first experience of addicts came with people who were addicted to drink—not unusual in Scotland. When I was a boy it was common to see drunks around the city of Dundee after 9.30 pm, because the public houses closed early. One of the factors that got rid of that problem was a more liberal approach to drinking hours in the pubs. It brought about a dramatic change in drinking fashions.

Many youngsters become involved in drugs as a result of peer pressure. That is why we have to rethink sentencing policy, and it is why I tabled new clause 51. I will not go through the new clause in detail—I could speak for two or three hours if I did, and I sense that the mood of the House would be against that. I should like to make it clear that I could not support any attempt to legalise cannabis.

One reason why I oppose legalising drugs came to my attention when my wife and I visited Switzerland, whither I had gone to assess the impact of its more liberal approach to drug offences. I would hate to see here what I saw around the Parliament building in Switzerland: people using needles in public places in the middle of the day. As I told my wife, I could not think of any other country in the civilised world where one could observe people using needles right outside a parliament building.

I defy anyone to walk outside this building in the middle of the afternoon and find someone using needles publicly in the immediate precincts. People were doing this in Switzerland because of the so-called liberal approach. Swiss parliamentarians told me that, following the introduction of the more liberal approach, known addicts converged on the area because they knew that they would be safe from conviction there. Now this may be what some people want, but it does not appeal to me—it is one reason why I find it difficult to accept arguments in favour of legalisation. In this life it is often a good thing to go and observe such experiments to find out whether they work.

Next, I wish to discuss the rehabilitation centres covered by new clause 52. Part of the answer to the problem must be helping those who are part of the problem —the addicts. It is important to give the courts the opportunity to detain anyone convicted under the proposed subsection (5A) for a term—it will be left to the courts' discretion—that will be required to wean people off their drugs. That is only sensible.

I recognise that this cannot be done without some cost to the taxpayer. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland rightly drew attention to the fact that these centres do not yet exist. He will know that in the years before the second world war there were no centres to help people with alcohol problems either; we had to create them, and the industry itself was largely responsible for paying for them. I should like to think that some of the stiff fines to be imposed on the illegal drug trade, not to mention the repossession of traders' goods and property, will be used to fund the rehabilitation centres.

I would not want anyone to think, just because I have spoken briefly, that my views on deterrence in this matter differ from my views on deterrence in defence or in any other terms. I believe that deterrence has an important part to play in helping to change attitudes and to convince people who might consider getting involved in the trade that the risks of so doing are unacceptably high.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I support my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench and affirm the strength of feeling among ordinary people in London, the centre of Britain's drugs trade, about the rising tide of drug misuse and drug-related crime. The problem is acute in my constituency.

As leading members of the Labour party have pointed out, a major issue at stake is the number of crimes committed in order to raise money to feed the drug habit. Half recorded property crime is due to people trying to find the money to feed their habit. That concerns ordinary Londoners. Many of the prostitutes on the streets of London and our other great cities are there to pay for their habit. I cannot stress too much the desperation felt by ordinary people trying to bring up their families when they discover that someone in the next-door flat or the upstairs flat in their estates has set up as a drug retailer. The misuse of drugs and drug-related crimes are ruining the lives of ordinary Londoners in places like Hackney.

Crack and cocaine are the newest scourge among hard drug users. On the streets of my constituency I see young men whose lives have been shattered by drug misuse.

Londoners are increasingly worried about the growth in the use of guns in drug-related crime. Guns are being fired off in crowded clubs, yet crimes involving guns are not given the sort of publicity that they deserve—they are all related to drug misuse. Londoners and the people of Hackney want a real war to be waged against drugs, based on a coherent appraisal of the problem.

That is where the Government are failing—failing the people of Hackney, the people of London and the people of Britain. The problem of the rising tide of drug misuse is complex; it is not just about token gestures in respect of fines. For instance, we need to examine foreign policy issues, such as the amount of aid given to certain countries. Small farmers in the Caribbean and the middle east turn to drug production because it is often their only means of earning hard currency for their families.

If the Governments of Britain and the United States were serious about fighting drugs, they would have to look again at aid for third world countries—and at banana production in the Caribbean. If small farmers in Jamaica and the eastern Caribbean are driven out of banana production, they will turn to growing drugs.

We also need to examine bank secrecy laws. It is no good Tory Ministers posing as being concerned about drugs while they continue, judging by their activities in relation to international banking regulation, to support the Bank of England's endeavour to stop effective disclosure laws. It is because of bank secrecy that the drug barons can shovel their money across continents.

As I say, we must also look at our support for third world countries' attempts to fight drugs. In Jamaica and the eastern Caribbean the drug barons have more highly

powered and expensive speed boats than do the coastguards. If this country were serious about fighting drugs, it would be pumping money into Caribbean coastal defences—after all, Caribbean countries provide calling off points for the drug barons.

It is easy enough to see drug dealers on the streets and in council flats. However, the people making money from drugs, the Mr. Bigs, are not visible and are often not touched by the Government.

Hon. Members spoke about treatment and education. Nobody takes drug abuse and drug-related crime more seriously than those who live and work in inner cities. We do not want token gestures by the Government. We want an overall strategy on drugs which takes into account the foreign policy issues that I have raised and education and rehabilitation. Above all, it must take on board the need for a co-ordinated law and order strategy. The environments of too many people are being ruined, too many communities are being harmed and too many children are having their lives destroyed. The Government have failed the country on the drugs issue and the people of Hackney and London want a real war against drugs.

8.30 pm

Mr. John Greenway: I should like to make four brief points.

First, I totally agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) said about the withdrawal of funding for health education workers. I recently called a meeting in my rural constituency for representatives from the police, the churches, schools and youth workers to discuss how to deal with the growing problem of drug taking by young people and the availability of drugs in our market towns. One of the strongest messages from the meeting was the real concern about the withdrawal of that funding by the Department for Education. I urge the Minister to make sure that the Department for Education is fully aware of the anger and outrage felt by many of our supporters in market towns about the withdrawal of that funding.

Secondly, I should like to respond to the criticism of the Government for increasing the fines for so-called soft drugs. I cannot understand the argument that it is wrong to increase the fines for the possession of amphetamines as well as for the possession of cannabis. We hear a great deal about cannabis, but amphetamines are in the same drugs group. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said about cannabis being the main drug, in his annual report published just a few days ago the chief constable of North Yorkshire said:

"There has generally been a decline in the use of cannabis as against the misuse of amphetamines which is strongly increasing."

We have to tackle that head on. When the police and the customs authorities catch people who are involved in drug trafficking the only offence to which many of them will plead guilty or of which they can be found guilty—given the requirements for evidence—is possession. I warmly welcome the increase in fines and it is reassuring to know that it will apply to Scotland as well as to England and Wales. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) has said, many of the improvements in interdiction have led to drugs seizures in Scotland.

Thirdly, I should like to make a point that has not been made on the legalisation of drugs. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West made a genuine attempt to introduce that subject to the House. There is high tax on two other poisons—alcohol and tobacco. If we were even to think about trying to control the availability of cannabis through some form of decriminalisation, presumably for health reasons, if for no other, the substance would have to be subject to high tax. That suggests that we could still end up with a black market. I am sure that the House will want to return to the issue again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) tabled new clauses on drugs rehabilitation. In that context, one obvious point has not been made. If, as we all agree, the number of offences being committed in this country, especially petty crimes against property, is by known criminals to fund their habit of drug abuse, it must be right that while such people are in prison they should be rehabilitated. It is the one thing that we could do constructively to reduce the recidivism of people leaving prison.

Mr. Simpson: I support new clauses 4, 5 and 67. In the debate on the previous amendments the Home Secretary warned the House that victim compensation could rise to more than £2 billion by the end of the century. He cautioned that there was a need for radical changes to bring that cost to a more manageable limit. There is an ironic symmetry with the cost of serious drug-related crime. As has been said, £2 billion per year is the estimated cost of crime that is produced by serious drug addiction. That is the fact upon which we should base the debate and the strategies that flow from it.

I have a word of caution in the context of my experience in my area of Nottingham. I praise the police, local authorities, the health authority and the Home Office drug prevention project for their willingness to talk openly about the serious and growing problem of dependency on crack-cocaine. No one should be under any illusions about the seriousness of that drug and the rate at which problems are growing across the country. I shall give one litmus test example. We did a quick survey one weekend and identified 29 children who were involved in child prostitution. Of those 29 children, 25 were crack dependent. They all had various ways of criminally paying for their dependency.

Not only in my area but across the country it is becoming increasingly easy to find stolen goods being priced in rocks rather than in pounds. The problem of crack swept through America and the authorities were poleaxed because they did not face the issue soon enough and were not prepared for the scale of the problem. There are two lessons to be learnt from that. First, the problem must be tackled at source. When asked about how they deal with crack when it has reached the streets, the police say that it is like chasing the wind.

Crack-cocaine must be dealt with by tackling the dealerships and terminating the supply lines. Secondly, we must face the reality that, increasingly, crack—cocaine is being offered to children. If the funding for drugs education work in schools is cut, today's children will not be equipped to deal with the difficult decisions that they will be asked to make in school today and in society tomorrow. That is the stark reality of where we are heading.

We need a programme, a strategy, to address all that and it must begin with some of the initiatives set down by the Home Office drug prevention project. We need to look at

[Mr. Simpson]

acceptable programmes that will help people while they are still drugs dependent to live with that dependency. Without that we cannot move to the next stage of living without dependency. People do not get conversions on the road as if blinded by a sudden understanding. Hard graft is needed to offer people pathways back to a sane and sensible way of living.

We must tackle the way in which this country is involved on the quiet in bankrolling serious drugs crime. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) said, unless we tackle the supply lines of funding through the banking system for hard drugs activities, those activities will continue to grow and thrive. That is not part of the Government's strategy.

As I said, I support new clause 67. Anyone who works with drugs will say that one of the most helpful steps would be to decriminalise cannabis. Those hon. Members who warn about the slippery slope towards serious drug addiction base their arguments on nil evidence. The only serious study which suggested that cannabis was addictive was based on the study of soldiers in the American forces in the Vietnamese war. Many of them pleaded addiction as it was a ground for being sent home. No study has shown that cannabis use leads to dependency on hard drugs. There is no progression except in terms of common supply lines. One of the biggest problems confronting children, young people and adults who use cannabis is that when they try to obtain it they are more likely to be offered a hard drug first. If those supply lines can be separated, there will be an opportunity to break the continuum that brings cannabis users into close and ongoing proximity to hard drug distribution.

The use of cannabis is a pathway not to addiction but to a criminal record. If it were decriminalised, we would immediately remove the unnecessary 42,000 convictions a year for cannabis use and automatically end the fivefold increase in cautions for cannabis use. We would certainly end the number of people who are harassed because of their use of cannabis. Decriminalisation would allow the country to develop a strategy that differentiated between serious drug use and the increasingly socially acceptable use of cannabis.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Everybody agrees on the problem and the extent of it. The question is, what can best be done to solve the problem? I agree with the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott)—probably for the first time—when she says that we need a war against drugs.

Bearing in mind the compulsive nature of drugs and that, for the user, reason goes out of the window, the answer must be, broadly, some stick, some carrot, much less cautioning and certainly no decriminalisation.

As to the stick, the Government are to be congratulated on stiffening sentences for traffickers and on tougher fines for users. I support the Government's action, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), in raising fines from £500 to £2,500. To continue to allow fines to devalue is to send totally the wrong signal to children and youngsters and to suggest that the Government do not care. The Government care very much, as should we all, so we should support increased fines. It would also send the wrong signal to the police, who have been cautioning far too much. One suspects that one reason is that they felt that the Government and the courts did not care to have adequate penalties imposed on cannabis users.

As to the carrot, in addition to better education in schools—I am pleased that the national curriculum now includes drug education as part of health education—

Mr. Rathbone: My hon. and learned Friend is inadvertently misleading the House. Drug education is included in biology, but that is not the sort of health education that co-ordinators were providing for all children in all schools.

8.45 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence: On the contrary, I am told that it is to be included in the national curriculum. I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome that. I agree with his other remarks about Home Office initiatives.

I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), who said that drug users should be given some encouragement. There is not enough drug education or rehabilitation in prisons. We have been going on and on about that for the best part of 20 years. Something more must be done to encourage rehabilitation and education. New clause 62 is in the right direction, although I do not know whether the Government will accept it.

New clause 65 calls for reduced sentencing, which is probably not the best approach, although a reduction in time served through earlier parole or earlier release would be sensible. The trouble with reducing a sentence is that a promise to undertake a drug misuse course cannot be enforced: if users know that a promise of that kind will give them a statutory right to a lesser sentence, they will all make the promise, but few will deliver and the system of justice will be brought into disrepute. The advantage of earlier parole or earlier release is that the carrot would not be given until the offender had delivered his side of the bargain.

Some of the chattering classes may be in favour of decriminalisation, and also some Opposition Members, although it is difficult to know whether the Liberal Democrats are in favour or against, as with so many of their policies. However, few people in society are in favour of decriminalising cannabis, because it would inevitably lead to more youngsters using more drugs. How would the drug habit of which the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington complained be lessened if more youngsters took more drugs?

The ordinary use of cannabis is harmful, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) pointed out. Dr. Paton of Oxford university records that it may cause irreversible brain damage if used daily for two to three years. Opposition Members who leap up and down may be indicating the very problem that Dr. Paton identified. Cannabis use also leads to the use of hard drugs. The trafficker says to the cannabis user, "It does not give you as much of a buzz as heroin, cocaine or crack. Why not try them?" Whether the use of harder drugs is psychological or medical, the courts are full of cases of people who started on lesser drugs such as cannabis, amphetamines or barbiturates and moved on to hard drugs.

Another objection to decriminalisation is that it would lead to more serious crime. As the number of users and the need to supply even cannabis, amphetamines and barbiturates grew, traffickers would need to supply more.

There would be a greater demand for harder drugs, which would inevitably lead to more trafficking—and more traffickers would lead to more serious crime.

Was the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) serious when he said that an argument for decriminalising cannabis use would be the release of 42,000 people in prison for that offence? If so, that is a good argument for decriminalising burglary. We could solve large-scale crime overnight by decriminalising burglary and releasing the thousands of persons awaiting trial or imprisoned for burglary.

The Government's approach is sensible, but more money must be found for education and rehabilitation. If more money can be found for that, if for nothing else, it would be well justified.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Right hon. and hon. Members share the belief that a terrible and growing problem confronts our country. We have a choice of two paths, one of which we know to be a path of failure.

Over the past 30 years, the approach in America has been the same as that of Conservative Members. America had a war against drugs, spending $8 billion a year over the past 10 years and a similar amount before that. In 1964, 4 per cent. of young Americans were using cannabis. The latest figure shows that 75 per cent. are doing so. There is no evidence to show that illegal use of any drug throughout the world has been reduced by adopting the methods proposed by Conservative Members. Six countries have the death penalty for using cannabis, and 50 have the death penalty for heroin use.

In America, similar arguments were used about the evils of alcohol. Even in this country today, the main cause for crime is alcohol. In 1919, America's answer was to ban alcohol: the consequence was that consumption doubled and the number of people who died from alcohol poisoning quadrupled because a great deal of alcohol was manufactured in unhygienic conditions.

What is the position on drugs now? I speak as someone who hates the use of all drugs. I take none of them, and I suggest that many others should be as antagonistic to the medicinal drugs that we take in huge quantities as they are to illegal drugs. The use of illegal drugs is increasing and our policy on drugs is the main reason why crime is increasing.

If people living in my constituency on one of the estates where there is 40 per cent. unemployment wish to make some money, it is no good going on a useless job scheme as there is little chance of getting a job at the end and it is no good working for McDonald's for peanuts, but if they deal in drugs there will be a good chance of getting themselves a BMW in five years. The problem that drives the drugs trade is money: profit is what is behind the drugs trade.

Drug trafficking is the biggest industry in the world. Drugs are coming into Britain in huge quantities. We are catching at the most possibly 10 per cent. and it could be only 3 per cent. The trade is increasing because people are making huge amounts of money from it. The best way of dealing with it is to undercut the profit and the trade by decriminalising the use of cannabis and making it available in the same way as alcohol is available now, and by treating the users of hard drugs as patients.

We must treat hard drug addicts as patients because there is virtually no chance of getting them off their drugs when they have to steal up to £2,000 of goods a week. If their habit costs £500 a week, as it does in Bristol, they have to steal that money. They are full-time criminals. Drug addicts take the drugs in unhygienic surroundings and using unhygienic needles. The number of people who die from heroin every year is 100. The number of people who die from using cannabis is zero. The number of people who die from taking paracetamol is 300, from other medicinal drugs 2,000, from alcohol 25,000, and from smoking cigarettes 110,000. Yet as a society we spend £100 million persuading our children to use tobacco but gaol them for using cannabis.

Do Conservative Members know why cannabis was banned? I speak as a chemist. Many substances are far more dangerous than cannabis. I would not encourage anyone to use cannabis or any of the other substances that are available. The reason why cannabis is a banned substance is that the head of a lunatic asylum in Alexandria once went to a conference and said that cannabis made people insane. His reason was that all his in-patients were taking it. He did not mention that everyone outside in the community was taking it as well. Since that day, no one has suggested that cannabis makes people insane.

Several other substances which are freely available could have been banned. The really lethal substances, which I would be horrified if any of my children used, are freely available in chemist's shops, supermarkets and stationery shops. The glues and other substances that they sniff—things that we have in our offices—could kill youngsters. The great worry with cannabis is that it is usually mixed with tobacco. Many members of a generation in the 1960s in Britain and in America used cannabis mixed with tobacco. Now, not one in 100 of that generation still uses cannabis, but a third of them still use tobacco and in many cases it will kill them.

We know what popular opinion is. What Opposition Members are proposing will not gain us any votes. I appeal to the Government. We know that their policy is the wrong one. It will lead to more crime because people will need more money for drugs and they will need to commit more crime to get that money. The Government's policy of increasing the fine for cannabis will result in only one thing: the cannabis user will have to commit more crime to feed his or her addiction. Unless we implement a policy of decriminalisation, undercut the market for cannabis and treat the hard-drug addicts as patients, the problem will get far worse. We shall end up in the position that America is in. Every one of our cities will be divided into areas, with drug users defending their areas with guns. That is the future unless the Government see sense.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): We are all aware that drugs are a serious problem in Britain and especially in the north-east of England. It was said not so long ago that in the north-east drugs were the third largest industry, after Nissan.

In my constituency in the past five years, five young people aged between 16 and 19 have lost their lives through taking drugs. The drugs that they took could be bought in the chemist. Unfortunately for some of them, they were not aware of what drugs they were taking and their effects. They took a cocktail of drugs such as temazepam, barbiturates and heroin. They clogged their systems up, went into a coma and died. It is a shame that the four young girls and one young boy who died were not in the real world. They did not understand what the drugs meant to them, but the pushers did. The pushers were

[Mr. Ronnie Campbell]

ordinary people living in the community of Blyth Valley. They were selling to the young kids so that they could get money to buy more drugs to feed their own habit. So there was a chain reaction of drugs in the community.

Unfortunately, Blyth Valley has become one of the biggest drug centres in the north-east. I take my hat off to the local police, who have made 28 raids in the past two or three days. When the police entered the house of one known drug dealer, they found 20 stolen televisions, 14 video recorders and a big swag of jewellery. If that does not tell us anything, what will? The drug dealers get the kids to go out and steal and burgle. Burglaries are on the increase in Blyth Valley. The kids bring the swag and get dope for it. The drugs are not only heroin. Some are from chemists. We must persuade chemists to put drugs under lock and key. We must get a grip on temazepam and wobbly eggs—they all have fancy names—before they get a grip on our people.

I take this opportunity to praise the *Newcastle Journal*, my regional newspaper, which has agreed to fund a poster campaign in Blyth Valley. It will print the poster for us and I shall distribute it in the area and especially in the schools. We must get across to young people the dangers of drugs. We must talk to them about drugs. It will always be difficult because if we talk to them, we tell them what drugs are. As one headmaster said to me, "What do I do, Ronnie? Do I tell them to take only a little bit of this drug or not to take it with that drug?" The young people who died took a cocktail of drugs. That is the problem. If we educate the kids, they become aware of drugs. Once they are aware of drugs, they will say, "I'll have a bash at it. I'll try a little bit of this or a little bit of that." That is the problem.

We must find the appropriate level and more money must be poured into the system. I do not know whether the new clause will achieve that, but I will support any amendment to the legislation that will help these young kids. Evil drug pushers are getting them hooked on drugs and making a fortune.

Mr. Maclean: I shall reply as briefly as I can to what has been a wide-ranging debate.

I assume that the intention of new clause 64, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), is to place a statutory duty on the Prison Service to provide drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes. There are problems with the drafting, but, in any event, prison governors are already expected to provide a cohesive response to the needs of inmates with drug problems. Guidance on that is contained in a Prison Service circular instruction and in a resource manual issued to all prisons in 1991, entitled "Caring for Drug Misusers: a Multi-disciplinary Resource for People working with Prisoners".

The Prison Service is reviewing that guidance, with the aim of developing an improved strategy for tackling drug misuse in our prisons. In Scotland, various prisons have developed specific programmes to meet the needs of particular groups of prisoners. A guidance manual setting out best practice for the management of prisoners who misuse drugs was issued in March: the aim is to help all prisoners to develop and maintain a drug-free life style. I, therefore, see no advantage in legislating to introduce a duty when the Prison Service is already providing an appropriate response. We heard about that from my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone); excellent work is also being done at Downview prison.

9 pm

As for new clause 65, I listened to the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam for requiring sentencers to take into account an offender's willingness to participate in a treatment programme when sentencing an offender whose drug habit has contributed to his offending behaviour. I agree whole-heartedly that it is important to deal with criminal activity that is drug related, but I do not believe that the new clause would usefully add to the court's existing powers to deal with such offending behaviour.

The sentencing framework introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991 requires sentences passed by the courts to be commensurate with the seriousness of the offence committed by the offender. A custodial sentence may be passed only if an offence is "so serious" that no other sentence is justified; a community penalty may be imposed only if the offence is "serious enough" to merit it. When a court considers that an offence is not "so serious" that only a custodial penalty is justified, but is "serious enough" to merit a community sentence, the court must ensure that the order or orders that it makes are the most suitable for the offender. In doing so, it may take into account any information about the offender that is before it.

Attendance at programmes dealing with, for instance, drug or alcohol dependency may be included in a probation order, either voluntarily—as part of supervision under the order—or as a mandatory requirement of the order. Under the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973, when a court is proposing to make a probation order and an offender is dependent on drugs or alcohol, the dependency caused or contributed to the commission of the offence and the dependency requires and is susceptible to treatment, the court may include in the order a requirement that the offender submit to treatment by a suitable qualified or experienced person with a view to reducing or eliminating the dependency. A community care assessment or psychiatric report will usually be a prerequisite in such cases.

Lady Olga Maitland: I take on board what my hon. Friend has said. The crunch is this, however: is the Home Office prepared to devote more resources to voluntary agencies such as the Addictive Diseases Trust, which have a proven track record of success?

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office is devoting considerable resources not only to programmes in the Prison Service, but to programmes in the voluntary sector. I shall explain that shortly, when I deal with the Opposition amendments.

Voluntary attendance on a programme may be part of the supervision plan drawn up for a "straight" probation order. The draft revised national standard for pre-sentence reports proposes that when the report writer makes a proposal that envisages a probation order, supervision order or combination order, the report should annex an outline of the supervision plan proposed for the offender to assist the court in its sentencing decision. It should contain a description of the purposes and desired outcome of the proposed sentence; a timetable with key milestones; the

methods to be used and activities to be undertaken; the intensity of supervision envisaged; and the likely effect on dependants.

In the case of an offender with a history of drug misuse, the proposed supervision plan—to which the offender must consent—could therefore include voluntary attendance at a drug rehabilitation programme as an integral part of the plan. The full reasons behind the suggestion must be set out in the main body of the report. In both cases—whether the attendance is voluntary or included in the supervision plan, or mandatory—it is an integral part of the sentence, and forms an element of the restriction of liberty imposed by that sentence.

When an offender subsequently refuses to co-operate with the terms of a probation order, that offender will be regarded as having breached the order, and may be returned to court. In the most serious cases, the court may decide to re-sentence the offender for the original offence, while taking into account the extent to which the offender has complied with the order. Where the breach appears to the court to be a withdrawal of consent to the community penalty a custodial sentence may result. It would, therefore, seem unnecessary to create a new offence to deal with the problem.

Furthermore, I am not convinced that it would be appropriate, as I think my hon. Friend has suggested, that completing a drug rehabilitation programme but failing to be rehabilitated by it should of itself constitute breach of an order. Treatment programmes can achieve excellent results, but there is no guarantee of success in individual cases. Finally, as the courts already possess a discretion to pass sentences that will be particularly suitable for offenders with a drug habit, I am not convinced that the new clause would serve a useful purpose.

I turn now to new clauses 51 and 52, which were tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). My hon. Friend seeks to increase very significantly the penalties for the drug offences dealt with in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The House will be relieved to know that I do not intend to go through my hon. Friend's proposals paragraph by paragraph. I merely say that, taken in the context of the sentencing framework as a whole, the current maximum penalties available for drug offences are sufficient to enable the courts to respond effectively and flexibly to the wide range of cases that come before them and to reflect the very different types of offences and offenders. I do not accept that the courts require the additional powers suggested by my hon. Friend.

Similarly, I cannot agree that it would be appropriate for most drug offences, including, for example, the cultivation of a cannabis plant, to be triable on indictment only. I share my hon. Friend's concerns about drug offences and the need to take them seriously. However, I believe that the current arrangements are satisfactory and give courts the freedom to pass appropriate sentences in all cases, including the power to pass tough sentences in most cases. I hope, therefore, that my hon. Friend will agree not to press his new clauses.

Mr. Bill Walker: Would my hon. Friend care to put on the record the Government's view of deterrence?

Mr. Maclean: I shall certainly do so. I take the view that all sentences should contain an element of punishment, an element of deterrence and an element of rehabilitation. That is the only means of having sentences that are just in the round.

As for the Opposition's new clauses 4 and 5, drugs education and drugs prevention are important and well-established elements of the Government's strategy for tackling drug misuse. They must, however, be integrated with the other elements of our strategy, which, apart from providing adequate treatment services, allow for vigorous enforcement action against drug traffickers and provide the courts with high maximum penalties to deter drug traffickers and dealers.

The co-operation between local authorities, police and other agencies and communities to which new clause 4 refers is already an increasingly common feature of local initiatives to tackle drug misuse. Clearly, the local authority needs to get together with all other local agencies with an interest in drugs prevention to agree a combined strategy. But local response to drugs problems must take account of local circumstances. A multi-agency programme needs, therefore, to be responsive to changing needs and patterns. The right approach, I suggest, is through a proper blend of encouragement and guidance, not through the creation of additional statutory duties for a single agency.

The Government's strategic framework for tackling drug misuse has been in place since the mid-1980s. It involves simultaneous action on a number of fronts, which, in view of the Opposition's criticism that there is no coherent strategy, I shall lay before the House. We do have a coherent strategy, of which educating our children on the dangers of drugs misuse is a vital element. The national curriculum requires schools to teach aspects of health education, including aspects of drug misuse.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: As I have pointed out, five young people in my constituency have lost their lives in the past two years. What is the Minister's policy to prevent such deaths?

Mr. Maclean: I resent the implication of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Of course we are appalled at any loss of life resulting from drug misuse. It is very clear that, without the comprehensive, coherent strategy that we have had for the past few years—without all the efforts to crack down on drugs coming into the country and on misuse in the country and to educate youngsters in the avoidance of drugs—the hon. Gentleman would not be holding up just five fingers. Indeed, the number of deaths would be so much greater that he would need to hold up five fingers a hundred times over.

Mr. Flynn *rose—*

Mr. Maclean: No, I shall not give way now because the House wants to make progress. I shall give way in a moment.

The Government are committed to ensuring, through the national curriculum and in other ways, that schools continue to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and attitude that they need to promote their immediate and long-term good health. Education has been backed by anti-drugs publicity. Since 1985, the Department of Health has spent increasing amounts on national drug prevention, information and public education campaigns. In 1993-94,

[Mr. Maclean]

some £5 million has been spent and independent evaluation has shown that the campaigns have succeeded in raising awareness of the problem.

There have also been innovative developments in drug prevention. The drugs prevention initiative was launched in 1989 as a partnership between Government and the community to promote the prevention of drug misuse. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes paid tribute to it. Teams are now operating in 20 locations to mobilise local communities to stop young people and others at risk taking drugs and help them realise the harmful consequences. Many successful schemes are in place and the initiative has been involved in the funding of more than 900 projects.

Mr. Flynn: If the programme has been so successful, why is it that, after 15 years of this policy, there is illegal drug use in 90 per cent. of our prisons? If we cannot keep drug misuse out of our prisons, how can we hope to keep it out of our schools, pubs and clubs if we continue with the Government's crazy policies?

Mr. Maclean: Drug use is endemic in western Europe and the United States. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman will support the proposals in the Bill to stop drug misuse in prisons through the searching of prisoners and proper drug testing in prisons. I shall welcome the hon. Gentleman's support for that policy, but that is only one plank of our policy to deal with all aspects of drug misuse.

The collective experience of the work of the 20 drug prevention initiative teams in local communities is being pulled together and co-ordinated. It will provide valuable information about the approaches that can be effective in drugs prevention and about the factors that influence their effectiveness, on which we shall base future action. In addition to all those measures for reducing the demand for drugs, we are putting considerable effort into reducing the supply and demand through effective enforcement action.

Police and customs continue to work hard to reduce the supply of drugs coming into the country, with notable success. Indeed, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) pronounced on many seizures at the beginning of his speech. He referred to the success of customs and the police under this Government in tracking down illegal drugs entering the country. We have made tough penalties available to the courts for use against drug traffickers, including up to life imprisonment for dealing in drugs such as heroin and cocaine. The United Kingdom's laws for getting at the profits of the big guys behind drug smuggling are among the toughest in the world. I hope that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) will welcome that.

The legislation that we introduced in 1986 enables the courts to deprive drug traffickers of their ill-gotten gains and makes the laundering of drugs money a criminal offence. The legislation has been strengthened by the Criminal Justice Act 1993 and, by the end of the 1992, we estimated that we had confiscated more than £42 million of drug traffickers' proceeds. All those factors come together in a comprehensive anti-drugs strategy involving Departments spending more than £500 million a year in the war against drugs.

We recognise the need, however, to review the strategy and to ensure that the policies that we are pursuing are correctly identified and are co-ordinated effectively. To that end, we have announced the establishment of a central drugs co-ordination unit. One of the unit's main tasks is to work closely with Departments to ensure that drugs policies are planned, developed and implemented within a clear strategic framework.

The unit's immediate task is to review our strategy on drugs and make recommendations for its continuing improvement. It will certainly not hesitate to say if it believes that greater attention needs to be paid to drugs education and prevention. A statement of our strategy will be published in due course. It will cover all drug policies, not just drug prevention, and will present a comprehensive and co-ordinated response to the problem. It will start by building on our successes—our successes in the drug prevention initiative, our successes in the safer cities programme, our successes in education, our successes in the work of the police in cracking down on illegal misuse, our successes based on Customs and Excise seizures, and our successes with other initiatives, such as that in King's Cross, mentioned by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, all of which are happening in the police force under the tenure of the Government.

9.15 pm

Finally, I shall say a few words about the proposal of the hon. Member for Newham North-West (Mr. Banks) to decriminalise the supply of cannabis. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestions. I will not go into detail about the proposal that he has laid before the House, as many of my hon. Friends have effectively demolished it. The Government have no intention of legalising or decriminalising any currently banned drug and we believe that we have overwhelming public support for that view.

Mr. Tony Banks: I understand that the Minister will not address the arguments, but will he give one assurance to the House—that he has never used cannabis in any form at all? Will he ask the Home Secretary to give that pledge also?

Mr. Maclean: Yes, I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. If we are talking about personal use, I can give him that assurance. I have never used it in my life and I can assure him that I did not try it or inhale it. I have never tried it—*[Interruption.]* I shall tell him why. It was mainly because I thought that some of people whom I saw using it at university were pretty inadequate, weedy souls. *[Interruption.]* Those of us who participated in the Territorial Army were not, and we are better for it.

A recent survey of drugs usage and attitudes to drugs of a sample of more than 4,000 people in four cities confirmed that most—66 per cent.—believe that all drugs currently prohibited should remain illegal and less than 8 per cent. thought that some drugs, such as cannabis, should not be controlled. In a recent radio interview, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Paul Condon, was also against the legalisation of cannabis. It is against every international conference and rule on drugs that the United Kingdom and the United Nations have signed.

I know that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West at one point complained that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was appealing to the grass roots. I do not think that he realised what he was suggesting. My right hon. and learned Friend is not appealing to the grass roots in increasing the penalties for class B and class C drugs. He is appealing to plain, simple common sense. Decriminalising drugs is a defeatist step. It

sends the wrong message to society, especially to the young, that some drugs are not harmful. That is dangerous. It has no place in our thinking and I reject the Opposition amendments.

Mr. Michael: That was not so much a speech as a self-indulgent rant and it did not do justice to the debate or to the subject. The police, local authorities, customs and many others are trying to develop coherent policies for the problem of the scourge of drugs and drug-related crime and only the Government are incoherent in undermining the very prevention the Minister has purported to advocate. It was a sad and unhelpful response. British society, individuals, families and communities cannot afford the Government's short-sighted and self-indulgent response.

It is a disappointment that the Minister has failed to accept our constructive proposals to tackle drugs and drug-related crime. From the Minister's complacent response, it is clear that he will not accept our new clauses. He will clearly not act. In view of the importance of other debates tonight and of other debates on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which, in many ways, will touch on the same topics to which we shall want to return, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 6

BODY TO INVESTIGATE MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

'(1) The Secretary of State shall within one month of the date of Royal Assent of this Act lay before both Houses of Parliament a report describing what plans he has to set up an independent body to investigate alleged miscarriages of justice in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the timetable within which he proposes to do so.

(2) The White Paper referred to in subsection (1) above shall describe the Secretary of State's intentions in respect to the following:—

(a) the membership of and method of appointment to the body;

(b) the numbers and functions of the employed staff of the body;

(c) the powers of the staff and members of the body and those of the body itself;

(d) the provision of legal aid for those alleging that they are the victim of a miscarriage of justice;

(e) the method and criteria by which the body will select cases for investigation;

(f) the method and criteria by which cases and issues of law will be referred to the Court of Appeal and the relationship between the two bodies;

(g) the extent to which the body should disclose documents and the results of its investigations to the alleged victim of the miscarriage of justice; and

(h) the extent to which the body will employ its own staff or will use others for the investigations.'.—*[Mr. Mullin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this we may discuss new clause 7—*Miscarriages of justice (No. 1)*—

'The Secretary of State shall, within one month of Royal Assent, publish a report setting out his proposals for the establishment of a body to investigate alleged miscarriages of justice in the light of the report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.'.—

Mr. Mullin: This is the third occasion on which I have tabled a new clause to establish an independent review tribunal to examine alleged miscarriages of justice. On 16 June 1988, Sir John Farr, the former Member of Parliament for Harborough, and I tabled an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill which would have established such a tribunal. I recall that my speech on that occasion attracted some derision, not least from the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who is now a Minister in the Foreign Office, but who was then a Minister at the Home Office, and the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who now presides over the education of our children, but who was at that time the Minister in charge of locking up innocent people.

What attracted derision in particular was my assertion, which is still controversial in some circles, that innocent people had been convicted of the M62 coach bombing, the Guildford and Woolwich bombings and the Birmingham bombings. It is a matter of record that, today, all 18 of those to whom I referred on 16 June 1988 have had their convictions quashed and are walking the streets with compensation in their pockets.

In July 1990, prompted by the collapse of the Guildford and Woolwich cases, Sir John Farr and I tabled an amendment to the Courts and Legal Services Bill along the lines of the new clause today. It was opposed on the Government's behalf by the then Attorney-General, the right hon. and learned Member for Tunbridge Wells (Sir P. Mayhew), who professed himself satisfied with the present procedures. In particular, he expressed the view that the powers of the Court of Appeal were adequate to deal with alleged miscarriages of justice.

Much water has passed under the bridge since then. Besides the collapse of all the main terrorist cases of the mid-1970s, to which I have already referred, there has been a long series of other cases in which convictions have had to be quashed after evidence given at trial by police officers, forensic scientists and others was found to be mistaken, false or doctored. There have also been cases in which vital evidence has been deliberately suppressed, not only by police officers, but by senior lawyers acting on behalf of the Crown, one or two of whom have gone on to high judicial office.

Twenty-three people have so far had their convictions quashed following the discovery that the West Midlands serious crimes squad had been systematically forging confessions over a long period, although not one of the officers involved in any of those cases has been charged, let alone convicted of a criminal offence. The three men convicted of the murder of PC Blakelock at Broadwater Farm have had their convictions quashed, as have two young women, the Taylor sisters, who were convicted of a murder with which, from the outset, it never seemed likely that they had anything to do. Among the saddest cases was that of Stefan Kiszko, whose conviction was quashed in February 1992 after he had spent 16 years in prison for an offence that scientific evidence available at the time proved that he could not have committed. Tragically, Mr. Kiszko died earlier this year.

I make no complaint about the fact that our legal system makes mistakes; that is inevitable under any system of justice. What I complain about is that we lack a mechanism for facing up to mistakes even when it becomes obvious to sensible people of all political persuasions that something is seriously wrong. In most of the cases to which I have referred, a gargantuan effort was required to persuade our criminal justice system to own up to what had gone wrong. It involved years of campaigning by the victims

[Mr. Mullin]

themselves, by their relatives, by journalists and broadcasters and, occasionally, by that rare animal, a lawyer prepared to work without payment.

Such campaigns have often had to be waged in the teeth of bitter abuse in the Murdoch press and elsewhere, some of it, in the past at least, orchestrated by Ministers. In the Guildford and Woolwich cases, it was only when faced with representations over a long period by a delegation comprising two former Home Secretaries, two Law Lords, the broadcaster Mr. Robert Kee and Cardinal Basil Hume that the Home Secretary of the day was persuaded to refer the case back to the Court of Appeal. To begin with, even representations from that distinguished body, to which I pay tribute, were insufficient to move the hard hearts in the Home Office.

Miscarriages of justice have many victims. First, they destroy or seriously damage the lives of those unjustly sentenced and the lives of their families. Secondly, the long campaigns that have to be waged to put right such miscarriages are distressing for the families of the victims of the crimes for which innocent people are sentenced. They have to see the gory details constantly raked over in public. Thirdly, a miscarriage of justice often means that the real criminal is still at large and free to commit other offences Finally, the criminal justice system is brought into disrepute by the stubborn refusal of those who preside over it to face up to realities that are often obvious to those of us who are not Home Office Ministers or Appeal Court judges.

Who can deny that the events of the past few years have brought the British criminal justice system into discredit around the world? The new clause is intended, in part at least, to remedy that position. I should have preferred it to have required the Home Secretary to amend the Bill, but I am advised that it can be in order only in the form that it appears on the amendment paper; therefore, it requires the Home Secretary to present detailed plans within a month of the Bill's enactment.

I note that the Home Office chose last Friday, after months of inactivity, to publish a discussion paper inviting comments on the proposed new review body. I welcome its appearance—belated though it is—although I cannot help wondering whether the timing has more to do with providing the Home Secretary with something to say in the debate this evening than with genuinely facing up to a problem that has been in his in-tray since the day he took office. The fact that, when I inquired this morning, it was not available even in the Vote Office—although I have now received a copy—suggests that this could be little more than a cosmetic exercise. I see that the Home Secretary is shaking his head. I hope that I am wrong.

I shall comment briefly on what should be the main features of an independent review tribunal. First, it must be composed of persons of an inquiring frame of mind, preferably with a track record of scepticism towards the official version of events. Secondly, while it will of course need to contain some persons with legal training, it should not be dominated by lawyers since, with honourable exceptions, this is a subject where lawyers have traditionally been part of the problem rather than the solution. Thirdly, the tribunal must have powers to summon persons and papers and to conduct its own investigation. Fourthly, it must not be dependent on officers of one police force to investigate the alleged misdemeanours of another. It is essential that it has its own dedicated force of investigators or the powers and resources to commission such a force.

Fifthly, the tribunal should be able, if it wishes, to recommend to the Court of Appeal that a conviction be quashed. It is not good enough simply to pass on new material without comment, which I gather is what is presently envisaged. Although the Court of Appeal has to a considerable extent cleaned up its act in recent years, history records that the legendary stubbornness of its judges has prolonged many celebrated scandals in the past 15 years. Sixthly, the tribunal should conduct itself with a sense of urgency and not at the leisurely pace with which the C3 department of the Home Office currently proceeds, bearing in mind the fact that it deals with people who may already have spent many years in prison for offences of which they are innocent. Seventhly, the tribunal should apply to Scotland and Northern Ireland, where many alleged miscarriages of justice have occurred. Finally, if the tribunal is to be credible, it will not be good enough simply to transfer to some outside agency the functions of the C3 department.

In 1982, the distinguished solicitor Sir David Napley told the Select Committee on Home Affairs that he was unable to recall

> "a single case where the Home Office has, as a result of its own investigations, felt able to recommend a pardon or any other recognition that a conviction was necessarily wrongful."

There may have been one or two exceptions since, but the same is broadly true today. It is a depressing fact that the C3 department generally sees its role as merely poking holes in evidence submitted by others. By way of example, one need look no further than the way in which it has mishandled the Carl Bridgewater case. It is obvious to all sensible people that the case against the four men convicted of that crime has now collapsed. There have been six police inquiries and still amateurs continue to turn up evidence that the police have failed to find or have wilfully misinterpreted. A mountain of new evidence has emerged. The foreman of the jury has called for the case to be reopened. Even an expert, Dr. E.W. Shepherd, commissioned by the Home Office to rebut the assertions made by other experts on behalf of the defendants, has come down on their side.

9.30 pm

On 14 January this year, Dr. Shepherd wrote as follows to the Home Secretary:

> "For my part I still have faith that you will choose to act . . . expeditiously given the gravity of the issues involved and the threat posed to public confidence in the criminal justice system and in the commitment of the police service to act with integrity. I look forward to early confirmation that this faith is well-founded."

Since then, Dr. Shepherd has heard nothing from the Home Office except a bland letter of acknowledgement. I cannot stress too strongly that he was an expert employed by police officers acting on behalf of the Home Office to examine the case. That shows how difficult it is to persuade the C3 department to take action.

The recent discussion document issued by the Home Office contains some ominous references to the Police Complaints Authority as a possible model for how the new body should operate. The only lesson to be learnt from the Police Complaints Authority is what not to do. I mean no disrespect to many of the honourable people who work for it and I suspect that some of them would agree with my

view. It is a powerless, timorous and generally useless body. What is more, even when it has recommended action, its advice has usually been ignored by the Crown Prosecution Service and others in authority. Most solicitors of my acquaintance would not touch the PCA with a barge pole. If the proposed independent review tribunal is to be modelled on it, we might as well all go home.

The tribunal that I envisage must be properly funded and empowered—above all, it must consist of men and women possessed of steely determination, bearing in mind the fact that they will have to confront some of the mightiest vested interests in the land. Talking of which, what has become of Sir John May's inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich case? The House may be surprised to hear that the Scott inquiry is not the only judicial inquiry proceeding at present. Sir John May's inquiry was set up in the autumn of 1989—four and a half years ago—in the wake of the collapse of the case against those convicted of the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

Sir John got off to a promising start, with public inquiries into the subsidiary, but related issue—the conviction of Mrs. Annie Maguire and her family—and then he went underground and nothing has been heard from him since. He is said to be interviewing witnesses in private. I understand that some of the principal officials involved have declined to answer his questions and that some of his old chums in the judiciary are no longer on speaking terms with him because he is thought to have pursued the first part of his inquiry a mite too rigorously.

I mention that inquiry only to raise a wider point. If a judicial inquiry that is set up by the Home Secretary and the Attorney-General in an atmosphere of urgency can be derailed in that way, we should be under no illusions about the fate that awaits an independent review tribunal that is not properly empowered and resourced.

The idea has been around for a long time. It was first suggested by Lord Devlin in the mid-1970s. It was recommended in a unanimous report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs as long ago as 1982. It was so uncontroversial that it attracted the support of even the hon. Members for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner). It was recommended by the Government's own Royal Commission on criminal justice, which reported in July last year. It is preposterous for the Home Secretary to claim that he has had insufficient time to consult. He has had a lot longer to reflect on that issue than on many of the other more controversial issues in the Bill. That is why tonight I and my colleagues will press new clause 6 to a Division. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I fully endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) said. He has an unenviable and wonderful record. It is unenviable because of the work that has gone into it, but wonderful because of his efforts to fight and to expose miscarriages of justice, principally the wrongful imprisonment of the Birmingham Six.

The House should listen carefully to what my hon. Friend has to say because I can recall dozens of occasions on which Home Secretaries and Home Office Ministers informed the House at the Dispatch Box, with absolute certainty, that the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, Tottenham Three, Judith Ward and so on were guilty. They should be a little more cautious and be prepared to look into other evidence.

Miscarriages of justice give rise to three enormous problems: the innocent are imprisoned; their families suffer and the abuse that they suffer is as bad as being in prison: and the guilty go free.

The work that has been done to expose such miscarriages of justice is important. Hon. Members would do well to read the books written by the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six and to see the film, "In the Name of the Father", which shows what really happens when there is a serious miscarriage of justice.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) seems to find this extremely amusing, but if someone is imprisoned for one third or half of their lives for an offence that he or she did not commit and receives nothing but abuse while trying to get justice, the hon. and learned Member should remember that, as elected Members of Parliament, our job is to act as a check on the Executive and to be prepared to speak up for causes that are often very unpopular. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South has bravely done so often.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the theme of the film "In the Name of the Father" is that the prosecution deliberately hid the fact that it had a witness to the alibi of the accused, Gerry Conlon, who was not present at the crime? That theme was completely concocted and has no relevance to the facts of the case or to the reason why the appeal was upheld.

Mr. Corbyn: The film that the hon. and learned Member is leading us to discuss emphasises what happens when a miscarriage of justice takes place. It is not a book or a record of every detail. It contains inaccuracies and everyone is prepared to admit that.

Mr. Mullin: I do not wish to discuss the film, except to say that the facts of the Guildford case are far worse than it makes out. The Court of Appeal released the Guildford Four because early drafts of forged confessions were found in regard to Patrick Armstrong. Since confessions account for the entire case against them, they were released.

Mr. Corbyn: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. He and other hon. Members are trying to stress the fact that all those miscarriages of justice exposed a method of preventing defence counsel from getting rightful access to information that could have prevented prosecution in the first place. That is a common thread, as is the thread of confessional evidence that is used to obtain conviction.

When one talks to people who have confessed to commiting a crime that they could not have committed and to being somewhere that they were not, one begins to realise what is happening in police stations and prisons throughout the country and what has led to those dreadful miscarriages of justice.

The cases that I listed received enormous publicity. If the hon. and learned Member for Burton is not prepared to watch a film—I understand that he is a busy man, with many commitments in the courts and elsewhere—he may care to find time to read a book—perhaps those written by Hugh Callaghan and Paul Hill. Some very good books have been written by people who suffered in prison for years and he might benefit from spending a few hours reading them.

I recognise that we are dealing with only one part of a very comprehensive piece of legislation. I echo what my

[Mr. Corbyn]

hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South said about promised inquiries. I accept that we have had the May inquiry, a royal commission and other examinations of the issues. We had, coincidentally, a statement on Friday about a review process to enable people to gain access to the Court of Appeal. That is long overdue.

The cases that I have mentioned gained a great deal of publicity because of the dedication of the families and the supporters of those who had been wrongfully convicted and their preparedness to campaign on the issue. Many other people, however, who are in prison may have an equally strong claim to be victims of miscarriages of justice. The problem is that there is no one to campaign for them. They have no access to legal aid to get their cases brought forward. It is a matter of chance whether their cases are picked up by someone who is willing to give up the time necessary to ensure that those cases are heard in the Court of Appeal. That problem is at the core of the argument for some access to that court. It is not good enough to rely, hit or miss, on who happens to pick up a case. The campaign for the release of the Birmingham Six started with no money and just four people at a meeting. After a few years, however, that had developed into a magnificent campaign, which went far wider than just the release of those innocent men from prison on that important day.

I could mention many cases, but I shall restrict myself to one, which is well known to the Home Secretary. A delegation has met the Minister of State, Home Office to discuss the Bridgewater Three. The Home Secretary is aware of a request that he should refer that case to the Court of Appeal, because fresh evidence has been submitted to him to suggest that the three men who remain in prison —the fourth tragically died in prison—did not and could not have committed the awful atrocity of the murder of Carl Bridgewater. No one is trying to minimise the appalling crime of that terrible death, but it does nothing for Carl's memory or for his family if the wrong people are in prison. We want justice to be seen to be done, which means, first, that those men should be released.

New evidence has been submitted to the Home Secretary concerning in particular the case of Pat Molloy, one of those convicted of the murder of Carl Bridgewater. The detailed evidence submitted to the Home Secretary reveals that Molloy was not the author of the confession, which he supposedly gave, as the police claimed at the trial. An investigation carried out, on commission, by a leading forensic psychologist, Dr. Eric Shepherd, agrees with the defence experts' reports. The alleged confession was obtained by the late detective constable John Perkins, who Pat Molloy said broke his teeth. Other evidence has been submitted about the way in which Molloy was treated and the manner in which he eventually made his confession, which resulted in his conviction and imprisonment and three others.

The Home Secretary is well aware of the evidence. A thorough inquiry has already been held about it and delegations have visited the Home Office. Two books have been written on the case, and that by Paul Foot has been published in a revised edition. There is a mountain of evidence to suggest that those in prison for the murder of Carl Bridgewater did not carry out and could not have carried out that crime.

It should not be in the gift of the Home Secretary to decide whether the enormous weight of evidence, which I believe is in favour of those in prison now, should be given the right to be heard in open court. That is the kernel of our argument. Those people should have a right of access to the Court of Appeal in any event.

The Bridgewater case is one of several hundred cases being considered by the Home Office officials. The process of reconsidering evidence is not new, but we want that evidence to be considered in the open. We want equal and real access to justice to be given to all people who believe that they have been wrongfully convicted. That is the basis of our argument and the basis of the argument of those who have served prison sentences.

I urge the Home Secretary, if he has the time, to look at a number of books written by the victims of miscarriages of justice in this country. He must appreciate that he has a responsibility as Home Secretary to ensure that real justice is available to all people, irrespective of who campaigns for them or the resources at their disposal. At the moment there is no access to legal aid for those who believe they have been wrongfully convicted. There are few lawyers who are prepared to work for nothing and a limited number of people who are prepared to endure the kind of subterranean media abuse that is heaped on those who campaign against miscarriages of justice. For those reasons, many cases are simply not heard. We need real access to justice. That is the synthesis of what we are arguing for in new clause 6, and I look forward to its support. Above all, I look forward to the day when we can say that everyone has real access to the courts.

9.45

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I need to detain the House for only a moment, but I thought it appropriate that a Conservative Member should be identified with new clause 6. I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) not only on putting the case very clearly, as he did back in 1990, but, I thought, on making all the major arguments.

It is a pleasure to follow Lord Devlin, 18 years ago, and my Conservative colleagues on the Home Affairs Select Committee in 1981-82. The key point I found, reading through that sixth report, was in paragraph 11. The Committee reached the following conclusion:

> "All our witnesses, apart from the Home Office themselves, felt that some opportunity for independent review would both add to the quality of the advice given to the Home Secretary and at the same time help to persuade petitioners and the public that each case had been given full and fair consideration."

I suggest that that is the kernel of the case that is being made tonight.

I draw to the attention of the House another brief quotation from the report. In paragraph 10, the Committee says:

> "Both Justice and the Criminal Bar Association suggested that the chances of a petition ultimately being 'successful' might sometimes depend less on its intrinsic merits than on the amount of external support and publicity that it was able to attract."

I think that that is true. That should worry us, too.

I believe that, since Lord Devlin set to work, the climate of public concern about miscarriages of justice has greatly altered. I shall not rehearse the details of the Birmingham and Guildford cases. I think that it is now the talk in the pubs and clubs of our country; it is not a rarefied matter simply for lawyers and Home Office officials.

I believe that the onus is on the Home Secretary, if he does not wish to support new clause 6, to say what he will do instead, because there is a genuine problem. I do not believe that the status quo is acceptable to another decade. I therefore hope that the House will, after due deliberation, support this important new clause.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I support the eloquent case made by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who, as has been observed, has a distinguished and deserved reputation for his tenacity in seeing through some especially unpopular, but ultimately, no doubt—from his personal point of view—satisfying, campaigns to resolve substantial miscarriages of justice.

As the House will have observed, new clause 6 embraces not only England and Wales and Northern Ireland, but Scotland. It is sometimes thought, especially by lawyers in Scotland, that our system is immune from miscarriages of justice of the type that has been mentioned. However, the cases of Preece and of Meehan, to which reference was recently made when we debated capital punishment, are eloquent testimony to the fact that miscarriages of justice can occur in any of the legal jurisdictions in the United Kingdom. For that reason, the clause as currently framed refers to Scotland as well.

There is nothing wrong in the law reacting to a disturbing series of cases. What could be more disturbing than the series of cases to which the hon. Member for Sunderland, South referred? Although I do not propose to rehearse them, it is worth pointing out from an historical point of view that a case that was equally celebrated in its time—that of Oscar Slater in Scotland—forced the legislature to introduce into that jurisdiction a right of appeal in cases where guilt had been determined by a jury. Recent history makes the clause not so much desirable as essential in order to establish public confidence in the judicial system.

No matter how the powers of the appellate courts are drawn, the existing machinery will inevitably be inadequate to get to the truth of some cases. That is particularly so in a system that leaves the determination of fact at first instance to juries, because appellate courts are reluctant to interfere with conclusions that juries have reached.

In general, that must be correct, but in cases like those of which we have heard this evening, the appellate courts' restrictive powers are inadequate to get at the truth of issues raised by allegations of miscarriage of justice. It is also important to remember that appellate courts deal with an adversarial system and are bound by the rules of evidence as they apply in the jurisdictions for which they are responsible.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs was remarkably prescient in the report to which reference has already been made. One cannot help but think that, had the terms of that report been speedily implemented, some of the events of the past 12, 13 or 14 years might have been avoided, to the advantage of our judicial system.

One need not be seduced by film reconstructions of previous cases, because the real evidence is as compelling as any that might be required. Mistakes occur in the legal system. No one can prosecute or defend over a period without being aware that he or she has made a mistake in the course of presenting a case. No judge can sit over an extended period without being aware that he or she has made a mistake in determining a case. Lawyers must acknowledge the fallibility of the legal system.

On that footing, I have little hesitation in commending the new clause to the House.

Mr. Gunnell: I shall not delay the House for long because, as other hon. Members have said, my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) has set out clearly what is needed with regard to a criminal cases review authority. We all await the Home Secretary's reply. Although I welcome the fact that he has published something, I was disappointed that the document had no time scale attached to it—apart from that related to the consultation process—because the matter is urgent.

My disappointment was accentuated by the fact that it was clear from the Home Secretary's comments in the debate on capital punishment that he takes miscarriages of justice seriously. He used the West Yorkshire case of Stefan Kiszko in a telling way when presenting his reasons for changing his position on capital punishment. He is clearly concerned that the issue of miscarriages of justice is extremely serious.

I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). The Carl Bridgewater case has been in the public domain for a long time, and significant new evidence has arisen. I hope that the Home Secretary will take that potential miscarriage of justice equally seriously. Those three men have been in prison for a long time. The case therefore needs to come before the Court of Appeal as rapidly as possible. Even if the Home Secretary judges that it should go back, there will still be a considerable delay before those people can be released.

Such factors underline the urgency of the problem. I hope that the Home Secretary will be able to tell us this evening what timetable he has in mind. We were disappointed that such a review body was not included in the Bill—

Ms Corston: Does my hon. Friend agree that another factor contributing to the urgency that the Home Secretary should feel is the fact that, because people who are the victims of miscarriages of justice continue to claim their innocence while in prison, they are ineligible for parole? That means, ludicrously, that the innocent serve longer sentences than the guilty.

Mr. Gunnell: I entirely agree—that is indeed an anomaly.

The son of two constituents of mine, Alan Dodson, who is in Full Sutton prison, was convicted in 1987 of the murder of his fiancee in 1986. From the moment of his arrest and first interview, he has always maintained his innocence. Division 3C of the Home Office entertains some worries about that, because of the representations about it that have been made to the Home Office. It has asked me for any helpful information that I might be able to provide. That goes to show the difficulty of making any progress on the case.

The original request for an appeal came from my predecessor, Lord Merlyn-Rees, and was turned down on the ground that there was no new evidence. At the time, that seemed a fair decision, but in some cases it is, by definition, extremely hard to come up with new evidence—when a murder is alleged to have been committed by a person acting alone, and when the police have formed a conclusion from the outset about who the guilty person

[Mr. Gunnell]

was. That can mean that the police do not properly investigate other possible leads. It is thus extremely difficult to produce further evidence.

Sometimes one cannot even procure a copy of the judge's summing-up. That applies in this case; no such copy exists, because the transcript has never been translated from the shorthand. Indeed, some of the shorthand notes of the six days of the trial that preceded the judge's summing up have been lost and can therefore never be recovered. It is clearly impossible to obtain a complete picture of the trial.

To obtain a copy of the summing up, a Member of Parliament would have to find £600—and I am told that we cannot ask for that to be done at public expense, or even pay for it out of our office expenses, if we are prepared to do so. It is hard to make progress without the summing-up by the judge in such a case.

The police seem to have formed a single-minded judgment. It seems that the defence may not have been conducted in a way that was helpful to the person in question. All this shows why many people are concerned about a delay in the appearance of a criminal cases review authority on the statute book.

We are also worried that the Bill will increase the potential for miscarriages of justice. For instance, we regret the way in which the right to silence has been dealt with, but that is a subject for another debate. We also regret the rejection of the many constructive Opposition amendments that sought to restrict the time at which that might take effect to formal situations. That would have meant that people could not be held responsible for everything that happened from the moment they were spoken to on the street, in the police car or at the station without a solicitor being present. Such safeguards should be in place if we are to avoid further miscarriages of justice.

That being the case, it is particularly important that the miscarriages of justice that have occurred should be capable of investigation and should be put right as rapidly as possible on the broader base, which is simply that they are or may be unsafe.

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on his new clause. Twenty years ago, it would have been quite unnecessary, and I would have said that after 20 years at the criminal bar. Over the past two decades there have been far too many injustices that have not been put right by the Court of Appeal because of its procedures and various inhibitions. I suppose that many of us can think of constituents who have been convicted, not in such dramatic circumstances as those that we have heard about, but in a lesser way.

I can think of one very prominent constituent who was convicted of murder. It was what the French would call a crime passionnel. He was het up and emotionally charged when he went to the police station and was undoubtedly coaxed into making a statement which I do not think would have held water and would have been put right by the kind of independent body about which the hon. Member for Sunderland, South has spoken.

As I have said, there have been far too many injustices and it is intolerable to permit them to go on without a body such as that which the new clause proposes. Sooner or later, that body will be set up. Let us do it now rather than postpone it and in the intervening time have more injustices.

Mr. Trimble: I rise primarily to show my support and that of my hon. Friends for the principle behind the new clause proposed by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). I welcome the form of the new clause in that it refers not only to England and Wales but to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

No system will be perfect, and no matter what the circumstances, mistakes are bound to occur in any situation. Several years ago I spoke to a visiting group of American lawyers who were concerned about the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. I told them the remarkable fact that over the many years of operation of the Diplock courts, there had until then been no cases in which any person convicted in the courts was imprisoned protesting innocence. That, of course, is no longer true. We have had the UDR Four case, with which my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) has been particularly associated.

Since the Court of Appeal overturned three of the four convictions in that case, other cases have come forward, at least one of which appears to me to have some merit. Therefore, we cannot claim to be immune from problems, although I must tell the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) that at least we have the advantage of always getting transcripts of cases and judgments and automatic rights of appeal.

None the less, I am satisfied that there should be a review authority and that it is not right to leave the matter purely to the Home Secretary or the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales, as the case might be.

Further, the review authority must operate in what one might call an inquisitorial manner. It must free itself from the adversarial approach that dominates the courts and appears to have dominated also the attitudes of the Home Office and administrators. Although the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has not yet responded to the Adjournment debate that my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone obtained on the Neil Latimer case a few weeks ago, it seemed from listening to his response that he was still far too much trapped within the habit of thought of someone who operates within the adversarial system. He seemed primarily concerned with defending and vindicating the judges and the judicial decision, rather than with taking an independent view and being motivated primarily by the search for truth, which must be the purpose of the review authority.

It is strange that lawyers who present cases and judges who decide them are comfortable with the thought that they may make mistakes when dealing with civil actions, and feel no rebuke when an appeal court overrules or varies their decision, but that they become desperately defensive

about criminal actions—as if they were fallible only in respect of civil actions and infallible in criminal matters. That is not a rational view.

I welcome the publication of the Home Office discussion paper. As the hon. Member for Sunderland, South said, his new clause and this debate might have set its timetable and target. If so, that is a good thing. Perhaps it is a pity that it was not published earlier. I hope that the Home Office will not adopt a purely parochial attitude and consider only England and Wales, but that like and speedy consideration will be given to Northern Ireland and the other jurisdiction.

I agree that the wider grounds for appeal referred to in paragraph 44 of the paper should be adopted. The right approach is that adopted in Northern Ireland for county court appeals, when a complete new hearing is started. By complete, I mean that all the evidence is considered afresh —there is not the technical rehearing that occurs in the English Court of Appeal.

There should be judicial review of the review authority's actions, and it should be under an obligation to make wider disclosure than paragraph 73 of the paper envisages. Most important of all, there should be no limitation on the royal prerogative. The discussion paper makes the mistake of suggesting that the royal prerogative's future scope must be limited, but I believe that it should be available to cover the exceptional case —and by definition, the exceptional case cannot be predicted. An opportunity must exist for recourse to the royal prerogative.

Another problem that concerns me as a Northern Ireland Member is that of small jurisdictions. I am not sure of the extent to which that is a problem in Scotland, but I suspect that it is one. Northern Ireland has one Lord Chief Justice, a few Lord Justices of Appeal and a few puisne judges —a total of 10. A criminal case will be heard by one of them in the first instance. Under the Diplock courts, there is an automatic right of appeal to a hearing by a further three judges. That accounts for four judges out of 10. If the case is referred back to the criminal court of appeal, another three judges will be required. With the referral of the UDR Four case, one prosecuting counsel had been promoted to the Bench, so was ruled out of consideration. What will happen if such a case is referred back to the Court of Appeal, when it has already run through half the judiciary? Is it reasonable to expect that an entirely fresh view will be taken by judges capable of taking such a view?

Small jurisdictions also produce a better cohesion among the jury—everybody knows everybody else. I am sure that problem exists also in Scotland. One constituent of mine is in prison in Scotland, and there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the decision in that case was not safe. I encounter in the representations that I make exactly the same defensive attitude that we have seen among the judges and lawyers in Northern Ireland. So there is a particular problem there.

I finish with one general observation. Details have been given this evening of several serious miscarriages of justice. In some of those cases, although not all—it is not the sole problem—the problem was unethical conduct by the police, the prosecutors and others. That is a general problem. No review authority would be able to cope with that, but it has to be emphasised that part of the process that is adopted must be to reassert the ethical standards that ought to apply in the police and among prosecutors.

If I recall rightly, when Lord Denning referred on that celebrated occasion to an appalling vista, he had in mind that if the appellant's case was true, it meant that the police had lied and the lawyers has failed in their duty. That was what he saw as the appalling vista: those whom we relied on to behave honourably had behaved dishonourably. That is something that we have to deal with.

In Northern Ireland, another factor has aggravated the matter. As well as over-enthusiasm among the police and prosecutors, political pressure has been exerted, and corrupted the process. That may also have been a factor in some of the miscarriages of justice in England and Wales too. It has certainly been a factor in Northern Ireland in the case with which I am dealing. The miscarriages of justice in England and Wales have also had another effect. It has been significant in one case that affected us in Northern Ireland. It has resulted in a tendency by juries to disbelieve evidence. That perhaps follows on from what Lord Denning saw as the appalling vista.

I am glad that the Home Office has published its discussion paper. I hope that the matter will be progressed as speedily as possible. I hope that the other jurisdictions, Scotland and Northern Ireland, will be kept on board and that legislation will be introduced soon which will deal with the matter on a United Kingdom basis, with all the jurisdictions at the same time. I appreciate that, because of its background, there will have to be slight differences for Scotland. There is no significant difference on the matter between the legal systems in Northern Ireland and in England and Wales. I hope that the Home Secretary can assure us this evening that the Northern Ireland Office will be fully on board on this issue and that changes will be made simultaneously.

Mr. Blair: I rise to speak in support of new clause 6, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work that he has done on the subject and the manner in which he moved the new clause today. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston), whose Bill on the subject has also helped to move the argument forward.

I wish to be brief and I intend to confine myself to one point. It is right that new clause 6 has been tabled. Like my hon. Friend, I suspect that if it had not been tabled we might not have had such a prompt response from the Home Office last Friday in the form of a discussion paper, although the Home Secretary is doubtless about to stretch our credulity a little more and tell us that it was a marvellous coincidence.

Of course there are problems of detail. For example, who would conduct the investigations of the new body? However, there is broad agreement in principle about the authority. There is agreement that the review body should be independent of the courts and should have its own procedure for investigations. There is a wide consensus as to the need for the body and a fair degree of consensus as to its powers.

The hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) was right when he said that one of the important things about such a body is that questions of miscarriages of justice would no longer depend on the arbitrary swings of publicity, taking up a particular cause at any one time, but would be on the more objective basis of a proper and thorough investigation.

[Mr. Blair]

The argument for such a body has been concluded and won long since. I make that point in support of the new clause. The Royal Commission on criminal justice, which was in a sense the reason for the legislation before us, was set up on 14 March 1991—the day the Court of Appeal quashed the convictions of the Birmingham Six, who had long and in vain relied on the usual procedures to obtain justice. It followed the 1989 inquiry of Sir John May into the convictions of the Guildford Four and the Maguires. In the course of that inquiry, Sir John made clear his belief that the present system should change, which was also the view of successive Home Secretaries. The inquiry had itself succeeded the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, produced more than a decade ago.

On page 6, the royal commission report—published nine months ago, in July 1993—states:

"The widely publicised miscarriages of justice which have occurred in recent years have created a need to restore public confidence in the criminal justice system. That need has not diminished since we were appointed."

10.15 pm

A royal commission set up to investigate the need for such a body recommended its establishment. It has been debated for literally years, with a growing consensus on all sides that it is necessary. There is no substantial disagreement about the need or purposes of it. In those circumstances, it is scandalous that there is no provision for it in the Bill. Such provision should and could have been in the Bill, and would have attracted enormous support from all quarters in the House.

I venture to say that if anyone had suggested back in March 1991—when the royal commission was set up—that a recommendation for such a review body in its report would be the one proposal not included in the Bill, people would have been deeply surprised. The Home Secretary may shake his head, but I think that that is obvious. The commission was set up on the very day when the convictions were quashed and it was set up in part, at least, to look into the need for such a body. There was already a strong consensus in its favour, and the commission found definitively that it should be set up. Now, nine months on, we still have only a consultation paper from the Home Office. I believe that there is no good reason why we could not have proceeded in a much quicker and more effective way.

If we are to restore confidence within the criminal justice system, of course we must be keen to convict the criminal; but we must also be keen to provide justice for the innocent. That is the purpose of any good criminal justice system—not to favour the prosecution or the accused, but to seek and obtain the truth, wherever it may lie. We know that there has been a history of miscarriages of justice over the past few decades, and a royal commission set up to inquire into the purpose of a review body recommended its establishment. Establishing the review body, and including it in the Bill, would constitute an important statement on behalf of the House about the right balance in the criminal justice system.

There is no good reason for delay. I believe that if the Home Secretary proceeded now he would be doing a service to the entire criminal justice system, and establishing confidence within that system. I urge him to accept calls that have come from hon. Members on both sides of the House, and to act now to put the matter right.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I, too, shall be brief.

There is no doubt that a string of miscarriages of justice has marred the high reputation of British justice; equally, there is no doubt that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) deserves praise rather than vilification for the part that he has played. I must point out, however, that many—although not all—of those miscarriages of justice took place 16 years ago. Since then, a number of things have already happened to reduce the likelihood of such miscarriages, although not to seal off all possibility of them.

The miscarriages of justice took place before the establishment of an independent Crown Prosecution Service, genetic testing, the electro-static document analysis system, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—which protects suspects—and the changes in criminal trial procedure whereby judges warn juries to be ultra-careful in identification cases. These miscarriages mostly took place before the new training of lawyers and judges and, in particular, before the introduction of tape-recorded interviews. That will have reduced substantially, but not sufficiently, the likelihood of miscarriages of justice.

Immediately after the string of miscarriages, the Government set up the Runciman royal commission. They have accepted in particular the recommendation that there should be a criminal cases review authority, which is long overdue. What is wrong with the present system is simply that it misses some of the miscarriages of justice.

The Society of Conservative Lawyers gave evidence to Runciman. That evidence was a bit stronger than some of the Runciman proposals that the Government are now considering. We suggested that the Court of Appeal should always acquit if it has a lurking doubt, that more use should be made of the power of the Court of Appeal to order a retrial, that there should be legal aid to cover reasonable search for new evidence and that there should be a widening of principles whereby new evidence could be admitted.

We also said, however, that the Court of Appeal even in a reformed state would not be enough to remove some of the miscarriages of justice and we, too, suggested an independent review board. We made the point that it should not be the responsibility of the Home Secretary to decide whether or not matters should be considered for reference back to the Court of Appeal, as advised by Home Office officials, who sometimes seem to believe that there must be positive proof of innocence before anything is referred back. One cannot, by looking at papers, detect whether a police officer has been dishonest, whether a forensic scientist has made a mistake or whether a witness was in error.

There was always a fundamental flaw in leaving it to the Home Secretary—who, of course, is subject to approaches by archbishops and everybody else—to give the impression that some of his decisions may be made on a political or other basis when nobody has the slightest reason for thinking that that ever happens. Obviously we could remove that sort of decision from the Home Secretary and put it in the hands of an independent review body. That would be much better, but such a body must be properly staffed and properly funded and must have full investigative powers. In this regard I agree with much of what has been said during the debate. The body must take up its position as soon as possible, and the discussion paper is a good start.

We are considering the wrongful conviction of the innocent—a type of miscarriage of justice that is deplorable in every sense. But there is another type of miscarriage of justice—the wrongful acquittal of the guilty. It may be that every year there are tens of miscarriages of justice involving wrongful conviction of the innocent, but there are tens of thousands of miscarriages of justice involving acquittal of the guilty. These people then go out and commit more crimes and are responsible for more suffering and misery in society. Runciman has addressed that matter, too. My plea is that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary should implement those changes as quickly as possible, as he is doing in the Criminal Justice Bill and beyond, so that society may be rid of all kinds of miscarriages of justice —not just the conviction of the innocent but also the acquittal of the guilty.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and I often have very different opinions, and that will certainly continue to be the case. However, there is wide consensus in the House and in the country that there should be an independent body to investigate alleged miscarriages of justice. The establishment of such a body would be in the interests of British justice. I trust that the Home Secretary is listening attentively to the views of hon. Members and will agree to the establishment of an independent body.

There have been unjust attacks on British justice, and the impression has been given—and is still being given —that in every case in the past few years in which people have been released from prison they were innocent. I do not believe that that is what the courts said: they said that the convictions were not safe, which is very different from suggesting that every individual involved was wholly innocent.

Mr. Mullin *rose—*

Rev. William McCrea: No, I shall not give way as I intend to speak for only a few minutes.

I stress that I am not interested in putting behind bars anyone who is innocent. British justice does not accept that the innocent should suffer, but I do not believe that the guilty should go free. I want there to be a genuine search for the truth. If those who have been released were guilty, I hope that we can somehow get to the very depths of the case, whether it be the Birmingham, Guildford or Ulster Defence Regiment cases. The House should be seeking the truth, irrespective of what the individual involved represents or of whether, in terms of Northern Ireland, he is from one section of the community or the other.

I have not heard much from Opposition Members about the UDR Four—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Sunderland, South was one of the few who mentioned them. From the very beginning, my colleagues genuinely believed in the innocence of the UDR Four, while others have recently joined the bandwagon who in the past wrote that they were guilty.

Lawyers are not perfect; nor are judges, Ministers or Members of Parliament. Errors can be made and, if they have been made, they must be put right, which is why we should have an independent body to investigate matters. My colleagues will certainly support that notion tonight because it is important. I ask the Home Secretary to take the matter seriously and to accept that there is widespread concern in the community.

I make a further appeal to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to the Home Secretary about the case of one member of the UDR Four who still lies in prison. He is innocent of the crime of which he has been accused. Three of the UDR Four were let out but one has been left in, and the only possible reason for that is political. There are plenty of reasons why Neil Latimer should be let out and I trust that he will be released.

I ask the House to support the new clause as I believe that it is being forced to a Division. I trust that the right decision will be taken and that we shall strike a blow for good British justice.

Mr. Howard: I, too, pay tribute to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) for the way in which he moved the new clause and for the way in which he has conducted his campaigns down the years. I agree that he must look back on some of his successes with considerable satisfaction.

Like every other hon. Member, I believe that one innocent person convicted is one too many. I want to put in place the best criminal justice system that it is possible to provide—a system that contains all necessary safeguards to minimise the possibility of a wrongful conviction, the most effective appeals procedures that we can devise, so that if there are any wrongful convictions they can be corrected at the earliest possible stage, and the best machinery for investigating alleged miscarriages of justice to ensure that, in the last resort, appropriate cases are referred back to the courts for review.

As the House will know, the Government have accepted the royal commission's recommendation that the powers to investigate and refer cases to the Court of Appeal should be removed from the Home Secretary and that a new body —the criminal cases review authority—should be set up to carry out those functions. We are committed to establishing the new authority as soon as possible.

That is a firm decision by the Government on the principle, but a decision in principle is not enough to provide the basis for detailed legislation. The royal commission considered the issues carefully and, we think, came to the right conclusion. However, its proposals do not amount to a detailed blueprint for the new authority. They do not answer all the questions that need to be settled before effecting this major constitutional change—probably the biggest in the area since the Criminal Appeal Act 1907.

There are further important issues to consider. Some are points of detail, but they nevertheless have to be decided before an effective scheme can be set in place. Others are more substantial. I shall say a word or two about some of them in a few moments. There may be different views on them, in the House and elsewhere, but they need to be resolved before we can proceed.

10.30 pm

We have been devoting a great deal of thought to identifying the issues and examining possible solutions. The results are set out in the discussion paper that I published on Friday. We have invited comments from those interested in this area of the criminal justice system by 31 May 1994. There are many people, practitioners and others, with a long-standing interest in miscarriage of justice cases—there is no doubt that the hon. Member for

Sunderland, South is among them—with experience and insights to offer. I want to hear from them and to benefit from their views.

Mr. Michael: The Secretary of State is basically asking us to be patient. Is not he aware that when those of us who were involved with the Criminal Justice Bill in 1993 moved similar propositions, we were were encouraged to be patient because, we were told, they were to be the basis, the heart, of the Bill currently before the House?

Mr. Howard: Whatever was said at that time was said before the royal commission's report was published. The royal commission might have come up with a detailed blueprint that would have enabled us to include provision for that body in the Bill. I can tell the House that no one would have been more pleased than I to include those provisions in the Bill. I was extremely keen to do it. It is perfectly clear, however, for the reasons that I have set out, that it is not a practical proposition.

The paper that I published on Friday discusses a range of important issues. They include the authority's relationship with the courts and with the Government, the composition, working methods, procedures and powers of the authority, the criteria for investigating cases and referring them back to the courts, the circumstances in which the royal prerogative should be exercised in the future, how members should be appointed and to whom the authority should be accountable.

The Lord Chief Justice, when he spoke in another place last October in a debate on the royal commission's report, stressed the importance of not rushing to creating new machinery for looking at alleged miscarriages of justice. He said:

"It is necessary to have a review procedure and it should be conducted by an independent body".

But he also said:

"it is extremely important . . . that we should not proceed too quickly. It is important that the new body should be properly constituted and set up."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 October 1993; Vol. 549, c. 795-98.]

I agree with him and I can assure him, and the House, that when the new authority is established, it will be after very careful consideration of, and consultation on, all the issues. The new authority will be properly constituted and set up. That is the right way forward, rather than the new clauses.

I know that many hon. Members are impatient to see that change introduced and so am I, but we should not do anyone any service if we rushed the legislation through without having attended to all the detailed questions that are set out in the discussion paper. It is for those reasons that I urge the House to reject the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 308.

Division No. 182] **[10.35 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan

Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John

Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Riffkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 11

DUTY OF CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE TO VICTIMS

'.-The Crown Prosecution Service shall be under a duty to—

(a) inform a complainant of the progress of the charge against the accused, of the dates of any court hearings, and of the outcome of any trial,

(b) consult the complainant about the nature of the charge to be brought against the accused, receive the views of the complainant about the level of the charge and, should the Crown Prosecution Service accept a lesser charge, inform the complainant in writing of the reasons for reducing the charge.'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.45 pm

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this, it will be convenient to consider the following:

New clause 12—*Notification to victim or family of offender's release—*

'(1) Where an offender has been convicted of—

(a) a sexual offence involving violence;

(b) murder;

(c) manslaughter; or

(d) causing grievous bodily harm

and has been given a custodial sentence, the judge may direct that the Secretary of State shall either—

(i) notify such persons as he may specify, who may include the victim of the offence or, where appropriate, the family of the victim, before the offender is to be released, either on home leave or on parole, of his impending release; or

(ii) make arrangements for such persons to be informed.

(2) Where the judge makes no direction under subsection (1) above, an application may be made at any time after the trial for such a direction to be made by the court.

(3) When the judge makes a direction under subsection (1) above an application may be made at any time after the trial for such a direction to be varied or discharged provided that the court shall be satisfied that the victim or such other persons referred to in the direction have been consulted and had an opportunity to make representation to the court.'.

New clause 47—*Victim protection injunction—*

'1. Where a person convicted of indecent assult, rape, murder or manslaughter is sentenced to a term of imprisonment, the Crown Court may also impose a victim protection injunction upon that defendant.

2. A "victim protection injunction" is an order under which the defendant shall be prohibited from entering a defined area for a specified period of time, where

(i) a defined area shall mean an area to be determined by the court, but not more than ten miles radius of

(a) the usual home of the victim or victims; or

(b) where the defendant is being sentenced on conviction for murder or manslaughter, the usual home of the close family or legal guardians of any victim

(ii) a specified period of time shall mean a period of time to be determined by the court but in any event shall be

(a) not less than two years; and

(b) not more than ten years; or

(c) where the defendant is being sentenced on conviction for murder or manslaughter, not more than twenty years.

3.—(1) A victim protection injunction may be imposed at the discretion of the court, after consideration of all the circumstances of the case, and with particular regard to

(a) the age of the victim or victims; and

(b) the nature and seriousness of the offence or offences; and

(c) the distress caused to the victim or victims by the offence or offences; or where the defendant is being sentenced on conviction for murder or manslaughter, the distress caused to the close family of the victim or victims; and

(d) the impact of the victim protection injunction on the defendant and his close family; and

provided that the court is satisfied that

(a) distress will be caused to the victim or victims of their close family if the injunction is not imposed; or

(b) the impact of the injunction upon the defendant and his close family will not be so onerous as to be unjust, having regard to all the circumstances of the case.

(2) The court shall take into consideration in determining the length of a term of imprisonment the effect of such a victim protection injunction has upon the defendant and may reduce the period to be served in prison may up to a maximum of one third of the sentence at its discretion.

4. Breach of any of the terms of a victim protection injunction shall be contempt of court under the Contempt of Court Act 1981.

5. The victim protection injunction shall be enforceable for breach in the Crown Court

(i) upon written complaint to the Crown Court by any of the victims or any member of their close family or legal guardians such as the victim protection injunction seeks to protect;

(ii) by the Crown Prosecution Service upon their receiving written complaint from any one of the victims or any member of a victim's close family or legal guardians such as the victim protection injunction seeks to protect.

6. Any person who has been made the subject of a victim protection injunction may be arrested without warrant where

(i) at the time of arrest, the police have reasonable cause to believe that person is in breach of that victim protection injunction; or

(ii) the police have received written complaint made by any of the victims or any member of a victim's close family or legal guardians such as the victim protection injunction seeks to protect, and such written complaint appears to the police to have been made in good faith.

7. The defendant or his legal representative may apply at any time to the Crown Court to have the victim protection injunction varied or discharged, on notice to each victim or their close family or legal guardians, unless the court accepts that the whereabouts of the same cannot be ascertained, provided that

(i) each victim (or their close family or legal guardians as the court thinks appropriate) consent to the variation or lifting of the victim protection injunction; and subsection (iv) below applies; or

(ii) none of the victims or, where the injunction was made in respect of a conviction for murder or manslaughter, none of the close family or legal guardians of any victim, any longer resides in the area defined by the victim protection injunction or would suffer unjust distress if the injunction were varied or discharged and subsection (iv) below applies; or

(iii) the defendant satisfies the court that compassionate grounds exist for the victim protection injunction to be temporarily varied to accommodate a specific short-term purpose such as attending a family funeral; and

(iv) the court considers it reasonable in all the circumstances, including the circumstances of any victim or victims or their close family or legal guardians, for the victim protection injunction to be so varied or discharged.

8. "Close family" shall mean

(i) spouse;

(ii) children or stepchildren who reside in their parents' home;

(iii) where the person is under the age of 18, the parents, stepparents or guardians of that person;

(iv) a cohabitee.'.

Mr. Michael: I gather, with some regret, that to ensure that we have time to debate these important clauses we have been deprived of a contribution from that Stakhanovite Trappist, the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), because we are not going to debate statutory local partnerships. We have debated that issue, however, during the passage of several criminal justice Bills and our position is well known.

The new clauses pay due regard to the interests of victims within the criminal justice system. Constituents and people involved throughout the system have complained that not enough is done to inform victims of what is happening about a complaint, including, for example, the progress of a charge against the accused; the dates of court hearings; and the outcome of a trial. Victims often know nothing of those matters.

Victims are not consulted, often on pertinent matters. Victims can discover that a case has been dropped or that the charge has been reduced to a less serious one without their ever having been consulted or being given the opportunity to express a view.

It is right that, at the end of the day, the relevant decisions should be taken by the Crown Prosecution Service and we do not suggest that the victims should have the right to veto those decisions. It would be only right and proper, however, and a useful discipline on the CPS when making its decisions, for it to have to inform, in writing, the victim of the reasons for reducing or not proceeding with a charge.

Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have expressed concern at the way in which charges have not been pursued. They are aware that many victims feel that not only have they been subject to nasty and personal crimes, including violence, sometimes extreme, but they have been damaged again by the criminal justice system's failure to deal with the offence adequately.

New clause 12 is equally uncontentious. It calls for the victim or the victim's family to be notified of the offender's release, in appropriate circumstances. The new clause would direct that that information should be provided to the judge—discretion is given to the court. The clause would not make notification mandatory, but would merely ensure that in circumstances where such information is important, it should be provided.

In the past year, on more than one occasion serious comment has been made by judges about the severity of an offence. Those judges have expressed the hope that a young person should be able to grow up without the fear of further interference or personal damage. The victim or a victim's family have discovered, however, that the perpetrator of sometimes horrific acts, commented on by the judge, is walking the streets. That causes great damage to the victim. The House will be aware of one particular case in which the victim committed suicide because he was so shocked by the release of the offender. It is therefore sensible for the House to make provision for the courts to be able, but not to require them, to issue appropriate directions in appropriate cases.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) intends to refer to the circumstances in which a person could be prevented from going to certain areas because of offences committed. That should be decided, yet again, at the discretion of the courts, at the time of sentence and in appropriate cases only. That would ensure that all circumstances were taken into consideration.

In view of the importance of the next debate on new clause 13 on racial attacks, and its importance to communities throughout the country, the debate on new clauses 11, 12 and 47 must, of necessity, be brief. It is an important debate, however, because it calls on the Government to do one thing only—to give consideration to victims and put them at the heart of the criminal justice system. I hope that the Minister will be able to accept the new clauses, as that would be a step forward in giving proper consideration to victims; a consideration which they do not receive now either from the CPS or from the criminal justice system as a whole.

Ms Coffey: I want to refer in particular to new clause 12.

My interest in ensuring that victims are notified, on request, of the release of an offender grew out of a constituency case. A woman who had been subject to a particularly serious attack first learned of the release of the offender from the local newspapers. As the House can imagine, that was a great shock to her, because the newspapers knew of his release before she did, and she had no time to adjust to the fact.

The victims charter states that it is not generally practicable to tell the victim of the release of an offender and gives evidence for that, in that it may be many years after the event or victims may have moved away. Certainly in that case it is impractical, but in a situation where there has been an especially horrendous attack on someone and the victim may have spent several years trying to get over the emotional trauma of thet attack and may have residual anxieties, it is important that the victim is prepared for the release of the offender.

[Ms Coffey]

Nothing can ever make up to a victim for the trauma of an attack on them—at least, nothing in terms of what the penal system can hand out to the offender—but I do not think that that is the point. All victims have to be prepared for the eventual release of the offender, and it would be extremely helpful to the victims if they were notified in advance.

I am not saying that they should be notified of the exact prison from which the offender has been released or the exact time or the day that the offender will be released. They should simply be given some warning that that release is imminent so that they can prepare themselves for it and not find out, as my constituent did, from the local papers, which to her was a traumatic event, as a result of which she felt that she was not being dealt with fairly by the penal system. That advance notification could help balance out the situation.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I shall be as brief as I can, but I wish to mention a very important matter. Last week, Allyson Burgess had to resort to making a private prosecution, incurring a £15,000 legal bill, to see justice done following the death of her husband, who was killed by a drunken driver. The Crown Prosecution Service official, she said,

"knew who I was but seemed to find me a nuisance".

She said in *The Daily Telegraph* on Friday:

"the system is geared to criminals and not victims like me."

Her solicitor, Mr. Martin Smith, told me today that the technicality that resulted in that fiasco could become even worse if the effects of ex parte Chaudhry are not dealt with by primary legislation. Effectively, the Law Lords have said that, if the CPS says that the only charge is careless driving, even people with sufficient means will not be able to pursue a private prosecution, as the Chaudhry case will prevent it.

The primary object of my speaking tonight is to bring to the attention of the House the stupidity of the current position, and to gain a better deal for victims of crime.

This week, I met in my surgery the brother of a victim of an identical case to that of Mrs. Burgess. What is more, there may be as many as 600 similar cases in the system. Mr. Peake, the victim's brother, wrote to the Home Secretary on 19 March 1994, pointing out the loophole and asking:

"Why is it that my family are suffering and yet we are the innocent?"

I shall not dwell on the facts of the case as the CPS may find grounds for a further prosecution beyond the only remaining charge against the driver relating to the fact that he left the scene of the accident—"accident" being a word that I use with some bitterness.

This clause will not bring back Mr. Peake's brother. It will not bring back Mr. Burgess. What it will do, however, is enable the victim, or in these cases the victim's family, to engage in a discussion with the CPS and ensure that any moves towards a lesser charge come only after every stone is turned, which is obviously not the case today.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Last year, 14-year-old Andrew Olden committed suicide on hearing that the man who had sexually abused him would be released from prison and would be returning to his community. The attacker, Kevin Woods, aged 33, had served 10 months of an 18-month sentence. Andrew's mother said at the inquest that Andrew could not live with the thought that that man would be free again in the community. It had a grave and traumatic effect on Andrew, who was taunted by other schoolchildren in his village about Woods's return to the village. Andrew Olden hanged himself.

What about the girl raped by a classmate? The sentence initially hit the headlines because the girl was given £50 to have a holiday and the rapist received a £500 fine, although it was subsequently increased to two years' custodial sentence. The victim and her parents are terrified about the return of that rapist to her locality, and have repeatedly contacted the police to express their concern.

What about the mother who, several months ago, was raped by a group of youths? They locked her in her flat and raped her repeatedly over a 24-hour period in the presence of her young toddler. They all live in the same area and will, in due course, be released and return to that area.

New clause 47 attempts to do something about that situation. Victims should not have to face their attackers in the street so soon after the crime. They should have at least some time to come to terms with the attack. The new clause seeks to protect victims of rape and other violent crime, and the families of those who have been the victim of murder or manslaughter, by preventing, in certain cases where the court decides that it is appropriate, their attacker from re-entering the community where the victim lives.

11 pm

When a victim protection injunction is imposed, the judge would take the impact of that on a defendant and his or her family into consideration in determining the length of the prison sentence. Injunctions are regularly given in domestic violence cases.

The new clause would give criminal courts the power to protect victims. Such a power has previously been held only by civil courts. It would be enforceable by the victim on complaint to the police, so would not impose substantial extra burdens on police time. The important point is that victims, particularly very young victims, would have the right not to have to meet their attacker in the street—perhaps grinning—soon after the event.

The victim protection injunction would put the rights of victims before those of their attackers. It is a new idea and, I hope, a good one. The criminal justice system does little enough for victims. If we can at least do this, the death of 14-year-old Andrew Olden will not have been completely in vain.

Mr. Maclean: With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and as the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is here, may I first correct something that I said on courts martial under new clause 75? I wish to clarify my intervention in the the hon. Gentleman's speech. He asked about the possibility of appeals from courts martial in Scotland being heard at an Appeal Court in Edinburgh, "as they now are". I said that that would continue to happen, but I am afraid that we were both wrong and I apologise for misleading the House. I may have raised the hon. Gentleman's expectations in that regard, but the appeal of a Scottish service man or any other service man against his conviction by a court martial will not necessarily be heard in Scotland by Scottish judges.

Although the Court Martial (Appeals) Act 1968 provides that Scottish judges may be nominated to sit in the Court Martial Appeal Court, and the Lord Chief Justice can

choose where that court sits—in Great Britain, Northern Ireland or anywhere else—it usually sits at the High Court in London with English judges. It applies the provisions of the service discipline Acts in the same way as the courts martial themselves. The overriding principle is that the court martial and any appeal from it will apply the provisions of the service discipline Acts consistently, wherever it sits.

I apologise for the fact that my earlier remarks were wrong and for inadvertently misleading the House.

Dr. Godman: I need hardly say that I am extremely grateful to the Minister for putting the record straight. May I ask a further question on appeals from courts martial? Have any such appeals been made to High Court judges in Scotland, if not Edinburgh, in the past five or six years?

Mr. Maclean: It will not surprise the hon. Gentleman to hear me say that I do not have that information. I undertake to write to him as soon as possible with all the details, which is, I suspect, the safest course of action.

To return to new clause 11: the Government's acceptance of a number of the royal commission's recommendations designed to improve the treatment and care of victims and witnesses was announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on 6 October 1993. These included the idea that victims should, as far as possible, be kept informed of the progress and outcome of cases and that, when appropriate, the CPS should pass on information to the victims and witnesses direct, rather than through the police. Consideration is being given to how these recommendations should best be taken forward to supplement measures already in place relating to the treatment of victims and witnesses.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) seeks to impose an absolute duty on the CPS to keep the victim informed of developments at all stages of the prosecution. That goes well beyond what the royal commission recommended and the Government accepted. Of course it is right that victims should be kept in touch with what is happening in their cases. The victims charter assigns to the police the main responsibility for that. The royal commission examined the issue in its report last year and concluded that that was sensible as a general rule. The police will already have had contact with the victim and will be in a better position to pass on information. The Government agree with that.

In addition, there are practical reasons for that view. The CPS has just over 2,000 lawyers, the police establishment in England and Wales has more than 128,000. The task would be impossible for the CPS to carry out without enormously increased resources, which are not available. The CPS is an independent prosecution authority, and as such does not act directly on behalf of the victims; it acts in a wider public interest. Both the victims charter and the royal commission accept that that is the right line to take.

To give victims the right to be consulted about the level of charges to be brought against the accused would fetter the independence of the CPS, which would not serve the interests of justice. Of course, the victim's interests are important in deciding whether it is in the public interest to prosecute. The CPS will take them into account, as the code for Crown prosecutors provides. On a practical level, comprehensive consultation with the complainant concerning the nature and level of the charge would build in delay and increase the time taken to deal with the case.

As for new clause 12, I am sure that the motivation behind it is a real concern for the victims of crime and a desire to help them. I applaud and share that sentiment. I cannot, however, accept what the new clause would do. It would give judges the power to direct the Secretary of State to notify specified people,

"who may include the victim of the offence",

of the impending release of an inmate convicted of one of the listed offences. I do not want to labour the point, but such a directive power of the judiciary over the Executive would have constitutional implications. We might all entertain doubts about it on that ground alone.

On the face of it, it may seem reasonable and sensible that victims and their families should be told of the impending release of the offender who victimised them —indeed, there are already arrangements for that to happen when appropriate—but by no means all victims want to receive the information. The offender may be released many years after the trial and the events that gave rise to it, by which time the victim may have succeeded in putting his suffering behind him. Victims may have moved to distant parts of the country, and may have completely recovered from their unhappy experience of the crime. It would not help such people to be notified of the release of the person who caused them so much distress—whether or not they wanted the information.

Subsection (3) would allow the victim and/or the victim's family to apply for the direction under which they were to receive the information to be rescinded or otherwise altered, so long as the direction in question was made under subsection (1). I do not think that a sensible or realistic remedy for victims who do not wish to be given information about the release of the offender. It would be an additional imposition, which many would not know how to set about handling. Furthermore, it would not be a remedy available in respect of a direction made by the court under subsection (2).

As for life sentence prisoners—all those sentenced for murder and some of those sentenced for the other three offences mentioned in the new clause—the victims charter already says that release plans for those serving life sentences should be prepared with regard to the wishes of the victim or his or her family. Arrangements are in place to ensure that the probation service gets in touch with the victims whenever possible to discover their views. If they are anxious about the offender's release, their anxieties can be met by imposing restrictions on the offender in his release licence. That too is quite different from what would happen under the new clause.

I cannot accept the new clause. It is inappropriate for the reasons that I have suggested and I think that the underlying objective is already being addressed and increasingly being achieved by collaborative work involving the Prison Service, the Probation Service and others.

New clause 47 would enable the Crown court to subject an offender who has been convicted of one of the offences of indecent assault, rape, murder or manslaughter and who is sentenced to a term of imprisonment to a victim protection injunction. That would amount to an exclusion order to ban him from the defined area. The practical difficulties for the police of enforcing such an order would be formidable, even if the area from which he was prohibited from entering were to be defined in recognisable terms, such as district council areas or a county.

The forbidden area is defined in terms of a radius of

[Mr. Maclean]

"not more than ten miles"
from the victim's "usual home" or, in the case of an offender who has been sentenced for murder or manslaughter,
"not more than ten miles"
from the "usual home" of the victim's
"close family or legal guardians".

How is the offender who is subject to one of the victim protection injunctions to know when he has come nearer than the specified distance to his victim's home, particularly in a large conurbation? How is a police officer who is to enforce it supposed to know?

That is not all. The clause defines the close family of the victim who is dead as a result of murder or manslaughter by the offender to include the spouse, the children living with their parents and cohabiters, but all too often such people are also the close family of the offender as well as of the victim. There are undoubtedly cases in which it is right to keep an offender away from his near relations, but it can hardly be right to make statutory provision to enable the court to order it almost as a matter of course.

Even where the victim is not related to the offender, the offender has his own family and they are quite likely to live in the same area as the victim. Do we really want to prevent the offender from having contact with his own family? Is that likely to encourage him to turn his back on violence? Victims and the close family of dead victims do not simply live in the vicinity of their usual home. They may have jobs at some considerable distance from their usual home and may spend most of their waking hours in the vicinity of their workplace, which could not be covered by a victim protection injunction. They may have more than one home. Which home is the usual one?

There are many problems with the clause although, superficially, it looks attractive. However, it has considerable problems and I am not minded to accept it. I have listened carefully to the arguments by Opposition Members on their three new clauses but I am afraid that at present I am unable to accept them.

Mr. Michael: The Minister is obviously confused. He has not bothered to read the new clauses, as is clear from the way in which he responded. He has not bothered to use the time since the Bill was in Committee to examine the Opposition arguments made there. If he had used that time properly, he would know that the suggestion is not to fetter the work of the Crown Prosecution Service: it is to require it to consult. Nor is it a matter of fettering the court. It is to give an opportunity to put protections in place where that is appropriate in the circumstances of the victim or victims or the family of the victim.

I ask the Minister to read the report of the debate and to examine some of the examples that have been given. He should respond in particular to my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller), who raised specific points. I do not want to delay the House now, but I hope that the Minister will do my hon. Friend the courtesy of responding to him outside the House. The Minister answered most of his own points himself; otherwise the text, if read properly, will answer the points that he made.

The essence of the debate is that the victim needs to be treated with respect, understanding and sensitivity because the victim has suffered the direct effects of the crime. Victims should have information and their views should be taken into account. They should be respected as witnesses and within the whole system. That is the essence of our argument, but it is clear that the Minister will not accept it. We shall return to the issues on many occasions until he and other Ministers accept the importance of placing the victim at the heart of the criminal justice system. However, for tonight I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 13

RACIAL HARASSMENT

'1. (1) In relation to any prosecution for any offence of violence it shall be the duty of the prosecuting authority to place before the court any evidence tending to show that such offence has been committed on the ground of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin ("racial grounds").

(2) On conviction of any offence of violence the court shall have regard to such evidence in determining the penalty, and, if satisfied that the offence was committed on racial grounds ("racial violence"), shall impose an additional penalty which may exceed the maximum penalty otherwise prescribed for such offence.

2. (1) A person is guilty of the offence of racial harassment if on racial grounds he:

(a) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive, or insulting, within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby; or

(b) commits any trespass or nuisance whereby any occupant of any dwelling is likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress.

(2) A constable may arrest a person without warrant whom he reasonably suspects of conduct constituting an offence under this section.

(3) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable:

(a) on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both;

(b) on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss the following: New clause 50—*Aggravation of racial hatred*—

'(1) If any person commits any offence provided for by—

(i) sections 18, 20 or 47 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, or

(ii) sections 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 of the Public Order Act 1986

and does so with a motive of racial hatred, then he shall be guilty of the said offence with aggravation of racial hatred.

(2) In this section, "racial hatred" means racial hatred against a group of persons in Great Britain by reference to colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins.'.

New clause 88—*Racial hatred*—

'.-Part III of the Public Order Act 1986 shall be amended as follows—

In section 27(1) there shall be substituted for the words "of the Attorney General" the words "of the Director of Public Prosecutions"'.

New clause 89—*Offences committed on racial grounds*—

'.—(1) In relation to any prosecution for any offence of violence it shall be the duty of the prosecuting authority to place before the court any evidence tending to show that such offence has been committed on racial grounds.

(2) On conviction of any offence of violence the court shall have regard to such evidence in determining the penalty and if satisfied that the offence was committed on racial grounds shall impose a penalty, which shall not be more than twice the

maximum prescribed penalty. The court shall be required to give reasons for the penalty imposed, indicating in what way it has taken account of its finding that the offence was committed on racial grounds.'.

New clause 90—*Racial harassment (No. 2)*—

'.—(1) A person is guilty of the offence of racial harassment if on racial grounds he—

(a) commits any trespass or nuisance whereby any occupant of any dwelling is likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress; or

(b) uses words or behaviour or displays any writing, sign or other visual representation which is offensive on racial grounds within the hearing or sight of any person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby.

(2) a constable may arrest a person without warrant whom he reasonably suspects of conduct constituting an offence under this section.

(3) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine or both;

(b) on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.'.

11.30 pm

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who has worked so hard on the Bill, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important new clause. I do so as a lifelong anti-racist and someone who recently produced two reports on racial attacks. All the evidence that I gathered in compiling them convinced me and my colleagues that the law relating to acts of racial harassment and violence urgently needs strengthening.

That matter is one on which we have pressed the Government before, but Ministers told us that our proposals could only make prevention more difficult. We listened to their objections and redrafted accordingly. While there is much more that we want the Government to do, the simple and limited proposals in new clause 13 offer a way forward.

New clause 13 creates a new criminal, arrestable offence of racial harassment and provides for heavier penalties to be imposed by the courts for existing crimes of violence where they are committed on racial grounds. I remind the House that those grounds are colour, race, nationality, and ethnic or national origin. The overwhelming evidence of racial harassment is that of white people abusing people of different colour or religion. Clearly, the definition we use would cover also racial abuse of white people by people of another colour.

We cannot escape the unpalatable fact that racism is endemic in Britain today. Despite existing laws on incitement, nearly 30 years of race relations legislation and much good practice by racial equality councils, local authorities and others, we are experiencing a rising tide of horrific racial abuse. Only recently has public awareness been raised, and primarily because of the 14 racial murders that have occurred in the past two years and the appalling injuries inflicted on people such as Muktar Ahmed and Quaddus Ali, who suffered brutal attacks by gangs of white men and survived them.

Those cases were recognised by the police and public for what they were—racially motivated violence. Intense focus on a few extreme cases, however, belies the widespread and persistent nature of less violent but deeply offensive and repetitive racial harassment.

This morning, I received a letter asking why I was "giving Blacks all this attention?"

I tell the House why. Black people—along with Jewish and Asian people and members of other ethnic minorities—are spat upon, taunted in the streets, have their homes daubed with graffiti and their religious centres defiled. That is why the issue needs attention and our new clause is required.

Those are not the random crimes that sadly and all-too-frequently affect society at large. They are not cases of the wrong person being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The victims of racial abuse are specifically selected because of their colour or creed. They are victims twice over—of the offence itself and of racism. They know why they were singled out and that they may be singled out again. They know also that anyone from the same group is a potential victim. Little wonder that such abuse engenders widespread fear, that people become afraid to leave their homes and afraid for their children, and that many suffer a permanent sense of humiliation.

Such abuse occurs throughout Britain. In England and Wales alone, racial incidents recorded by the police in 1993 were close to 9,000—double the number five years ago. Yet research consistently shows massive under-reporting. The real figure for racial incidents in England and Wales last year is estimated at between 150,000 and 200,000. Those figures, I suggest to the House, are a terrible indictment of our society and surely a challenge to the Government to act, and act decisively.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Does my hon. Friend share my concern at the failure of the Government to support the Bill that was introduced by the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth)?

Ms Ruddock: Very much so. My hon. Friend makes an important point. That Bill not only had a wide consensus of support outside the House, but was supported by the Labour party and other parties in the House. We regret that the Government could not see fit to support the Bill introduced by a member of their own party.

Under the present law, few of the perpetrators of racial offences are caught and even fewer are punished. The Government have no information on clear-up rates and no plans to gather any. Suffice it to say that the Attorney-General gave his sanction to prosecutions under incitement law of a mere 14 people in the past seven years. Yet last week no less an authority than the Prime Minister told the House that the existing law was adequate to deal with racial hatred. Well, the victims do not think so. Most of them do not report the offences against them because they do not expect any remedies. Often, they have no confidence in the police. Yet the police in turn say that the laws are inadequate and that they lack resources.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will my hon. Friend make a comparison with the 1950s and 1960s, when the Conservative Government of the time refused to act on race discrimination, always arguing that special laws were not necessary? A Labour Government in 1964 started the process of putting on to the statute book anti-discrimination laws which have undoubtedly helped to ensure that people who do not have a white skin can obtain employment.

Ms Ruddock: My hon. Friend's point is well made. He does well to recall those times and that history. Let us hope that history will not repeat itself tonight and that the Government might have learnt some lessons in the intervening years.

[Ms Ruddock]

New clause 13 gives clarity to the offence of racial harassment and enables the police to arrest without warrant the perpetrators, where they are suspected. It ensures that racial motivation must be examined as an aggravating factor in other violent offences and that, on conviction, the double burden of the victim is reflected in the sentence. Both proposals have wide support, including that of the Commission for Racial Equality, the Anti-Racist Alliance, members of the police forces and all political parties in the House. Both proposals provide an opportunity for the Government to demonstrate that they are tough on racially motivated crime and that they care about the victims.

As the Commission for Racial Equality says in its briefing to us today:

"The law has a vital part to play in setting and reflecting standards of public behaviour."

Racists are beginning to campaign actively in Britain. No longer are they kept underground. They are standing for elections and in one case won a local by-election. It is time that the House took racial abuse, racial harassment and racial violence much more seriously and that the Government implemented proposals, if not our proposals, to do something more constructive about it.

We believe that acceptance of new clause 13 would send a powerful signal that the House is determined to take at least one vital step on the path to ending racial abuse in Britain.

Mr. Maclennan: I support the move to create a specific offence of racial harassment. That is also the aim of the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) to which the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) referred, and which has cross-party support. However, I shall concentrate mainly on new clause 50, which I tabled.

The purpose of the new clause is to deal with the problem of racism when violence is committed against the person, or when an offence against public order has taken place and the motivation is racist. The virtue of that approach is that, in my view, it would make it easier to obtain convictions than would the creation of a specific offence of racial violence.

No tariff of penalties is attached to new clause 50, as few of the offences covered by it currently attract the maximum penalty permitted under the law; but, if racial hatred is proved, the judge may sentence accordingly in most cases. Racially motivated attacks have, alas, become more prominent and numerous. There have been a number of vicious assaults—and, indeed, murders—of mostly young Asian men.

There are no reliable figures showing the true extent of racially motivated attacks, although a number of police forces are now beginning to record Home Office-reportable offences. In the Metropolitan police district, in the 12 months to September 1993, the police reported 2,110 allegations of reportable offences and 1,730 racial incidents classified by area. They broke down those incidents by offence groups. Common assaults constituted 14 per cent., assaults 18 per cent., abusive language 25 per cent., criminal damage 29 per cent. and all other offences 14 per cent.

The police also classified the victims of the racial incidents, revealing that 46 per cent. were Asian, 22 per cent. black, 18 per cent. white Europeans and 4 per cent. dark-skinned Europeans. Other victims formed the remaining 10 per cent. Six per cent. of all the incidents were recorded as being anti-semitic. Those figures, however, give no evidence of the seriousness of the offences committed. Some of the smaller groups have suffered some of the more horrific offences, particularly the anti-semitic ones.

For some time, the Commission for Racial Equality has argued in favour of a specific offence of racial violence. The law does not recognise any such category of offence; as a result, the police have not routinely counted the attacks and are not required to investigate racial motivation.

The proposed new clause that stands in my name would have the benefit of effecting a change in the attitudes of the police and the prosecuting authorities, and this would assist greatly towards eliminating a scandalous development in our civil society. In the past the police have been criticised for ignoring or condoning racism. I do not believe that our police forces are generally guilty of these faults. It is extremely encouraging that, in his very first speech following his appointment, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, Paul Condon, attacked racism in the police force. There are many ways in which, following the Scarman inquiry, community policing initiatives have helped to stamp out this behaviour. Alas, it appears that amendment of the criminal law is necessary if the attack is to be made more effective.

11.30 pm

The proposed new offence of racial aggravation would enable a court to convict where there was evidence of an offence of violence and proof of racial motivation. The court could take that into consideration and impose a more severe sentence accordingly. Proof of racial motivation would not be a necessary ingredient for conviction, but if there were such proof it would allow a condign punishment to be inflicted. I regard this as the most likely means of effecting the change that the Commission for Racial Equality advocates.

Equally, the creation of a new offence of racial violence could bring the law into disrepute as it would be difficult to prove motivation and difficult to obtain conviction. Consequently, to the horror of racial attacks would be added the frustration of failure to secure conviction.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): In a sense, there is a coming together of all parts of the House in the presentation of these new clauses. I have the honour—and I welcome the opportunity—to deal with the cluster at the tail end of the group. As hon. Members will no doubt soon begin to gather at the Bar of the House in anticipation of a Division, it behoves me to be reasonably brief.

Some of my hon. Friends may not necessarily agree with all points in the arguments in favour of the Opposition's new clauses. Some of these are complicated points of law, which Members who are not lawyers may find slightly more difficult to handle. We have to face the very great problem of an adequate definitional basis for singling out racially motivated attacks on persons and the great complexity of making definitions stick in law. That is an obvious difficulty with which lawyers on both sides of the arguments will have to grapple, often at great length.

None the less, I believe that it is the will of the House that something more must be done. Thus, I listened with great interest to the Liberal Democrat spokesman, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), as

he enunciated his reasons for proposing new clause 50—on his own to start with, but then accompanied by one of his distinguished colleagues.

New clauses 88, 89 and 90 are technical, but they deal with the fundamental problem. They are, to some extent, similar to the Opposition's new clauses, although there are slight differences in wording. The principal element of new clause 88 is that the Attorney-General requirement would be replaced with a Director of Public Prosecutions requirement. Good legal opinion suggests that that would be a considerable improvement.

New clause 89 relates, at least a little, to the first part of Labour's new clause 13, and new clause 90 relates to the second part of that provision. I believe that the latter is the most important amendment in the group.

Although they have not been selected by the Chair—I make no complaint about that—new clauses 86 and 87 were part of the grouping in logical terms because they provided definitions—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If they were not selected, the hon. Gentleman cannot debate them.

Mr. Dykes: I was referring to them tangentially, but I accept your criticism, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and withdraw my comments immediately.

Part of the reason for tabling the new clauses was that some hon. Members of all parties are disappointed that the legislation proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) has not yet progressed as far as we had hoped that it would. We live in an increasingly multi-ethnic community, but there is a growing problem in my constituency, in north-west and north London and in Greater London as a whole, and there is a particular problem south of the river.

The Government would be wise to consider new legislation now to intensify the definitions of racially motivated attacks. Every day, the newspapers are full of dreadful stories of people who are attacked because of their racial origin or the colour of their skin and for no other reason.

We already have a good basis for new legislation. Existing legislation has been strongly supported by successive Conservative Administrations. Now is the time to go further. Of course, lawyers can always argue about the specific wording of technical clauses. The new clauses are technical, but they are human and moral, too. It behoves us all to accept the new clauses and I support them with great pleasure, hoping that the Minister will respond positively. If he wishes to delay matters by saying that the Government need more time to consider the new clauses, the House might accept that, but I would not do so with too much ease because the problem is now urgent.

Although this point is on a wholly different level of human behaviour, I share the anxiety felt by many hon. Members about the fact that many young members of the Metropolitan police are still harassing or stopping too many black youths—who are usually driving cars—for no other reason than the colour of their skin. That has been admitted repeatedly by senior police officers at Scotland Yard. Although the matter is not dealt with in the wording or intent of the new clauses, I mention it deliberately at the end of my remarks in the hope that it will also be considered by the Minister of State.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I support the new clause. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) said, we need a new law to deal with racial attacks. Such attacks are vile criminal acts which make people's lives a misery. The victims' lives are blighted by fear for themselves and their children.

As my hon. Friend said, there has been a steep rise in the number of racial attacks. In 1988, 4,407 racial attacks were reported. By 1993, the figure had risen to 8,779, an increase of 100 per cent. in five years. Forty per cent. occurred in London. It has been estimated that the figure represents an under-reporting of the true figure, because only one in 20 of such attacks are reported to the police. The Minister told the Select Committee on Home Affairs that there were probably 130,000 to 140,000 racial incidents a year, and there is good reason to believe that that is also an underestimate. As my hon. Friend said, there have been about 14 despicable racially motivated murders in the past two years.

Why are so few racial attacks reported? There is such a great deal of under-reporting because, at one level, there is no confidence in the police. There is a perception that they will not take complaints seriously, and there have been examples of the police blaming the victim. On top of that, the victims know that there is no specific law making racial attacks an offence, so they do not believe it is worth their while reporting incidents to the police.

In 1985, I introduced the Racial Harassment Bill under the ten-minute rule. It was the first Bill presented to Parliament to make racial attack a criminal offence. It dealt mainly with housing, but it had three aspects. First, it provided that the perpetrators of racial harassment should be evicted from their homes, instead of the victims having to flee for their safety. Secondly, it provided that racial harassment should be a specific offence, as suggested in the new clause. Thirdly, it would have imposed a duty on the police to investigate and report in every such case. The Bill also provided a schedule of offences that would be legally punishable, including graffiti, racist verbal abuse, and so on.

Since I introduced that Bill, there have been some successes. For example, the definition of what the police record as a complaint of a racial offence has changed and some local authorities have taken up the matter with their own hotlines and have improved their guidelines in their departments to take action against racism when they have come across it.

Of course, the biggest success is that Front-Bench Members of the Labour party have accepted that they would make racial attacks a criminal offence. Indeed, that has been accepted by many Conservatives Members, including the hon. Members for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Finchley (Mr. Booth). There is overwhelming public opinion in favour of the introduction of a law along the lines of the new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Deptford.

Despite all the support, this Bill represents the 27 measures cited by the Home Secretary at the Conservative party conference. It includes, for example, action against anti-hunt demonstrators, but it does not take action against racist criminals. That is an insult to the black and Asian communities and to all decently minded, anti-racist people in the country.

When the Home Secretary went on a tour of the east end, he said:

"Good relations is not just legislation; but advice, information, help and education—measures that create mutual understanding".

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

He does not talk about advice, information, help and education when it comes to tackling other crime. Let us deal with punishing the offenders in racial circumstances. As for mutual understanding, the Prime Minister said that we should have a little less understanding and a bit more punishment. Why does not that apply to racists? Why do the Government turn that on its head whenever we talk about racial offences?

When the hon. Member for Finchley introduced his Bill recently and it was talked out by some Conservative Members, the Minister of State, Home Office said that the Government could not legislate until there had been a serious and thorough investigation by a Select Committee. Select Committees have reported and said that there should be an offence of racial harassment. It is nine years since my Bill came before the House—nine years of increasing racial attacks and of murders. Surely that is a serious and thorough enough investigation. The Government have adopted a complacent attitude. They have not shown any moral lead to combat racism. New law is needed. There was a survey of youths in Leeds who were committing racial offences. They knew that it was not a crime when they were confronted. It needs to be made a crime. There needs to be pressure on the police to enforce action against racists, since some forces would still be reluctant to do so unless there is a law for them to implement. The state, especially, must make its anti-racist position absolutely clear in the law.

One other reason for such a law is the rise of the British National party. It is a most dangerous organisation, not only to black and Asian communities, but to the whole community. It is a threat to democracy and I would not be opposed to banning it. Neo-Nazi organisations have been banned in Germany, for example. If the Government say that there would be civil liberties problems in banning the BNP, they need to make its activities illegal and make the racist attacks that it carries out illegal. That is why a new law is so important.

Racism is a scapegoat creed. Its real sources are unemployment, bad housing, poverty and hardship, which stem from the economic failures of the Government and of capitalism. Law will not solve that problem, but it will go a long way at least in showing that the state is seriously against the racist outcome of those problems.

Wherever racism rears its ugly head, there is death. Whether the Ku Klux Klan, the apartheid regime, racial attacks in this country or the holocaust of Nazi Germany, racism equals death. It is in multicultural, multiracial societies where people live together that one has harmony; those societies equal life.

We need a law; we need the state to come out firmly to say that racism will not be tolerated. That is what the big march the other week by the Trades Union Congress was about. Tens of thousands of people came on to the streets demanding action against racism. The new clause goes in that direction.

11.45 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): At this time of the evening, hon. Members should remember that speeches do not need to be interminable to be immortal. I shall therefore make a relatively short speech. Virtually everyone in this country and everyone in the House abhors racism, which is against all the traditions of tolerance and liberalism in this country. However, there are a small number of evil men who are determined to harass individuals because of their race, their religion or their colour. That is against all the traditions of this country and against what the House stands for.

In my constituency, I have seen some of the evils of racism and anti-semitism. Hate mail and holocaust denial are all too common. The hate mail that I have seen—some of which I have received—is sheer, unadulterated filth. Many of my constituents fled from the horrors of Nazism in the 1930s and they find a chilling echo of 1930s German in some of the mail that they receive today. They served this country well in war and they have a right to spend the evening of their lives in peace.

One of the other obscenities that we have seen is the daubing of cemeteries with Nazi propaganda. Surely at the very least people should be allowed to rest in peace when they have died. It is one of the tragedies of life in this country that if one visits a synagogue or a Jewish school one can guarantee that there will be security men on guard. It is surely wrong that a place of religion or a place of education should need a security officer because the worshippers and the children want to feel secure.

There are weaknesses in the law. There is sometimes a failure to prosecute. I have seen leaflets that have been circulated in London university which are certainly an incitement to death, but nothing has been done to prosecute those who produce the leaflets.

There are other weaknesses in the law to which I hope that our right hon. Friend the Minister will address himself. I refer, for example, to the power of constables to arrest. If a constable is on duty at Hyde Park corner and hears a racist speech, he can arrest the law-breaker there and then. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) and I have some experience of Hyde Park corner as we used to speak there many years ago, in the dark days of the last Labour Government, but we never got arrested because we were not racist.

If constables see someone distributing racist literature through letter boxes in Tower Hamlets or elsewhere, they do not have the power to arrest them there and then. I should like my right hon. Friend the Minister to look at the power of constables to carry out arrests to try to curb racial hatred and racism. I hope that he will give an assurance to the House this evening that he will look at the problem. I should also like him to give an assurance that when the Bill goes to the House of Lords he will consider the possibility of amendments being tabled. By then, he will have had the benefit of the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that in Scotland there is anti-English literature being distributed? That, too, must be properly dealt with.

Mr. Marshall: I have great sympathy with the point made by my hon. Friend. When I went to Scotland at the age of six I remember being told in the playground of the Harris academy in Dundee that I was a foreigner. The situation was aggravated when my mother told me to tell the others that we ruled them from Westminster. That did not go down well then, and I do not think that such comments go down terribly well in Scotland today. There is no doubt that what my hon. Friend has said is right.

There is an evil and a cancer afflicting our society.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I have been following his remarks closely. He seems to be arguing—and I agree—that there should be changes in legislation. Will he dissociate himself from the words of the Prime Minister, who said in the House some days ago that there was no need for any change in the law?

Mr. Marshall: I must apologise to the House for the fact that my good nature has prolonged my speech in that I have given way twice. I thought that I made it quite clear to the House that I thought that my right hon. Friend the Minister should look at the power of arrest by constables, which obviously involves a change in the law. I asked him to consider making arrangements for an amendment to be tabled in the other place once he had received the report of the Select Committee, as he will have done by the time the Bill passes to the other place. I hope that my right hon. Friend will give us an assurance on that matter this evening.

Mr. Winnick: It will be most welcome if the Minister of State, when he responds, says that the Government are sympathetic to new clause 13, but bearing in mind the unfortunate remarks that he made when the Bill of the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) was being debated we have little hope that the Government will support the new clause.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I had a great deal of sympathy with the objectives of that Bill, but not with the way it sought to achieve them.

Mr. Winnick: That is the very point that we are trying to establish today. It is not enough simply to deplore—as we all do—the racial attacks on and harassment of people because of their colour, religion or racial origin. The question is what the House is going to do about it. What laws can we enact to help victims of racism?

The amount of racial violence is disturbing. The official figures from the Home Office refer to nearly 8,000 racial attacks in a given year. I believe that the true figures on racial violence are much higher. The Minister of State, in an intervention in a previous debate—indeed, in the evidence that he gave to the Select Committee on Home Affairs—accepted that figures on racial harassment, as opposed to violence, are very high. The Minister corrected me by saying that he wanted to make it clear that the figure that he gave to the Select Committee on Home Affairs referred to racial harassment. Leaving aside the amount of racial violence, the Government, through the Minister of State, accept the amount of harassment that occurs simply because of the victim's colour of skin or racial origin.

As my hon. Friends have said, there is little doubt that racial gangs are operating. They are not exclusively responsible for the sort of violence that we have seen in recent months in the United Kingdom, particularly in the east end of London. No one suggests that the fascist gangs are exclusively responsible, but they are behind many of the attacks. I find it inconceivable that we already have laws on the statute book against incitement to racial hatred—those laws are not in dispute and, as I understand it, no one wants to repeal them—yet at the same time organisations exist which are designed purely to stir up as much racial propaganda and agitation as possible and to cause attacks on people. That is the only reason why gangs such as the National Front and the British National party exist. By acting as they do, they break the present law.

As well as passing new laws, it is important that existing laws are properly implemented. Much more could be done by the police to ensure that some of the racial attacks do not occur. When they do occur, the police should ensure that the offenders are brought to court.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman that the law should be much more strongly enforced, but my difficulty with the new clause—I entirely support the motivation behind it—is that the level of proof required to get home in court will be much higher. One will have to prove harassment and that it has a racial motive. I fear that many guilty men and women will go free if the clause is included in the Bill and it is bad law for a case to be brought, only to fail.

Mr. Winnick: I understand some of the hon. Gentleman's arguments, but the offence will be in addition to existing laws on violence. No one is suggesting that it is the only way in which the alleged offender can be brought to court—it is an additional way.

One of the purposes of new clause 13 is to demonstrate society's abhorrence of such attacks. In effect, the new offence would show that they are totally unacceptable and that it is unacceptable for violence to be caused to a victim simply because of colour or race. It would be an additional factor to be taken into account when sentencing and not the only evidence that came to court.

Mrs. Roche: Further to that argument, is it correct that in such cases one would charge offenders with the new offence of racial harassment or violence and also—if an assault had taken place—with actual or grievous bodily harm? If one could not get home on one element of the new offence, one would be able to fall back on existing law.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. All forms of violence and criminality are strongly to be deplored. As we know, there is too much violence and crime in Britain today.

As I said in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), I am reminded of the debates within and outside the House about how we should deal with racial discrimination. At that time, most Conservative politicians and the Conservative Government argued strongly that however wrong such discrimination was—they did not deny that it was taking place—legislation was not the right way to deal with it.

Time and again, Fenner Brockway moved ten-minute Bills in the early 1960s, arguing strongly that it was essential to introduce laws to deal effectively with racial discrimination. He turned out to be right. Employers who said that they had no objections, but that their customers would object if they employed people who did not have white skin, were not going to change their ways until the law made it impossible for them to continue to discriminate. Now, no one is surprised that banks and other institutions employ people who do not have white skin. If people objected in a bank and said that they did not want to be served by a cashier because he or she happened to black, they would clearly need psychiatric help. No one objects.

[Mr. Winnick]

It has been clearly demonstrated that, however much discrimination still exists, legislation was necessary. The same applies today. Just as it was right to legislate then, it is right to do so today, when we are faced with the amount of racial violence and the number of attacks on people in parts of London only two, three and four miles from here. People are literally terrified of going out late in the evening. They are terrified when their children go to school. Why? It is simply because in the main they are of Asian origin and the bullies pick on the women and children. They are the defenceless victims of racism in many parts of the country and in the east end of London.

We must not merely deplore racism. Government action is necessary in this Parliament to ensure that the victims of racism get the protection that only Parliament can give. The Government must act, and act quickly.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): A number of hon. Members have already referred to the growing evidence of racial attacks and harassment, so I do not propose to repeat it.

Many of us know from our constituents about the impact of racism on their daily lives. From representations that we have received from individuals and from black, Asian and Jewish organisations, we know that the law needs to be strengthened. Harassment penetrates every aspect of victims' lives. It is not an isolated incident, but something that occurs every day. In many cases it goes on for years and years.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, people feel threatened and unsafe in situations in which most of us would not feel the slightest threat—in their own homes, at school and in places of worship. The current law is often ineffectual when dealing with those fears.

12 midnight

Those people are looking for some action. We may be told that more time is needed to conduct more inquiries and reports before anything can be done, but racial harassment is not new. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has said, Bills were proposed years ago to draw attention to the problem. Although the Government may have time to wait for the outcome of reports and inquiries, the people in our constituencies who are suffering harassment every day do not. They want to know why the Bill contains nothing to deal with the problem and why it is necessary to debate a new clause to deal with it at this stage in the Bill's proceedings.

For many years those people have had to seal up their letter boxes to stop petrol being poured through and their homes set on fire. They have had to deal with graffiti on their houses, abuse in the street and physical attacks. A great deal of such harassment goes unreported because people feel that nothing will be done, that the law is ineffective and will not be brought into play.

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not only a question of physical damage, the fire bombing of houses, the fear felt by children on the way to school, attacks in the street which, if nothing is done about them, will eventually lead to someone being killed, or the fact that woman are afraid to go out at night and that whole parts of the east end which used to be lively are now dead after 9 pm?

We must also consider the emotional damage that race hate inflicts on young children. A little boy of five with a bandage around his knee told me that he was bitten by a dog because dogs do not like black people. That is terribly sad, because children's self-image and their confidence is being destroyed by race hate. Is it not time that the Government—some of whose members have sent out racist signals on a number of occasions—sent out an anti-racist signal by doing something about the law?

Mr. Gerrard: I agree absolutely. Sometimes it is easy to look at the extremes of violence and say that we must deal with the murders and arson, and ignore what may be regarded as the more trivial offences of abuse and graffiti. We may ignore the cumulative effect of such behaviour.

From time to time, we have all been insulted, but most of us do not have to deal with insults, abuse or personally directed graffiti every day. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) has drawn attention to the serious psychological damage that that causes. That damage reveals the need for subsection (2) of the new clause, which makes certain acts racial harassment offences.

At the moment, victims of harassment do not trust the authorities—including the police, councils, voluntary organisations or schools—to take action. The feeling is that no one will help. Although many local authorities have improved their anti-racist policies and the police have improved their methods of dealing with racial crime, people's perception is still that no one will help them. For that reason, it is vital that the law should be changed. That would send out a message about public policy and make it easier to deal with the perpetrators of racial harassment.

There is no reason for complacency or for saying that we can wait and that there is time for study. It is time for action. I do not hold out much hope after what the Minister said earlier, but I should have thought that we might have a positive response tonight because people in our constituencies cannot continue to wait.

Debate adjourned.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot]*

Debate to be resumed this day.

NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. James Cran, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Sir James Kilfedder, Mr. Eddie McGrady, Mr. Ken Maginnis, Mr. Jim Marshall, Mr. Peter Robinson, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Richard Spring, Mr. John D. Taylor, Mr. David Wilshire and Mr. Mark Wolfson be members of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. — *[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Stephen Dunne

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

12.4 am

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): My luck in the ballot has enabled me to raise a matter of grave concern to individual constituents in Portsmouth which also has national relevance.

The issue of child protection and child abuse is deeply emotive. Having children myself, and with active family involvement for many years supporting the fine work of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, I am well aware how easy it is to be misunderstood or misrepresented if one even questions, let alone criticises, fashionable theories and practice based mainly, these days, on the Children Act 1989 and the guidelines produced by the relevant Government departments since.

In the past 20 years, in the paramount interests of the child's welfare, we have given draconian powers to the state to interfere in everyone's home and family, principally through the agents of doctors, police, social workers, probation officers and employees of the NSPCC. We have given powers which require careful training, maturity, sound judgment, restraint and, above all, considerable common sense on the part of all those people to whom they are entrusted on our behalf.

If not so exercised, those powers can do immense damage and grave injustice to innocent parents and other adults, including teachers, who have the misfortune to have the finger merely of suspicion pointed at them, and who find themselves effectively having to prove their innocence of assumed guilt rather than the other way around.

The facts of the case affecting my constituents, the Dunne family, are chilling. Mr. and Mrs. Dunne are responsible, decent people, happily married, with unblemished characters and no history of child abuse. They live in their own home in Southsea, in good financial circumstances, and have close family living nearby. They have two sons—Andrew, aged three and a half, and Stephen, aged six months.

On 25 February, at 6.15 pm, Mrs. Dunne was bathing the then five-month-old Stephen when she felt a swelling on the right side of his head. She was very worried. There was no sign of bruising, and the swelling felt like fluid. Her husband returned home at 6.45 pm, and they immediately decided to go to the paediatric unit at St. Mary's hospital for casualty attention. They arrived at 7 o' clock and were registered at half-past 7. Stephen had not been seen by 10 pm. He was tired—they were sitting in a corridor—so Mrs. Dunne returned home with the child, the nurse suggesting a visit to their doctor the next morning.

They rang at half-past 8 the next morning, and saw Dr. Robinson at 9.45 am. She referred them immediately to St. Mary's again, writing a letter and telephoning to warn of arrival. By 11 am Stephen had not been examined. Mrs. Dunne suggested coming back when they were less busy, and the nurse said that she would telephone. They were telephoned at 3.45 pm and Stephen was at last seen at 4 pm, almost 24 hours after the injury had been noticed.

He had shown absolutely no signs of distress, vomiting, nausea or of being off his food, as one might expect with a significant head injury. Two doctors in succession examined him and asked whether he had had a fall or a knock. Mrs. Dunne simply did not know what had caused it, and said so. It was a pure isolated home accident, the type that any experienced parents, even of a superhuman type, regrettably find themselves unable to explain. At 6 o'clock, he was given two head X-rays and admitted overnight. Mrs. Dunne stayed on the ward with him, but had little sleep as Stephen was woken every hour.

The next morning, Mrs. Dunne's sister came to visit with Mr. Dunne. Others were on the ward. At about 10.30 am, Dr. Martin Hardman, a consultant paediatrician, arrived. Unlike the two doctors the previous day, his manner was unfriendly and intimidating. He examined Stephen all over, making it clear that he was looking for signs of injury. He found nothing whatever. He asked repeatedly how the swelling occurred. To the Dunnes' disbelief and horror, he then said offensively, "It's obvious, isn't it?", plainly implying that they had inflicted the injury themselves.

The Dunnes became even more upset. Finally, Dr. Hardman suggested that they go into a private room. With breathtaking ignorance of all that had gone before, he then accused them of not seeking immediate medical attention. He claimed that Stephen had a fractured skull and that "someone must have done it". He said that Stephen must have several more X-rays and stay in hospital, not for medical reasons but to keep him in a safe place.

Mr. Dunne insisted that they return home, and they did so, with Dr. Hardman warning him that it would not look good to social services. The next day, Stephen had eight X-rays of his body. Naturally, no injuries were revealed. His head was further X-rayed. The Dunnes returned home.

That evening, the nightmare worsened, when two police officers and a social worker arrived. They wanted Mr. Dunne to go to the police station for an interview, but he objected strongly and telephoned his parents, who arrived shortly afterwards. Eventually, Mr. and Mrs. Dunne were interviewed in separate rooms at home. One can imagine the emotional turmoil.

The following day, Mrs. Dunne experienced traumatic depression. She felt that she could not be alone with her children, as she was terrified that they may have an accident. She rang the social worker, who came to try to put her mind at rest. On 8 March, a child protection conference was held. Incredibly, it was decided to place Stephen on the child protection register, and to review the case after a month.

The Dunnes are in the grip of the system. There is no apparent escape from it, or from the record. They have appealed to the hospital and to Hampshire social services, the result of which, without my raising the matter as soon as possible in the House, is likely to be explanations and apologies from the hospital for the delays before Stephen was finally seen, but no retreat or effective action with respect to their treatment at the hands of Dr. Hardman. The social services will, understandably, probably reiterate that it is their duty to investigate such matters, and that they merely played it according to the law and the guidelines, once Dr. Hardman had alerted them.

There should be a rigorous independent case conference about the following. First, why did the hospital take from 7 pm on Friday 25 February until 4 pm on Saturday 26 February before examining a five-month-old baby, despite an injury later described as a fractured skull—of which, incidentally, the parents would like proof—and given that it is common knowledge that the first 24 hours are the most critical in such cases?

[Mr. David Martin]

Secondly, why was Dr. Hardman plainly ill informed about such details? Flouting all guidelines, he turned to the parents in a public place and, without demonstrating an open mind, made a profoundly shocking allegation.

Thirdly, what inquiries had Dr. Hardman made of Mr. and Mrs. Dunne's GP about family history and the likelihood of child abuse in respect of their children before activating all the panoply of the child abuse system?

Fourthly, what official independent procedure can investigate Dr. Hardman's diagnosis and actions—apart from my raising what is admittedly one side of the matter in the House as a matter of urgency—and appropriate action consequential on that?

Fifthly, why could not Hampshire social services, in such a case and with such a family, at least try to arrange a low-key, preliminary visit by an experienced social worker, instead of the immediate and traumatic arrival of a social worker accompanied by two police officers whose duty was to take statements and, apparently, take the father off to the police station?

Finally, will my hon. Friend the Minister consider further general considerations that arise from this case?

The NSPCC recently set up an inquiry into why, when there has rightly been such concentration in recent years on laws and procedures to investigate child abuse, the incidence of such deaths does not diminish. There must be more concentration on prevention. If parents are treated thus, as the Dunnes were, despite their family history and record, when they jointly attend casualty with their child, should not the obvious lesson to every other parent—a lesson potentially most harmful to children—be that, if they go to casualty with an injured child, they will be dubbed a suspected child abuser, with all that that entails?

I shudder to think what would have been activated if the unexplained and unexpected cot death of my wife's and my second child, at the age of five months in 1980, had received this sort of investigative attention—not to mention the broken arm of our four-year-old boy some years ago as a result of a home accident. We are all extremely vulnerable as parents, especially those of us who believe in the right of parents to smack young children as part of sensible discipline.

Of course the investigators can—and no doubt do—always argue that they have a duty to act. Of course it can be explained that child protection conferences are not tribunals to decide whether abuse has taken place; that the placing of a child on the protection register does not imply that the parents are guilty of abusing their child. Tell that to Mr. and Mrs. Dunne, or to their family, or to others who get to hear it; tell it to the marines.

According to paragraph 6.39 of the authoritative guidelines in "Working Together", for a child to be placed on the register either there must be an identifiable incident and professional judgment that further incidents are likely, or significant harm is expected on the basis of professional judgment of findings of the investigation, or on research evidence.

These are the criteria on which the conclusion in Stephen's case was based. Perhaps my hon. Friend can ask to see the evidence that could have led to that conclusion —particularly the essential finding that further incidents are likely or to be expected. That finding is deeply offensive to responsible parents, incorporating as it must complete rejection of the idea of an isolated, one-off home accident.

It may also be relevant to ask how older brother Andrew, three and a half years old, has safely reached such an age without being protected from his parents by a paediatrician, the social services and the police.

While doing all we can to root out the evils of genuine incidents of child abuse which turn our stomachs, let us keep a sense of proportion, and, above all, common sense. Only a tiny minority of parents are child abusers, under any reasonable definition of the term. Mr. and Mrs. Dunne have certainly never been in that category, and everything should now be done to see that their faith in the justness of the system is restored, including the immediate removal of Stephen from the child protection register.

I ask my hon. Friend to do what he can to put things right, not only for the sake of this family but for others who may experience similar treatment, which so distorts and misdirects where the real effort is required: in the constant and necessary battle against the horrors of child abuse.

12.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) has had the good fortune in the ballot which has enabled him to raise this constituency case. He has set it in the context of his personal and family experience. I fully understand my hon. Friend's concerns for his constituents, especially in the light of his account of the unfortunate and worrying chain of events preceding the child protection investigation.

My hon. Friend asked some important questions about the handling of the case and the possible redress available to the Dunnes—questions similar to the inquiries that I requested be made when I heard of his concerns.

I propose to consider first the problems that Mr. and Mrs. Dunne encountered at St. Mary's hospital, since they seem to be at the core of the case, before I move on to the child protection issue that my hon. Friend has raised.

I understand that there may be some disagreement between Stephen's parents and the hospital about the precise sequence of events, starting with their attendance at ward C2 on 25 February. The hospital's account is that they presented themselves at the medical admissions ward at 7.35 pm on Friday 25 February because Stephen had a lump on the right side of his head.

When a nurse booked them in, she is said to have explained to them that they would have a long wait because the paediatric unit was extremely busy at the time. The consultant paediatrician was on the ward between 9 pm and midnight, treating a sick baby. There is a hospital document which states that, at 10 pm, the parents did

"not wish to wait longer to see doctor"

and they then took Stephen home.

The following day, they saw their GP, who referred Stephen as an in-patient back to St. Mary's hospital. They then presented themselves again at the hospital, and Stephen was admitted at about 4.30 pm.

However, while there may be some dispute about the sequence of events, what is not in dispute is that Stephen was not seen by a doctor on the evening of 25 February. This raises very serious issues about the reception of patients on ward C2 at St. Mary's hospital. The local arrangement at St. Mary's hospital in Portsmouth is for children who need urgent attention to be directed straight

to a children's ward. That should not mean that the standards of care are lower. We would still expect suitably experienced staff to be available to assess all children immediately they arrive.

Once a child's condition has been assessed, the child may have to wait for treatment—if other children have greater clinical needs. But we have made it clear in our guidance entitled "Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital" that every hospital should have effective procedures to prioritise waiting children, and ensure they are seen promptly.

Hospital staff cannot prevent parents from taking their children home if that is what the parents have decided. But no child should under any circumstances be sent home or formally discharged by hospital staff unless the child has first been given an opportunity to be seen by a doctor.

Mr. and Mrs. Dunne understandably, and rightly, made use of their entitlement under the patients charter to complain through the hospital complaints procedures about the service they had received. Current procedures provide for a full investigation into complaints and for a prompt written response to be made. I have seen the response of the chief executive, which acknowledges the failure of the hospital staff to respond promptly and correctly in the first instance, and offers apologies for that failure.

The matter was also discussed at a meeting of the hospital clinical standards board on 24 March, and the chief executive has now written to Mr. and Mrs. Dunne to inform them that the board shared his concern over the admitted failures of 25 February. I understand that the board chairman and medical director of the trust are to hold urgent discussions to determine and agree the steps to be taken to ensure that such a distressing incident is not repeated.

If Mr. and Mrs. Dunne are dissatisfied with the process of the handling of their complaint, they may complain to the health service ombudsman. However, he is unable to investigate that part of the case which is about clinical judgment, as it falls outside his jurisdiction.

If part of a complaint involves clinical judgment, the matter can be referred to the regional director of public health, for him or her to decide whether an independent professional review by two consultants not involved in the case should be carried out. None of these avenues, of course, precludes Mr. and Mrs. Dunn taking action through the courts if they so wish.

I will be asking the chief executive for an assurance that any necessary action has been taken in response to the issues that have been raised by the failures acknowledged by the chief executive and the board. I shall also be asking the chief executive to satisfy himself and me that all relevant staff at the hospital are fully trained in child protection procedures.

That brings me to the next aspect of this case and the further question raised by my hon. Friend—the child protection investigation.

The issue of alleged or suspected child abuse is one of extraordinary sensitivity. It trails with it a heavy cloud of suspicion. It can create mistrust and division among the closest of families, and it creates the paradox that, at the very time when parents and families most need support and reassurance, when a child whom they love is in pain, officialdom arrives with questions to be answered.

Often in such cases, of course, there are no easy answers. That is why I understand the anguished feelings of Mr. and Mrs. Dunne. Like all families in such a situation, they must not be labelled guilty, but presumed innocent until and unless guilt is proven and, accordingly, treated with respect, sensitivity and courtesy. Anything else is intolerable, inhumane and in contravention of the basic principles of British justice.

My hon. Friend referred to the Government's inter-agency guidance on child protection, "Working Together under the Children Act 1989". Set firmly within the context of that Act, it strikes the right balance between promoting decisive action where that is necessary to protect children from abuse, and reinforcing the need for all professionals to acknowledge the rights and responsibilities of parents and to approach each case with an open mind.

At an operational level, Government guidance should be promoted through the local inter-agency procedures drawn up under the auspices of the area child protection committee. Hampshire published revised child protection procedures in January 1993. I understand that Mr. and Mrs. Dunne have a particular concern about a reference in the procedures that states, at paragraph 3.3(iii):

> "Where health staff have information or concern regarding the welfare of a child they will notify the Social Services Department promptly. In child protection cases, the degree of confidentiality will be governed by the paramount need to protect the child".

I further understand that Mr. and Mrs. Dunne met representatives of the social services department on 21 March to outline their particular concerns, and that they have been invited to take the matter up with Hampshire, once the present issue has been resolved, if they want to further the discussion about improvement in practice involving abuse procedures.

Following one issue that has arisen in this case, Hampshire social services will be consulting Victim Support about its role in helping families in child protection situations, to ascertain whether there are lessons to be learned on a broader scale.

As for the police involvement and action, my hon. Friend will understand that I cannot comment, but Mr. and Mrs. Dunne may want to make use of the normal channel for complaints concerning the police, which is the Police Complaints Authority.

My hon. Friend asked for the removal of Stephen's name from the child protection register. That is a local decision taken in accordance with guidance under the Children Act 1989, and one in which I cannot intervene. I know that, in line with our guidance, Stephen's parents, and another family member—Mrs. Dunne's sister—attended the whole of the initial conference called by Hampshire on 8 March to discuss Stephen's case. Before that conference, Mr. and Mrs. Dunne were given a leaflet of explanation about child protection conferences, together with a copy of the factual report of events.

Mr. and Mrs. Dunne have also been invited to attend the review conference planned for 5 April. I hope that they feel able to work in partnership with the social services and the other agencies involved in the case.

I understand my hon. Friend's concern—indeed, his scepticism—about the view stated in our guidance, that placement on the register does not imply any guilt. I re-emphasise the important point that the purpose of the child protection conference is simply to decide whether or not to place the child's name on the child protection

[Mr. John Bowis]

register. If the decision is made to do so, the conference will draw up a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary plan for the child's protection.

As our guidance makes clear, the conference is emphatically not a forum for a formal decision that a person has abused a child—that is for the courts. Likewise, placement of a child's name on the child protection register does not mean that the child has been abused. It is a record of children for whom there are unresolved concerns and for whom there is a co-operative protection plan of the kind that I described.

Parental involvement is central to the principles of the Children Act 1989. Before that legislation, we had seen media interviews with some of the parents involved in high-profile child abuse cases in which they had been denied information by authorities, were at best confused, and at worst saw the professionals involved as active enemies. We wanted parents to be involved at all stages of an investigation or intervention, to be informed about the basis for it, and to be consulted at all stages subsequently.

We have made considerable efforts to promote family involvement through the development of training materials financed by our child abuse training initiative, and through a practice guide on "The Challenge of Partnership", which is in preparation. Among materials funded through the training initiative was the development and production of a training package on "Family Participation in Child Protection".

We have also helped to finance a new edition of a joint Family Rights Group and National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children publication, "Child Protection Procedures: What They Mean For Your Family". It has been translated into several languages and is very helpful to parents and family members, in particular in understanding the procedures surrounding child protection conferences and in avoiding jargon—a trap into which professionals too often fall, and one which can be a real barrier to involvement at a time when all the individuals in the family may be feeling particularly isolated and vulnerable. We are funding a training video on parental perceptions of significant harm and child protection investigations, which is aimed to be accessible to both social services professionals and to parents.

I conclude by agreeing wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend that we must keep a sense of proportion, while doing all that we can to root out incidents of child abuse. This is why "Working Together" aims to create the conditions in which agencies act swiftly and decisively when immediate protection of the child is the highest priority. We cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that, in the most extreme circumstances, we are preventing a threat to a child's life.

We are all too well aware of cases in which social services, and other agencies, have been rightly criticised for inaction or inappropriate action. Recent well-publicised cases in Islington and Nottingham have demonstrated all too clearly that the child pays the penalty for the mistakes of the professionals. It is equally right that it is a fundamental principle of the Children Act 1989 that the safety of the child is the paramount consideration.

On the one hand, the debate is about the damage which can be felt by families who feel falsely accused of having abused their child. On the other hand, unexplained head injuries in a child of this age must always feature high on our list of priorities for consideration of investigation, to ensure that the child, whose welfare is of paramount importance, is not at risk of harm.

There are questions to be asked in this case. They are questions which I shall be asking of the hospital. Were the complaints and appeals procedures available to the family? I hope that the coming conference will resolve the difficulties faced by the family, and that Stephen will go on to flourish in a happy and supportive family atmosphere. That is what local and national policy must be all about.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 29 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Pre-school Playgroups

1. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what future role he sees for the pre-school playgroup movement.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): Good playgroups with a sound educational base have a very important part to play in pre-school provision. More than 750,000 children now attend about 20,000 playgroups throughout the country. Pre-school playgroups have a vital role in the educational future of the country, so I can announce that, subject to parliamentary approval, the grant to the Pre-school Playgroups Association for 1994-95 will increase to about £1.2 million for its training activities, an increase of 35 per cent. over the previous year.

Mr. Haselhurst: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement will be warmly welcomed by people who run playgroups and by all the parents who participate in, and are grateful for, such activity? Will he offer further reassurance that there is no threat to the validity of the pre-school playgroup experience in the light of the fact that there is to be a spread of nursery education?

Mr. Patten: There is none whatever. I know that there are some excellent playgroups in the Saffron Walden area. I can confirm to my hon. Friend that the future of the pre-school playgroup movement is safe in our hands. I believe that pre-school playgroups are an integral part of the English way of life and a very important part of English village life. They will also be a very important part of educational provision for children aged three and four under the terms of the announcement that we shall make, in the not-too-distant future, about our plans.

Mr. Spearing: The House would certainly agree that there is a need for pre-school playgroups and I agree with the Secretary of State that they perform a most useful function. Does he agree, however, that they are complementary to nursery education, its known accommodation, staffing and practice standards and the personal qualifications of its staff? Does he therefore agree that there should be further debate, if that is possible, of a Bill relating to the assessment of need for nursery education, so that the two wings can be balanced to the benefit of all concerned?

Mr. Patten: That is the first time in 15 years that the hon. Gentleman has said publicly that he agrees with me. It is a pretty unusual afternoon. The hon. Gentleman has made me rather worried, although I recognise his expertise as an ex-teacher.

Pre-school playgroups, whether run by voluntary organisations or by the private sector, have a very important part to play. They are run on the sites of a good number of local education authority primary schools. They are complementary, I think, to the work that is done by state-provided nursery schools and nursery classes and also to the work done by the private sector in pre-school provision, as well as the Montessori groups. I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that we aim for mixed provision for three and four-year olds in the future.

Mr. Whittingdale: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's support for pre-school playgroups, but does he agree that one of the best ways to increase parental choice would be to introduce a voucher system, which would allow parents to take advantage of the excellent private and voluntary provision, as well as public provision, of pre-school education?

Mr. Patten: I am reviewing all possible ways of developing pre-school provision along the lines that I have just described to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). At present, nothing is ruled in and nothing is ruled out.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I feel that it would not be right for any of us to speak about education today without first expressing our sympathy to the parents of Nikki Conroy and the people at the school in Middlesbrough who were affected by the tragedy yesterday.

When will the Secretary of State take control of policy making on early years education? One day the Prime Minister tells us that he is mad keen on nursery education and the next the Minister of State says that she regards it as inappropriate. When will the Secretary of State stop playing piggy-in-the-middle—or is he so concerned to protect his own bacon that he does not dare to disagree with either of them? Valuable though the contribution of playgroups may be, it is no substitute for quality nursery education. When will the Secretary of State show some commitment and give a lead on nursery education?

Mr. Patten: There were a lot of questions there. First, may I associate myself entirely with what the hon. Lady said about the tragedy in the constituency of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). Those in my office were in touch with the hon. Gentleman yesterday and I have written to the chairman of the school governors to express the Department's sympathy. The whole House shares the hon. Lady's feelings and I am pleased that she mentioned the matter.

On nursery provision, it is important that we look in future not at fixed models of the past but at innovative and fresh ways of providing a better standard of pre-school provision for three and four-year-olds. As I said earlier, nothing is ruled in and nothing is ruled out. But I am sorry for the hon. Lady, who has recently been criticised by leading Labour figures such as Mr. Neil Fletcher, the last Labour leader of the Inner London education authority, and Professor Michael Barber, the recent deputy general

secretary of the National Union of Teachers. Both have accused her of being backward-looking; I would only add, neanderthal.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. If all the questions take that long, we shall not even reach Question 6. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) will set the pace for us.

Funding

2. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage the injection of private sector finance into state-funded education.

Mr. Patten: I welcome the existing investment in education by the private sector, and have asked the funding councils and the Funding Agency for Schools to make further expansion a high priority. I shall publish in the summer an information pack designed to encourage wider investment, and am reviewing the possibility of further and perhaps quite radical action.

Mrs. Lait: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Hastings college on its success in attracting private finance? Will he undertake to draw those initiatives to the attention of East Sussex education authority, which is known to campaign actively against grant-maintained schools, to ensure that that authority realises that private sector financing will not displace public funding?

Mr. Patten: On the first point, my hon. Friend is right; Hastings college has a splendid record of attracting private sector investment, on the back of funds coming in from foreign students, to build new buildings in Hastings. On the second point, I regard as disgraceful Liberal Democrat and Labour-controlled East Sussex county council's recent behaviour in attacking grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Grocott: Before the Secretary of State gets too excited about private funding of public education, will he take the opportunity to acknowledge the dismal failure of the funding policy for city technology colleges, 80 per cent. of which are paid for by taxpayers? Given his unwillingness to answer any questions whatever about the operation of those colleges, will he acknowledge that they represent the only area of public life where taxpayers foot 80 per cent. of the bill in return for 0 per cent. of the power?

Mr. Patten: Our 15 technology colleges are 15 beacons of educational excellence in our inner cities. They are popular with parents, and students are queuing up around the walls to get in. The existing CTCs are being followed by a second wave of technical colleges in which we have had more than 200 expressions of interest. Needless to say, the Labour party has already pledged to abolish them, should it ever get the chance.

Mr. Dunn: Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State confirm that we want as much variety as possible in the funding and type of education and that the Opposition oppose the existence of CTCs, grammar schools, grant-maintained schools, the assisted places scheme and Church schools?

Mr. Patten: I would be wrong, politically and factually, if I did not take this opportunity to say that my hon. Friend is right. The Labour party's typical backward-looking way has already been picked up by Professor Barber, Mr. Fletcher and other Labour party supporters. If only Opposition Members had listened to Professor Barber, who used to be a special adviser to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), the Labour party might have some sort of educational policy; as it is, it has nothing at all.

Teacher Training

3. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had over his plans for the reform of teacher training; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): We consulted extensively last autumn before introducing the current Education Bill and have discussed our reforms with a number of representative bodies during the past six months.

Mr. O'Hara: How many of the bodies consulted approved of the Government's plans to reform teacher training? Have parents been consulted about the implications for their children of increased and extended exposure to apprentice teachers under the proposed system?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman has interpreted the Bill incorrectly. For a start, no school will be brought into training unless it chooses to—no compulsion is involved. Secondly, the Bill will ensure the more effective deployment of resources for initial teacher training, and I should have hoped that a majority of hon. Members would welcome that.

Mr. Pawsey: I hope that my hon. Friend will disregard the ill-considered comments of Labour Members. Is he aware that his statement will be widely welcomed by parents, as the reforms involve schools and allow practical teaching to take place more closely with individual children? Will my hon. Friend also join me in condemning some of the extraordinary practices of teacher training colleges in the past?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend, with his wide experience, is absolutely right. There will be—there already is—an explosion of interest in school-centred training among teacher trainees, who are interested in this new form of training for those with three or four years of university experience who want more training on the job. It is working very well, and the Bill will cement the new system in place.

Mr. Don Foster: Does the Minister accept that his commitment to high-quality teacher training sits ill with his Department's failure to ensure that highly qualified teachers have the necessary resources at their disposal and high-quality buildings in which they and their pupils can operate? Does he agree that the Department's proposals to tackle the backlog of repairs and maintenance in school buildings are wholly inadequate?

Mr. Squire: In a word, I do not agree. The House looks forward to hearing which part of the 1p that the Liberal

Democrats trail around the country will pay for this proposal. We shall be keeping a close eye on it—the hon. Gentleman should be in no doubt of that.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Are we really to be treated to another display of overweening arrogance by the Secretary of State, following the mauling that his Bill has received in another place? Does he really intend to reverse Labour's amendment, backed by some of the most right-wing members of his own party, and insist on school-based courses for teachers' education, with no input from higher education—even though the pilot scheme on which the proposals are based will not have been completed until this sorry Bill has completed its passage through the House?

Mr. Squire: The Bill is in excellent shape, and we look forward to its arrival here from another place. I note in passing that the idea of a teacher training agency has been accepted by the other place, where their Lordships rejected the Opposition's alternatives. As the hon. Gentleman would expect me to say at this stage, the Government are carefully considering their position on the question of school-centred teaching in response to the amendment.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the remarkable professional behaviour of the teachers at Middlesbrough yesterday showed the high quality of the teaching profession and the fact that schoolteachers have a substantial contribution to make to the education of new members of their profession?

Mr. Squire: I think that my hon. Friend speaks for the whole House when he congratulates the teachers involved in yesterday's horrific incident. Day in, day out, I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the work that teachers do across the country, exhibiting skills which, fortunately, do not usually have to be deployed in such dreadful circumstances.

Mentally Handicapped People

4. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will hold urgent discussions with the voluntary organisations representing the mentally handicapped about the local government reorganisation and local education authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): Voluntary organisations, like other bodies interested in these matters, will wish to ensure that their views are made known to the Local Government Commission. The commission is required, among other things, to undertake consultations with local interests.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Minister accept that the Government have a special responsibility? It is they who are recommending reorganisation, and they should protect special schools and meet the needs of the mentally handicapped. What are they doing about that?

Mr. Forth: The Government have recently done a tremendous amount generally for special needs and for the mentally handicapped: there are new responsibilities for the schools themselves; the opportunity for special schools to consider grant-maintained status, which will give them a new independence from local education authorities; a special needs code of practice; and a new tribunal. All these will ensure that special educational needs will have a place in our education system that would have been unknown a few months ago. They were thoroughly embedded in the Education Act 1993. We can look forward with great confidence to special educational needs making a huge step forward and occupying a special place in education.

Mrs. Browning: Is my hon. Friend aware that county councils' reluctance to place children with both learning difficulties and physical disabilities in schools run by charities in the voluntary sector is threatening the viability of those schools, and means that such children are now faced with more generic provision, rather than receiving the excellent specialist provision that charities provide?

Mr. Forth: If my hon. Friend is right—I hope that she will give me some evidence that I can examine—I can reassure her that the provisions of the Education Act 1993, together with the code of practice for special educational needs, give parents new rights of choice, which I am sure they will exercise frequently in favour of the very schools that she mentions. There is a permanent place in our education system for all special schools—those currently run by local authorities which may become grant maintained in the near future and particularly non-maintained special schools.

Mr. Win Griffiths: May I emphasise the Opposition's welcome for the potential in the code of practice for helping to deal with the problems of children with special educational needs, and for the wide range of consultation papers that the Department for Education has issued on all the related problems? However, I remind the Minister that —as his boss will know very well—the road to hell is paved with good intentions, and that the practicality in local authorities and schools is that, despite the Government's good intentions, their policies are seriously failing children. Will the hon. Gentleman follow the good samaritan's example and provide proper funding for those in need?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks. I wonder whether his last sentence represents a new spending commitment on behalf of his party. If so, I wonder whether he has checked it out with the shadow Chancellor; he may want to take it up with his hon. Friend. The hon. Gentleman is rushing to judgment prematurely. We are at the earliest stages of the new regime for special educational needs. The opportunity of grant-maintained status for special schools only starts next month and the code of practice and the tribunal come into effect in September. We must all give schools and local education authorities the opportunity to demonstrate how they can use what will be made available to them to provide for special needs, before rushing to judgment as the hon. Gentleman has done today.

St. Alfege with St. Peter's School

5. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the conditions at St. Alfege with St. Peter's school in Greenwich.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received letters on this matter from the hon. Gentleman himself, the school's chairman of governors and the appeal fund manager.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister recognise the extreme anger felt by parents, governors and teaching staff at that excellent primary school which has to operate in conditions that are overcrowded, substandard and reminiscent of Victorian times? When will the hon. Gentleman recognise that until we provide proper facilities for our young children in primary schools, we cannot hope to achieve the excellence in education which they deserve and which we should be providing for them?

Mr. Forth: I am very much looking forward to meeting the hon. Gentleman when he comes see me with a delegation from the school on 12 April; we can discuss these matters then. In the meantime, it is certainly open to governors of the school to approach the local education authority and discuss whether, for example, a small minor works project could be used to tackle some of the more urgent needs of the school. Funds should be available from the local education authority and I would strongly recommend that course at this stage, pending my looking again at the case for the school, as I shall when I meet the hon. Gentleman.

16-year-olds

6. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the United Kingdom participation rate in education for 16-year-olds; and what information he has on comparable rates in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): Some 94 per cent. of 16-year-olds in the United Kingdom took part in some form of education and training in 1990, the latest year for which international comparisons are available covering both full-time and part-time education. That compares well with the position in other OECD countries for which data are available, where participation by 16-year-olds ranges from 100 per cent. in Canada to 71 per cent. in Spain.

Mr. Greenway: That is a very encouraging reply. May I give my hon. Friend the even better news that 74 per cent. of 16-year-olds in North Yorkshire actually stay on at school? Will he continue to build on the progress already made, to make vocational education and training really worth while and relevant for young people so that they achieve the best qualifications that they can and so achieve something of value to employers?

Mr. Boswell: I am delighted to hear the good news from Yorkshire, where the importance of investing in the future is fully understood. That mirrors national provision: there has been a tremendous increase in the number of young people who stay on at school, obtaining satisfactory academic and vocational qualifications or taking training courses in parallel.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Minister's response. Does he accept, however, that too many parents —especially in areas of high unemployment—tend to encourage their children to take dead-end jobs rather than equipping themselves to do better jobs in the future?

Mr. Boswell: I am sure that that was the case in the past, but I think that the culture is changing. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and I—indeed, the whole House—will join in breaking that tradition. The more young people stay on, the more chance there will be of our having a highly skilled labour force and a competitive economy in the future.

Sir Dudley Smith: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments about staying on at school: that is excellent. Will he also tell us how we compare with other OECD countries in terms of rural schools? If the position in this country demonstrates excellence and good endeavour, will he do all that he can to preserve those rural schools, in view of the excellent comments of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier about the need to preserve the rural scene?

Mr. Boswell: My constituency is quite near my hon. Friend's, and I am aware of his concerns about Warwickshire. I have noted his comments, as, I am sure, have my colleagues; but he will appreciate that, while it is likely that representations will be made to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, we cannot comment on individual school reorganisations.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister should start by admitting that some 40 per cent. of 16 and 17-year-olds do not complete the courses that they begin; that participation rates for 18-year-olds are very poor by international standards; and that study after study shows how badly our young people do compared with those abroad. As Ministers would not expect so little—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have not heard a question yet. This is Question Time, and I must hear a direct question to the Minister.

Mr. Lloyd: As Ministers would expect a good deal more for their children, will the Minister now tell us what he intends to do to ensure that all our young people get as much as children in Japan, Germany and France?

Mr. Boswell: We are determined to deal with the deficiencies exposed in "Unfinished Business": we are determined both to increase the staying-on rate and to ensure that those who go on to attend either sixth form or further education colleges sustain their education through to the age of 18. Incidentally, the hon. Gentleman cited some figures relating to 18-year-olds, although the question relates to staying on at 16.

It is important to keep people on course for that time. No doubt the hon. Gentleman has noted the helpful proposals of the Further Education Funding Council, which are designed both to counsel young people and lead them to the appropriate course and—through the appropriate funding mechanism—to ensure that they stay on that course and complete it.

National Vocational Qualifications

7. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what targets have been set for the uptake of general national vocational qualifications among 16 to 19-year-olds over the next three years.

Mr. Boswell: We need high take-up of appropriate and demanding vocational qualifications in the next three years if we are to achieve the challenging national targets for education and training. There are already more than 80,000 students taking GNVQs: that is well on course to meet our aim for one in four 16-year-olds to start GNVQ courses in

1996. Our longer-term aim is for half all 16 and 17-year-olds to take GNVQs at foundation, intermediate or advanced level.

Mr. Trend: Does my hon. Friend agree that there should be parity of esteem between GNVQs and A-levels, particularly for employment purposes? What are the Government doing to achieve that, bearing in mind the fact that many Conservative Members do not want a dilution of the high standards for A-levels?

Mr. Boswell: I entirely agree that there should be parity of esteem. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has conveyed that parity between vocational A-levels and their academic equivalents; we now need to ensure that the highest possible standards and appropriate rigour are observed in the delivery of the vocational qualifications to which I have referred. I recently launched a six-point plan to improve the position, and I am confident that we shall achieve those standards.

Mr. Rooker: How many of the 6 per cent. of 16-year-olds to whom the Minister referred in the previous question, which was not about staying-on rates, who are missing out on education will go on to vocational training? Why was not the answer to the original question 100 per cent?

Mr. Boswell: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has slipped a question. I shall try to respond to him because the two questions are closely related. In conjunction with our colleagues in the Department of Employment, an offer of high-quality vocational education or training is already available to everyone. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently announced proposals for a modern apprenticeship scheme. We have put great emphasis on increasing the staying-on rates either at school for education or at college for training and we have nothing to be ashamed of in the huge expansion in staying-on rates and the acquisition of appropriate qualifications.

Assisted Places Scheme

8. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to change the assisted places scheme for independent schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: None, Madam Speaker. The Government remain fully committed to this popular scheme and the children it supports in the interests of academic excellence.

Mr. Fabricant: I am reassured by that answer. Is not it the case that 30,000 of our most able young people, although not perhaps our most wealthy, benefit from the scheme? Is not it ironic that it is the Labour party which carps against schemes such as this, despite the fact that many on the Opposition Front Bench benefited from it, while we are the party of meritocracy and equal opportunity for our young?

Mr. Patten: Many on the Government Benches would have loved to have the educational opportunities in private schools, direct grant schools and independent schools that many Labour Members had. What really matters is educational excellence—giving children a chance in life. That is what we want to see with the assisted places scheme. I am in favour of the much more competitive education system that we now have. I am fully in favour of independent schools but I want to see our grant-maintained schools and our maintained schools giving them a good run for their money, which many do, as our performance tables of academic results show.

Mr. Steinberg: Is not the assisted places schemes just an underhand method of subsidising independent schools at the expense of state school children?

Mr. Patten: If that is the best that the hon. Gentleman can do with his question, no wonder he has been got rid of as a representative of the National Union of Teachers.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that many parents and their offspring will testify to the success of the assisted places scheme? Is not it true —it is certainly my experience—that schools and teachers also benefit from the scheme? Is not any proposal to do away with it the result of narrow-minded thinking by those who are against choice in education?

Mr. Patten: Those of us who believe in a classless and competitive society can only agree with my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: How does the Secretary of State justify spending almost £100 million of taxpayers' money on the assisted places scheme to subsidise independent schools when, at the same time, Ministers are complaining that there are 1.3 million surplus places in our schools? Is not that another example of the inefficient use of taxpayers' money, which is so desperately needed in other sectors of education?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Lady benefited from a direct grant school education and good luck to her. The Government are interested not in ideology, organisation or in sums of money put in but in academic excellence on behalf of our children and young people and the results that those young people produce. It is as plain as a pikestaff that up and down the land we get exceptionally good value for money from the public money invested in the assisted places scheme because the vast majority of children who benefit from those places obtain spectacular academic results.

Leicestershire County Council

9. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff were employed in the education department of Leicestershire county council annually over the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my hon. Friend think that because local management of schools has been so successful, particularly in Leicestershire, and because there is an ever-increasing number of grant-maintained schools, there should be serious reductions in education departments, not least in Leicestershire, which is controlled by a Lib-Lab pact? Is not that something which the Department should be encouraging?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend must be right in what he says. Indeed, had he been inclined to do so, he could have added that further education colleges and sixth-form colleges have now also started to run themselves. All this adds up to a sound reason why all LEAs across the country should be reducing their central staff.

Higher Education (Academic Staff)

10. **Mr. Keen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for the introduction of national planning targets for the recruitment and retention of academic staff in higher education.

Mr. Boswell: None, Madam Speaker. The staffing requirements of universities are a matter for individual institutions.

Mr. Keen: Is the Minister aware that a demographic time bomb is ticking away in higher education—for instance, in the subject of chemistry, more than 25 per cent. of the staff are more than 55 years old? Should not the Government plan, as the French are doing, to make sure that in future there are sufficient staff in higher education?

Mr. Boswell: It is nice to know that there are still some people on the Opposition Benches who believe in indicative planning, but the Government do not. We are certainly aware of the age profile of the academic work force and, indeed, some of the problems in individual departments. We shall continue to keep an eye on the situation. But, first, grown-up universities and colleges must determine their own academic staffing profiles and, secondly, we now have a larger range of students than ever before from which to choose potential recruits for the academic world.

Mr. Hawkins: Will my hon. Friend confirm that we have virtually achieved our manifesto commitment of one in three young people in higher education—whereas in 1979 under the Labour party the figure was only one in eight—and that expenditure on higher education is due to rise in real terms over the next two years?

Mr. Boswell: I can readily confirm that. We have hit our target in almost two years when we had allowed ourselves nine years in which to do it. Student numbers are at record levels.

Discretionary Awards

11. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will increase the funds available for discretionary awards in the coming academic year.

Mr. Boswell: It is for local education authorities to decide how much to devote to each area of the education service, including discretionary awards, in the light of local needs and circumstances, their own priorities and the resources available to them.

Mr. Howarth: Is not it the Government's responsibility, having presided over the greatest disruption in pupil education in recent years, to make sure that resources are there so that those people who have suffered can have a second chance? While the Minister is at it, why does not he apologise for all the disruption?

Mr. Boswell: I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman has in mind. I doubt whether he has in mind the fact that public funding for the maintained schools sector has risen by more than 45 per cent. in real terms since 1979 and that my right hon. Friend and my colleagues have been driving up educational standards.

However, since the hon. Gentleman asks what our responsibility is, I can tell him that it is to provide, as we do, more than £17 billion through the standard spending assessment, which represents an increase of 2.4 per cent. over the previous year. That is a record of resourcing local education authorities that allows them to assume and, we hope, discharge their proper responsibilities.

Grant-maintained Schools

12. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress is being made towards the Government's target of increasing the number of grant-maintained schools in Leicestershire.

Mr. Squire: Five schools in Leicestershire have so far achieved grant-maintained status. Three of these are in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Garnier: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the best ways to achieve such progress is to invite teachers and parents in Leicestershire to visit the three schools in my constituency—Abington, Bushloe and South Wigston? Will he agree that it is hardly surprising that, outside those schools, there is a queue of parents who come from outside the schools' catchment areas and who want to place their children at those schools, despite the fact that Leicestershire is, as my hon. Friend from Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) has just said, a Liberal-Labour LEA?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend is right. The story that he tells of Leicestershire is the same one that is repeated across the country for GM self-governing schools. I have some good news for all of my hon. Friends: from next Friday, a further 110 schools will formally become GM schools.

Local Management of Schools

13. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the local management of schools.

Mr. Forth: The most valuable assessment of LMS is that by the schools themselves, the overwhelming majority of whom support its principles and practice. Schools do not wish us to bring back the arrangements previously in place.

Mr. Shepherd: Is my hon. Friend aware that the schools in Herefordshire certainly share the opinion that he has given the House? However, I draw his attention to the concern that has been expressed to me by the Barrs Court special school in Hereford, which has a very high level of students with severe and multiple learning difficulties. It is concerned that, with nationally agreed pay awards, it may not be able to accommodate those within the LEA assessed grant. Will my hon. Friend be reviewing the way in which local education authorities assess the allocations made to special schools so that they can continue their valuable work, and what advice might he give to LEAs?

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities have remarkable freedom and flexibility in devising and implementing their local management of school schemes, and special schools' budget shares are very dependent on the decisions made by local education authorities within a broad framework, which should be sufficiently flexible to allow the needs of all individual schools to be met. In particular, they can take advantage of the many concessions made for small schools—those with fewer than 330 pupils. I hope that the school will be talking to the local education

authority, to ensure that the provision that it receives is adequate to its needs. There is no reason why that should not be the case.

Mr. Bell: Further to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and of the Secretary of State, would not it be appropriate for the House to offer its condolences to the parents of Nikki Conroy who so tragically lost her life yesterday in Middlesbrough in a stabbing attack? The House will share with the entire nation its sense of sadness at the death of so young and so lovely a person, cut down even before her prime in a senseless and dastardly attack. Does the Minister agree that no blame can be attached either to the management of Hall Garth school or its teachers, that the teachers, not least the head, have coped extremely well in the circumstances and that Cleveland county council has responded magnificently in giving counselling to those involved? Would not it be appropriate for the Secretary of State to ask all managements in schools to review their own security as a matter of urgency and for him to report back to the House on the outcome of such a review?

Mr. Forth: I associate myself and all my colleagues with the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I am sure that our heart-felt sympathy goes to all those involved in the tragedy and I share the hon. Gentleman's admiration for the role played by all those most closely involved, not least the teachers. I have been very impressed by the measured and dignified way in which the chairman of the governors and the head teacher have responded to what happened in their school. I believe that the best service that we can provide for all school children throughout the land who, with their parents, will be upset and appalled at this incident, is to examine carefully what happened and draw whatever lessons can be drawn. However, I believe that, as a result of what happened yesterday, all schools will already be looking at their own arrangements and deciding what they can best do. We will certainly be examining what happened to see what lessons can be learnt and what advice, support and help we can give.

Physical Education

14. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what importance is attached to physical education in the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Physical education is a foundation subject in the national curriculum. As such, it is compulsory for all pupils aged five to 16 years in maintained schools.

Mr. Spring: Is my hon. Friend aware that some 71 per cent. of 14-year-olds receive fewer than two hours' physical education a week in school? Does he agree that sport and exercise, as opposed to the watching of videos and television, are desirable for young people and should be encouraged?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend must be right about the importance of games. As I am sure that he knows, it is compulsory for five to 14-year-olds to have such games. He may be interested to know that Ofsted, the independent inspectorate, recently collected evidence which showed that, on average, PE took between 7 and 12 per cent. of curriculum time.

Truancy

15. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many truancy watch schemes he expects to be established under his recent initiative to crack down on truancy.

Mr. Forth: A total of 101 schemes were suggested by local education authorities for inclusion in the 1994-95 truancy and disaffected pupils grants for educational support and training programme. Half the 86 approved schemes include a "truancy watch" element along the lines of a pilot scheme currently operating in Staffordshire. My right hon. Friend has been much encouraged by the many expressions of support for those schemes from senior police officers and representatives of the business community.

Mr. Booth: Is the Minister aware of the widespread support for the Government's truancy initiative, especially in areas such as Finchley, where there is great support for education generally? Will he also tell us what steps are being taken to encourage, enhance and train parents to support those truancy efforts?

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend and I lay an enormous stress on dealing with the problem of truancy. We believe that young people should be in school, being educated, and should not be at risk outside school. We believe that that is of the greatest importance. I have been encouraged by the positive response from schools and from local education authorities, which have been involving their community, the police, education and welfare officers and, I hope, increasingly involving parents, on whom rests the statutory responsibility for ensuring that their children are in school and learning when they should be.

Mr. Riddick: Question 16.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will be lucky.

PRIME MINISTER

ENGAGEMENTS

Q1. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Byers: Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating the work force at the Swan Hunter shipyards on Tyneside, who, despite the fact that the company is in receivership, have continued to produce a high-quality product on time for the Ministry of Defence with the receiver close to securing a new owner, but with work running out? Will the Prime Minister, as a matter of urgency, consider steps that the Government can take to safeguard the future of shipbuilding on the Tyne and thereby retain 1,000 highly-skilled manufacturing jobs?

The Prime Minister: I support what the hon. Gentleman has to say about the workers at Swan Hunter. As he will know, officials are continuing to support the receiver's efforts to sell Swan Hunter as a going concern.

I know that the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) have been active on its behalf. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has told the company that foreign ownership would not preclude Swan Hunter from bidding for MOD work. As the hon. Gentleman will know, all MOD work is bid for on a competitive basis.

Mr. Trotter: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the bid from France is successful, the new owners intend to use Swan Hunter to obtain substantial additional export orders for Britain and that the continuation of Swan Hunter in those circumstances would be good not only for the Royal Navy—by maintaining competition—but for Britain—by obtaining additional exports—and for Tyneside—by retaining an excellent work force?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. I think that it would be the collective wish of the House that Swan Hunter should continue its work in the future. I very much hope that it will be possible for a buyer to come in, so that Swan Hunter may be able to continue.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister agree with the Foreign Secretary, who told the House yesterday that the blocking minority in the enlarged Community would be 27?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know, I shall make a statement on that matter in just a few moments. When there is dissent between 22 and 27, there will not be automatic— *[Interruption.]* Between 22 and 27, there will not be automatic agreement, and I shall set out the circumstances then in a few moments.

Mr. John Smith: I am aware that we shall have the opportunity to ask the right hon. Gentleman more detailed questions, but I asked him about what the Foreign Secretary said yesterday in the House. Is not it the case that, if no agreement is reached in the Community, the blocking minority is 27? That is a fact, is it not?

The Prime Minister: If no agreement is reached in the Community, the blocking minority at the moment would move to 37. That is the point at issue. After agreement is reached, if agreement is reached and everything proceeds satisfactorily in the next 24 hours, the position would be that, if any country was part of a blocking minority that did not reach 27, but was over 22, that is 23 to 26, it would not automatically be 27. There would be a considerable delay and much further discussion.

Mr. John Smith: Is not the clear point this: that after the delay has expired, the blocking minority will be 27? Yes or no?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman misunderstands—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I am afraid that he misunderstands, as the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) did yesterday. There is no time limit.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that enlargement of the European Community is in Britain's best interests and that the four strong and stalwart possible new members will not be put off by the knowledge that to fight hard for national interests is still possible when one is at the heart of Europe?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend will know, we have been the foremost proponents of enlargement of the Community, because we should like a larger and more loosely knit Community. I very much hope that all the four applicant nations will win their referendums and become members of the Community from 1 January next year.

Mr. Ashdown: May I put the question to the Prime Minister a different way? I disagreed with him at the time, but does he recall saying last week that the principle to which he would wish firmly to adhere was that the Governments representing 30 per cent. of Europe's population should have an unqualified right of veto over the rest? Will he now confirm that that principle has been abandoned?

The Prime Minister: No, the right hon. Gentleman is misquoting what I said last week—but he is absolutely right that I am concerned about the legitimacy of Community decisions as an ever-larger part of the Community can be overridden under qualified majority voting. That is precisely why we have reached the safeguards in the past 24 hours and precisely why we have now obtained an absolute assurance that both the thresholds and the voting weights will be reconsidered and redetermined in 1996.

Mr. Devlin: Will my right hon. Friend take time during his busy day to send a message of sympathy to the staff, pupils and parents at Hall Garth school in Middlesbrough, which a considerable number of my constituents attend and which was the scene of the awful tragedy yesterday? Will he also send a message of commendation to the teaching staff for their prompt and effective action in dealing with the madman who broke into the classroom?

The Prime Minister: Not only would I be happy to do that, but I think that the message would have the unqualified support of every right hon. and hon. Member. I believe that all hon. Members would wish to send their deepest sympathy to Nikki's family and to the school. The event was horrendous—the sort of random act of madness that it is almost impossible to guard against—and for the families and pupils involved it leaves a legacy of horror that will take a long time to wash away. I congratulate the teachers and others for the way in which they behaved yesterday. Clearly, we shall have to see whether any further guidance can be given to schools in view of that tragic incident.

Q2. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dunnachie: Does the Prime Minister realise that by ignoring the wishes of the people of Strathclyde, who overwhelmingly rejected the idea of water quangos, he is going against his own citizens charter?

The Prime Minister: I answered two questions on that subject last week and the hon. Gentleman will know that I do not agree with the way in which Strathclyde set up its referendum. It was not possible to retain the previous methods of controlling water authorities and we have chosen the method that we believe is most apt for the future.

Q3. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Lady Olga Maitland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that council tax increases in Liberal-controlled counties are well above the rate of inflation? Indeed, in Somerset the rate of increase is twice the rate of inflation, in Dorset it is three times the rate of inflation and in Hampshire it is five times the rate of inflation.

The Prime Minister: I am aware of that in the case of Hampshire and in the case of Richmond in London, and I suspect that if we were to examine the situation we should find a very high level of council tax under Liberal authorities everywhere. It is clear that if people want a lower level of council tax, they ought to vote Conservative.

Q4. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanson: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has now admitted that the average family tax rise from April will be £9 to £10—double what the Chancellor of the Exchequer says it will be, and more in line with Labour party predictions? Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whom he now believes—the Chancellor or his Chief Secretary?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary was talking about the average wage earner; my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was showing what the impact on the average family would be. They are both correct.

Mr. John Marshall: May I, as the chairman of the all-party friends of the Northern line group, welcome today's announcement about new trains for the Northern line? Is not this good news for 400,000 Londoners who travel daily on that route? Is my right hon. Friend aware that it will be particularly welcome in the London borough of Barnet?

The Prime Minister: That does depend on successful bids from the private sector. What has happened today is that the Government have given permission for London Underground to hold a competition for the provision of privately financed rolling stock for the Northern line. We shall be looking to the private sector to take on some of the risks of ownership, but I am confident that the use of that competition will pave the way for greater use of private finance in the future.

Q5. **Mr. Keen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Keen: I congratulate the Prime Minister, not just because it is his birthday but because some of my constituents are impressed by the quality of the answers that he gives. However, people often point out to me—I have to agree—that many of the right hon. Gentleman's answers are unconnected with the questions. I think that that has to do with the random access file from which he reads. Would not the random nature of the question-and-answer session be reduced if the right hon. Gentleman were to read all the answers first and then we were to ask questions?

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to join me in congratulating the management and work force of Slingsby Aviation in Kirkbymoorside on securing the contract to supply more than 100 training aircraft to the United States air force? The factory is being visited today by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Does not that order prove that small firms in Britain can compete in the toughest market anywhere in the world?

The Prime Minister: I was not aware until now of that contract, but I am very happy to congratulate Slingsby. It is certainly the case that a large number of both small and medium-sized firms are now exporting a high proportion of their turnover. That reflects both their efficiency and the fact that the British economy is now acutely competitive.

Q6. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Roche: Does the Prime Minister agree with his Chancellor, who has described national insurance as "not a tax", or with his former Chancellor, who thought that it was?

The Prime Minister: I think the hon. Lady is being very selective in her quote. The reality is as my right hon. and learned Friend has stated.

Q7. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my right hon. Friend accept that a traditional feature of life in British towns is their main post office? Is he aware of the consternation created in places such as Saffron Walden when the post office is threatened with having its services franchised out to a side-street newsagent? Will he undertake to review Government policy towards the Post Office with those concerns in mind?

The Prime Minister: I agree that post offices should remain very much a part of life in our towns and villages. That is why the Government are committed to maintaining a network of post offices across the country. What is important is the quality of service that customers receive, and that is what the Government want to see improved in Saffron Walden, as elsewhere. I will certainly reflect on the points made by my hon. Friend.

Q8. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rooker: Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating the hon. Member for Birmingham,

Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), whose constituents last week, for the first time ever, welcomed the election of a Labour councillor?

The Prime Minister: Given the hon. Gentleman's constituency in Birmingham, if the electors did elect a Labour councillor, it certainly cannot be on the back of the record of the Labour Birmingham council.

Mr. Burns: Will my right hon. Friend please have a word with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to see whether it is possible, before the Easter recess, to have a statement on the road-building programme in the hope that he will announce the abandonment of the hated proposed M12 from the M25 to Chelmsford, which no one in south and mid-Essex wishes?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have heard the plea from my hon. Friend; I will

European Union (Qualified Majority Voting)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I shall make a statement on proposals to adjust qualified majority voting in the context of the European Union's enlargement negotiations.

In the negotiations, the Government had two principal objectives. First, we wished to see the negotiations succeed, provided the terms were acceptable. We have been strong and consistent supporters of enlargement. We look forward to welcoming Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden at the beginning of 1995, provided their peoples and parliaments so decide in the referendums that lie ahead.

On enlargement, it is necessary to amend article 148 of the treaty. Without a change, the blocking minority would automatically rise to 37 votes. Our second objective was to safeguard the rights of minorities in the period between enlargement and the 1996 intergovernmental conference, and to seek a fundamental review of qualified majority voting at that conference.

We believed that there should not be an unqualified, mathematical extension of the blocking minority to 27. We were concerned that successive, unqualified extensions had weakened the democratic legitimacy of the Community.

A large part of our concern stemmed from the handling by the European Commission of social measures. Article 118A of the treaty, which provides for health and safety at work, had been used as a vehicle for the adoption by qualified majority voting of measures affecting social affairs and employment. In addition, a proposal had recently been made to count the employees of multinational companies in the United Kingdom towards the threshold of the works council directive—although this measure had been brought forward under the social chapter, to which the United Kingdom is not a party.

My right hon. Friend said yesterday that we were pursuing our concerns about the social affairs measures. I can now tell the House that we have received assurances from the Commission that it will not bring forward any further proposals under the health and safety articles under its term of office except for measures directly and demonstrably relevant to health and safety at work. This means that we shall not face a repetition from this Commission of our experience over the working time directive, which we are challenging in the European Court of Justice; or over the young persons directive, which is in dispute between the Council and the European Parliament.

The Commission has also agreed now that proposals under the social chapter will not embrace in any way people or organisations in the United Kingdom. For the purposes of the social chapter, the United Kingdom will be entirely excluded from legislation. This meets a particular concern that we had with the works council proposal, which the other 11 member states are pursuing.

The proposal on qualified majority voting negotiated by my right hon. Friend at the weekend meets many—although not all—of the Government's concerns. We have secured agreement that the review of qualified majority voting at the next intergovernmental conference will now include the question of thresholds. These will be reopened and re-examined, as will the number of votes attributed to each member state in the Community. [AN HON. MEMBER: "That was available before."] This means, as my right hon. Friend said yesterday, that there will be a root and branch review of the system. This will have to take a fundamental look at the democratic legitimacy of decision-making.

At the request of the United Kingdom and Spain, the transitional arrangements from accession until 1996 will no longer provide for unqualified extension of the blocking minority to 27. The Council is under a legal and binding obligation to seek agreement on the basis of a minority of at least 23 votes. My right hon. Friend ensured that there would be no time limit for the fulfilment of this obligation.

The Commission and the presidency are required to take "any initiative necessary" to reach a solution adopted by at least 68 votes—that is to say, with no more than 22 votes against. This obligation is justiciable in the European Court of Justice. We expect it to be upheld scrupulously. Should there be any question of a breach of the obligation, we would reserve the right to take whatever action was necessary, and a number of avenues would be open to us. The first would be a legal challenge and the second would be use of the Luxembourg compromise.

The binding nature of the obligation is clearly understood by our partners, and stems from the form of the Council's decision. For example, Germany has said today that it regards the obligation as binding on the Council, and Germany has no doubt, it says, that all other member states of the Union will also fully respect these procedures.

On this basis, the Cabinet has concluded that, since we wish to see enlargement proceed, progress on qualified majority voting was sufficient to be acceptable until 1996. We are informing the presidency that, provided the concessions made to the United Kingdom and Spain are accepted without qualification by the other member states, the United Kingdom can accept this interim proposal.

Enlargement will bring into the Union countries which share Britain's open trading instincts, and which will be net contributors to the budget. It will be another step towards the wider, less centralised, open trading Europe for which we have been working.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): However the Prime Minister seeks to camouflage his retreat from his vainglorious assertions of "no surrender" last week, is not the plain fact that the Government have accepted a blocking minority of 27, as the Foreign Secretary was forced to admit in the House yesterday?

On the detail of the Foreign Ministers' declaration, is not his supposed triumph of obtaining a minor period of delay hopelessly undermined by the text of the declaration, which says in paragraph (c) that it is all

"without prejudice to the obligatory time limit laid down by the Treaties and by secondary Law"?

Is it the case that if, at the end of the day, agreement has not been reached, the period of delay can be terminated by a simple majority, and then a blocking minority of 27 is required?

On the so-called assurances from the Commission, is there a written agreement which can be made available to the House? Can any assurances, whatever they may be, extend beyond the end of this year when the Commission's term of office expires?

Now that the Prime Minister has had to make a humiliating climbdown, will he explain to the House why the question of qualified majority voting was not raised

[Mr. John Smith]

earlier in the enlargement discussions—for example, at the Lisbon summit or at the most recent Brussels summit, where all the key decisions on enlargement were taken?

Is not the explanation for the timing and for this whole sorry fiasco that a Prime Minister, fearful of the warring factions in his own party, propelled himself into an unwise conflict, which he could not and did not win, but which has resulted in unnecessary and severe damage to friendly countries and no advantage to Britain?

The Prime Minister: A number of points which were raised by the right hon. and learned Gentleman are factually inaccurate. On the question why qualified majority voting was not raised earlier, the fact is that it was raised earlier. It has been discussed during the past year and for many months between Ministers and officials, and it has not previously been agreed. But it has been discussed for a great deal of time at both official and Government level. Unfortunately, it was not possible to attain an earlier agreement.

In what he has just said, the right hon. and learned Gentleman appears to have overlooked the fact that we have achieved a series of concessions that would not have been available if we had adopted his position of accepting, without let or hindrance, 27 for all areas immediately, which is what was sought by other people. We have not achieved the maintenance of the blocking majority of 23 —I would ideally have preferred that—but neither have the other member states achieved what they would have wished, because we have obtained concessions, particularly concessions that protect our most vulnerable flank on social affairs.

As for the obligatory time limit, I know that it is complex, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman has misunderstood it. That time limit relates to the European Parliament after a common position has been reached, and not during discussion among member states for reaching a common position; the right hon. and learned Gentleman has misunderstood the point.

On the right hon. and learned Gentleman's simple majority point, if there were any attempt to use a simple majority to move forward to a qualified majority vote, under this agreement we would certainly be able to go to the European Court of Justice, and we would most certainly do so. I think that it is clear from what is being said by other member states that they would not be likely to go down that route. Certainly on previous occasions, they have not and they know what the impact would most certainly be.

The agreement with the Commission lasts until the end of this year, because this Commission ends at the end of this year. But I can tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman that we will certainly seek an extension under the new Commission next year, and I see no reason to suppose that we will not achieve it.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Will my right hon. Friend get rid of some puzzlement outside this House? In the regulations, is there some mysterious rule that says that Britain may not make her case for a particular course of action, or that, for some reason or another, it will be impossible for Britain to get enough votes on her side for a reasonable case to enable it to be adopted?

The Prime Minister: No, my hon. Friend is right that it is open to this country, as to any other country, to argue its case on areas of particular concern. We have said consistently throughout that it is necessary to safeguard certain areas of particular interest to the United Kingdom. Although, as I conceded to the House a moment ago, I would have preferred to retain 23 as a complete blocking minority until 1996, it is equally the case that there are areas of Community policy where a blocking minority of 27 suits this Government's policies more than 23. The CAP, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition says, is a case in point.

Fundamentally, we are seeking a root and branch reform of both the weighting of votes and the threshold of votes and that is what we have obtained in 1996. The hon. Gentleman opposite, who during the statement was shouting that that was available before, is wrong. The agreement on thresholds was available before, but not the agreement on thresholds and weighting.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The Prime Minister must explain to his party why he asks them to celebrate today what last week he told them was unacceptable. For my part, I welcome the fact that he has arrived at a solution —even if it is by accident—that now allows us to reform the CAP in the interests of the British taxpayer, and to admit more quickly the four new members, who will make a net contribution to the budget, and who are likely to be Britain's friends, provided we do not go on behaving as we have in the past two weeks.

No amount of clever words or verbal gymnastics can hide the fact that the Government have made a fool of Britain in Europe; that the Cabinet has made a fool of the Foreign Secretary; and that the Prime Minister has frankly made rather a fool of himself.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has clearly not understood the nature of the agreement that has been reached. If he had, he would have acknowledged the fact that the Council is under a binding agreement to aim for a basis of at least 23 rather than 27 votes when any blocking minority exceeds 22 but falls short of 27. That is likely to safeguard a number of our interests.

The right hon. Gentleman made no mention of the fact that he would have surrendered the unanimity rule. He is not prepared to fight in Europe for matters that may be of direct concern to this country—we are, as is every other Government in the Community. It is interesting that the right hon. Gentleman would not support the Government in fighting for things that are plainly in the interests of the people of this country.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that this is an honourable solution to a difficult problem, which hopefully will allow the four applicant countries to join as soon as possible? Is he aware that it is important for those new countries to join before 1996, when negotiations begin at the intergovernmental conference? Is it not further important, if we are to achieve a thorough discussion of qualified majority voting, for those countries to realise what it is in this country's interests to do—that is, to make the whole of the working of the Community an important vehicle for the future? There are both the intergovernmental and the qualified majority voting sides—the totality is important for this country's interests.

The Prime Minister: We shall now have a thorough examination of both thresholds and weighting. Of course, that will also now include any of the applicant members that join the Community on 1 January next year. As my hon. Friend said, we were foremost in arguing for enlargement. I believe that that is very much in the interests not only of this country, but of the Community as well. In due course, we look forward not only to the entry of the European Free Trade Association states, but—perhaps around the turn of the century—to that of some, or all, of the Visigrad states.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): If the figure of 27 was unacceptable to the Prime Minister in any form last Tuesday, why is it acceptable a week later?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman heard me say a moment ago that, although I would have prefered 23, 27 has always been acceptable for some aspects—reform of the common agricultural policy being a case in point. What I said last week was that we insisted on safeguarding the rights of substantial minorities, and that is what we have achieved.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the tapes have reported what are referred to as "fierce denials" by the Commission a few minutes ago about the guarantees on social policy, can the Prime Minister explain who is going to decide whether a directive is relevant to health or safety? Will it be decided by the Commission or the Council, and will it be done by a majority vote?

The Prime Minister: We know what the proposed directives are, unless fresh directives that are as yet wholly unconsidered are suddenly proposed, which is not likely. We know that only two directives are coming forward that will come under health and safety legislation, and those are two that we asked for.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Does the Prime Minister really not realise that leadership, in the context of his enfeebled Government, requires that he be brutal with the eccentric excrescences to his right?

The Prime Minister: I am always open to receive advice but, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not always take it.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Can I offer my warm congratulations to my right hon. Friend and the Government on achieving a most important modernisation of the Luxembourg compromise arrangements? Will he confirm that it is the determined intention of the Government to go ahead with the other member states and to develop the European Union in accordance with the Maastricht treaty?

The Prime Minister: Well, there is one serious qualification to an acknowledgment of that point—the fact that, whereas the rest of the European Union countries will proceed with the Maastricht treaty including the social protocol, we shall not. However, with that exception, we shall certainly proceed with developing the European Union, as set out in the treaty that this House passed.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Prime Minister is investing a lot of trust in the European Commission as far as assurances go. Does he recall that the Commission is the most arch-federalist of all the institutions in the Community and that its President is a certain Mr. Jacques Delors—a notorious socialist, who wants to do precisely those things that the Prime Minister does not want him to do? If those assurances are as strong as the Prime Minister claimed, why do we also need a legally binding and enforceable agreement that the Community will not resort to qualified majority voting? If that qualified majority voting is challenged, surely the other European federalist body, the European Court of Justice, will decide who is right and who is wrong?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has set out very clearly precisely why we were unwilling to sign up to the proposals in front of us without the changes that we have now secured on social matters. It is precisely for the reasons that he has set out that we felt that we needed those commitments—and we have achieved them.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As no objective observer believes that this so-called compromise has achieved anything of real value for the United Kingdom, and as, as of now, my right hon. Friend has no authority, credibility or identifiable policy in this vital area of policy, why does he not stand aside and make way for somebody else who can provide the party and the country with direction and leadership? *[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Resign!

The Prime Minister: Anybody listening to what my hon. Friend has had to say, not just today but at any time in the past two and a half years, would in no sense suggest that my hon. Friend was an objective observer of any related matters. I remind my hon. Friend that it might be a useful novelty if, from time to time, he was prepared to support the Government whom he was elected to support.

Hon. Members: More!

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Who is going to clean up the blood?

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): When all the waffle on this subject has died down, would the Prime Minister please tell me what has changed? Would he agree that, under 12 member states, 23 was 30 per cent. of the total vote, and would he agree that, under 16 member states, 27 is now 30 per cent. of the total vote? What has changed?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman is incorrect. Twenty-seven is just over 40 per cent. of the votes—*[Interruption.]*—of population. When we joined the Community, the blocking minority was 30 per cent. of population; 27 is now over 40 per cent., and it is on that point that we think that in 1996 we need to change the system so that there is more democratic legitimacy for the way in which the Community reaches its decisions.

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the really good news this afternoon is that the way is now clear to go ahead with the enlargement of the Community, which must be in this country's best interests in the long term?

The assurances from the Commission on the health and safety articles are important. We should not have had to fight for them, because they should not have been introduced by mismanagement and device by the Commission. My right hon. Friend will have the full

[Sir Cranley Onslow]

support of the House in fighting against any repetition of the Commission's abuse in that way—support which he could not expect from the Opposition.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is entirely right about our commitment to enlargement and the importance of enlargement to the European Union, both in the short and the long term. He is equally right to say that we should not have had to fight for those concessions. It is our belief that the Commission misused the treaty-based article 118A, but the fact is that we did have to fight for them, we have fought for them, and we have achieved them.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Prime Minister not aware that the agreement that the Commission wanted, the Foreign Secretary supported, the Cabinet has accepted and the Prime Minister has announced makes it more and more likely that laws will be imposed on this country in Brussels, which will supersede British laws and will deny the British electors the right to determine the laws under which they are governed? Is the betrayal of this principle towards a federal Europe not a denial of the principle that no Parliament can commit its successor, and that the British people must have the right to vote for those who pass the laws under which they are governed?

The Prime Minister: I am not entirely sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not have been better employed directing that question at those on his own Front Bench, who would have, first, unquestionably accepted 27 and, secondly, abolished unanimity.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Will my right hon. Friend pause to reflect for a moment on the price of failure to agree? Would not a failure to enlarge or to protect minorities be disastrous? Away from the hothouse of this place, will it not be clear to everyone that this is the best agreement on offer?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. It was necessary to get enlargement and the extra protections to help minorities. By 1996, it will be apparent that a number of states will express concern at the present system and how qualified majority voting works. There is no proper equity between, for example, the populations of many of the countries and the votes that they can exercise in the Council of Ministers. That applies to the United Kingdom and other countries as well.

But if the actions of the European Union as a whole are to retain the support of the peoples of Europe, we shall have to look carefully at how we reach our decisions. That is what we have now agreed will happen, with a root and branch reform in 1996.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): The Prime Minister has conspicuously failed to convince 11 countries of the merits of his argument for 23 votes. Is he seriously suggesting that, during the next intergovernmental conference, he will be able to persuade 15 countries to turn back the clock and return to 23 votes?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the nature of the discussions. A number of the countries were prepared to continue on the present basis because they were aware that there was to be a significant examination of this matter in 1996. They will welcome the fact that it will now be more significant than they had previously imagined.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): In view of the increasing competition from Japan, the far east and the United States to every business throughout the European Union due to the success of the GATT round, is it not essential that, in the intergovernmental conference in 1996, agreement is reached so that votes more nearly accord with populations, and businesses throughout the community are not burdened with extra costs?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. There is no doubt that the excessive social burdens laid on many companies throughout the European Union are making their exports less competitive than they otherwise would be, and no longer competitive with similar companies in Japan, the United States and many countries in the Pacific basin. That is one of the reasons why we were not prepared to accept the social chapter. It is also why we believe that we must look at the changes in the voting system that I have outlined to the House today.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In the context of the transitional arrangements, will the Prime Minister explain how the Government will decide to use their votes at Council meetings in that interim period? For example, at the Fisheries Council to be held on 11 and 12 April, will there be qualified majority voting or the issue of unanimity, which is my understanding of the original treaty? Does he understand the concern within the fishing industry in Scotland that his only allies during these negotiations were the Spaniards, who want access to the North sea, and that that has been accelerated?

The Prime Minister: There is no change in the items dealt with either by unanimity or qualified majority voting under what has been agreed. The method of deciding—whether qualified majority vote or unanimity—is laid down in earlier treaties, such as the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty. That is not changed by anything decided in the past couple of days.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his robust stance in defence of minorities in Europe? However, given the statements that have emanated from Europe this morning that a reasonable delay would entail only a few months, that any concessions would apply only to the present Commission, and that we could not claw back in 1996 what we lose now, does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a well-founded concern that we have conceded the figure of 27? Will he therefore give an absolute assurance to the House that, if we do obtain 23 votes, we can delay indefinitely directives with which we disagree?

The Prime Minister: I think the remarks to which my hon. Friend refers may have come from one Foreign Minister. They do not reflect the view of the Heads of Government to whom I have spoken in recent days.

I have no doubt that we will be able to delay under 23—quite how long will depend on the nature of the discussion. What is clear is that the time limit set out by that Foreign Minister is ludicrously wrong. If we feel that a matter has not been properly developed, we can, first, take it to the European Court of Justice, which may well take more than several years to determine it. Secondly, we

can use the Luxembourg compromise. I give my hon. Friend the assurance that, if we feel it necessary, we shall take one or both of those actions, and we have made that clear to our partners.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): When I asked the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) how on earth the Government got themselves on this hook, he replied, "I am a very good angler indeed." Is not that at the heart of the matter? Is it not about time the Government started acting positively in Europe, with Europe, for Europe; is it not time they discussed, in full public court, the question of monetary union—instead of holding their discussions behind closed curtains, as they are now?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman would make common cause with my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford on his last point—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Nobody else does.

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I can better what my hon. Friend has said.

Sir Archibald Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): The principal objective of the Government's negotiations was the enlargement of the Community. If we had refused to reach any agreement, that enlargement would probably have unravelled, much to the satisfaction of a number of countries in the EC. I therefore congratulate my right hon. Friend on the compromise reached—in particular, on the agreement that the voting structure should be looked at in 1996. If we continue to expand the Community to take in the Visigrad countries, we could reach the point where the main contributors—Britain, France and Germany—were outvoted by the rest of the Community.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is entirely right. Unless there is reform, and if the mathematical formula followed through on this occasion were again followed on the next enlargement, France, Germany and the United Kingdom—three significant contributors to the Community—could be outvoted by qualified majority voting procedures. Clearly that would be absurd; it is one reason why I am confident that we will have a root and branch reform in 1996.

My right hon. Friend is equally right about the importance of enlargement to us and the Community. I think that it will increasingly change the nature of the Community for the better.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Given the contrast between the angry defiance of the Prime Minister last week and the surrender today, is it not understandable that virtually every Tory newspaper has been highly dismissive of the Prime Minister's conduct over this issue? The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has had the courage to say what many other Tory Members would undoubtedly say if they had his courage: it is time for the Prime Minister to go.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North is always ready with a quote, but I am not likely to be over-concerned about that.

As for the earlier, more substantive, concern expressed by the hon. Gentleman, we set out last week the fact that we needed some changes to protect minorities—changes to protect the position being abused under article 118A. We have obtained what we sought in that regard. We have also required and obtained a much wider root and branch reform of voting procedures in 1996. That is not surrender; it is obtaining what we set out to obtain in the negotiations some time ago.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is it not extraordinary cheek on the part of the leader of the Labour party to pour contempt on an honourable settlement, carefully negotiated? He would not even have tried to achieve such a negotiated outcome. Is not his cheek probably born of the fact that he has never been in a position to negotiate anything since the Labour party accepted our membership of the European Union?

The Prime Minister: I am not entirely sure that my hon. Friend is totally accurate about the right hon. and learned Gentleman's past. He may have had some part in seeking to negotiate devolution at some stage in the 1970s. If I recall correctly—and if not, of course I shall withdraw—he had a large responsibility in that, and it was not a notable success.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does not the whole affair reflect the fragility of the claimed protection of unanimity? Have not the arguments now descended from negotiation into the throwing around of mutual ultimatums, showing that the Community, far from being an organisation of co-operation, as time passes becomes one of coercion?

The Prime Minister: No, the hon. Gentleman is wrong about that. Nothing here affects unanimity or the national veto. We are still determined that that shall be retained, as are other countries. The only threat to unanimity comes from the fact that the Labour party is seeking qualified majority voting as the norm—which means, if it means anything, that a Labour Government, were there to be such a beast, would scrap unanimity and the national protection which that offers us.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is it not always in Europe jam tomorrow? We were told at the end of the Maastricht proceedings that there would be no further move towards federalism. We have suffered this defeat; we have seen our opt-out of the social chapter eroded; and we are now told that all will come right in 1996. Will not the British people at some stage say to their Government, "You must say no, and mean it"?

The Prime Minister: The enlargement is something of which my hon. Friend would approve. It is of significant interest and, in the terminology of my hon. Friend, jam today. The enlargement will be of significant importance to the future working of the Community, as will subsequent enlargements from the Visigrad countries and perhaps in due course from others.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Does the Prime Minister recall that his predecessor was so adept at undermining the European efforts of her Foreign Secretary that eventually Geoffrey Howe was forced to exclaim during his resignation speech that it was like going onto the cricket pitch to find that his bat had been broken by the team captain. On this occasion, would it not be more appropriate for the bat to be broken over the team captain's head?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend and I both propose to use the bat in Britain's interest, we shall have better use for it.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend make it absolutely clear, particularly to those outside the House, that this decision makes no alteration to our absolute veto on the most important issues, and that that will not be open for renegotiation in 1996? Does he also accept that, despite what many other people may say, he has the vast support of the majority of right hon. and hon. Members sitting behind him?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is entirely right to say that it makes no change whatever to the unanimity rule. As that is not understood by many people, and certainly not by many commentators who appear to have written about the matter recently, it is important that that message should be clearly understood in the House and beyond it.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Does the Prime Minister agree that talk of a veto is nonsense, and that his predecessor sold the pass on the British veto in 1985 with the Single European Act? Does he accept that it is all a big charade, and, because of internal divisions, he has turned Britain into a laughing stock throughout Europe?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman understands less than most of his hon. Friends. The veto still exists. Indeed, it was largely because it did exist that I was able to say no—as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said a moment ago—to the social chapter during the Maastricht negotiations. I was able to say no. The national veto stood behind me; had I not got that concession from our partners, I could have ceased to agree to the entire Maastricht treaty. The veto does exist; it is potent, it can be used, and I have used it.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I cautiously recognise the Commission's position on the remit of health and safety legislation and the social chapter, and welcome the fact that the thresholds can be renegotiated in 1996. Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that it is now more important than ever for a review of the scope of European legislation—and the amount of legislation that is dealt with through qualified majority voting—to be carried out between now and 1996, in line with the doctrine of subsidiarity that the Labour party so hypocritically opposed during the Maastricht treaty negotiations?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right in those ambitious thoughts. Indeed, that is beginning to happen. The amount of legislation from Europe has been halved over the past year to 18 months, and I thoroughly welcome that: such a reduction is long overdue, and it has now been obtained.

As my hon. Friend will also know, under the subsidiarity provisions of the Maastricht treaty, the equivalent of 25 per cent. of Community legislation either has been repealed or is being revised.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): How does today's obvious climbdown—coupled with the miserable failure of Britain's negotiating position over the reform of qualified majority voting—serve to advance the Prime Minister's oft-stated policy of putting Britain at the heart of Europe?

The Prime Minister: We seek, in this and in other matters, to influence what happens in the European Community in the direction that we think is right. We have done that very successfully with the enlargement procedure; we have done it very successfully with the reduction of legislation; we have done it very successfully with the subsidiarity provisions; and we have done it very successfully in other areas as well. As a number of my hon. Friends have said, that requires us from time to time to dissent from what happens to be the prevailing majority view in the European Union.

There is nothing anti-European about doing that. It is also the case that other nations—the French, the Germans, the Spanish, whoever it may be—dissent from time to time from aspects of European Union legislation. It is right that they should do so, because only through arguments and discussions of that sort can a proper consensus be reached.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Just to dispel any residual doubts, will my right hon. Friend spell out unequivocally those points of principle on which, in the national interest, Her Majesty's Government are prepared to stand, courageously and consistently, in our relations with the European Community?

The Prime Minister: We have made perfectly clear, over a long period, the areas that are of particular principle to us. The fact that we were not prepared to accept the social charter, for no other reason than that it would make it more difficult for companies in this country to sell their goods and maintain jobs, is a matter of principle for us; similarly, the maintenance of the national veto is a matter of principle for us. We also seek to make changes to the system of qualified majority voting. Some we have obtained on this occasion; for others we have laid down a marker in 1996. Those and other areas are matters of great importance to us.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Does the Prime Minister believe that we have more friends and allies in Europe as a result of this diplomatic disaster? Does he think that we shall have more friends and allies in 1996 as a result of what has happened? Has the Prime Minister learnt at least one thing from this debacle—that any attempt to found British European policy on the internal interests of the Conservative party will end badly, and will deserve to?

The Prime Minister: I will tell the hon. Gentleman one thing that we have certainly learnt. We have learnt that we have obtained concessions in this negotiation that we would not have obtained if we had followed the Labour party's advice and just lamely said yes to 27.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to remind the country that the fight that he has put up for its interests is in complete contrast to that of the Opposition party? That party would have not only watered down the whole concept of QMV, but abandoned our national veto. Is that not the dividing line between the parties on Europe, and will it not be the issue that the country will need to see as part of the European elections?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that—except that, with his characteristic generosity, he neglected to mention that the Liberal party has precisely the same policies as the Labour party.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We shall now move to the next business.

Stray Dogs

4.14 pm

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to allow local authorities to permanently identify a stray dog before returning it to its owner; and for connected purposes.

The Bill addresses one of the most common problems in Britain's cities—the problem of stray dogs—and seeks to give local authorities assistance in dealing with it.

The House is well aware that Britain is a nation of dog lovers. Over one in four households have a dog. As *The Times* revealed last week, there are 7.3 million dogs in Britain, which represents an increase of almost 2 million in 12 years. For most people the dog is a treasured member of the family. They care for it, give it exercise and do not allow it to stray or be a nuisance to others. Most dog owners recognise that the freedom to own a dog involves responsibility to that dog and to their neighbours.

Unfortunately, there are those who do not accept their responsibilities, and who allow their dog to stray and become a nuisance to others. We all know that a stray dog may cause road accidents, may foul indiscriminately and, with other dogs, may become a menace to other people, causing fear and alarm.

The experience of my local authority, Bristol city council, is that the majority of stray dogs are what could be described as "latch-key" strays—dogs that are let out of the house to wander and return home later. In response, Bristol city council has an excellent dog warden scheme, dealing efficiently with strays. The wardens are dedicated to the welfare of the dogs and work closely with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to find homes for dogs whose owners do not wish to have them back.

Unfortunately, some of the dogs cannot be found new homes, and inevitably have to be destroyed. Many of the owners who adopt this casual attitude to their dog will no doubt acquire a new dog, which may well suffer the same fate.

In 1991-92, Bristol handled more than 1,800 stray dogs. It costs Bristol over £9 per day to kennel each of the dogs, which, by law, have to be kept for at least seven days. An unclaimed dog costs the council tax payers of Bristol up to £70 in kennelling costs, and a further £10 if the dog has to be destroyed. In 1991-92, more than 450 dogs were not claimed by their owners, costing Bristol council tax payers an estimated £31,500. Some authorities are destroying more than 1,000 dogs each year.

As anyone can see, dealing with strays is a costly business, and most authorities are not given the power to tackle the problem more effectively. Bristol city council encourages owners to have their dogs permanently identified. It is a sort of vaccination against loss, and is as painless as any other injection a dog will receive. It places a small microchip under the skin at the back of the dog's neck. The chip can be read by a hand-held reader carried by a dog warden, an RSPCA inspector and some police officers. The individual number given to each dog can be used to trace, by a simple telephone call, the name and address of the owner.

Bristol city council microchippped more than 800 dogs in the past year alone. It has increased the number of dogs that can be returned to their owners within hours, and sometimes within minutes, of being found. A dog returned

[Ms Jean Corston]

to its owner on the day it is found saves dog wardens precious time, and the council and the council tax payer considerable sums of money. Furthermore, a council that finds a dog whose owner does not want it back will get the owner to sign over ownership of the dog to the council, allowing it to be rehoused without having to be kept in kennels for seven days.

The Bill merely allows authorities such as Bristol, which handles large numbers of stray dogs each year, permanently to identify a stray dog before it is returned to its owner. Although the law requires dogs to wear a collar and tag when in a public place, in reality most strays do not have a collar and tag. Unlike a collar and tag, a microchip cannot get lost.

The Bill is not a dog registration Bill. It does not require compulsory registration for all dog owners. But it does give the authority the option of targeting the offending owners and ensuring that their dog, which has been allowed to stray, carries permanent identification.

Furthermore, many of Britain's councils will not have a significant stray dog problem, and will not require to take such steps; but I believe that local authorities throughout Britain will increasingly use this simple procedure to reduce the stray dog population and save precious public money. Already, between 1992 and 1993—just one year—Bristol has seen a decline in its strays of more than 400, which represents a fall of 20 per cent. This has been achieved by persuading owners to have their dogs permanently identified. The number of stray dogs being kennelled will fall even further if the Government allow the Bill to become law.

Finally, the Bill does not affect the responsible dog owner. It will not add to the burden of local authorities or the taxpayer in general; nor will the Bill place an extra duty on any local authority. It will merely add a valuable option for local councils to tackle a problem that is visible daily on our streets and in our neighbourhoods. The Bill is better for the welfare of the dog, better for people, better for children in parks and playgrounds, better for our urban environment, and much better for the taxpayer. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Ms Jean Corston, Ms Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. Tony Banks, Mrs. Ann Winterton, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Bill Etherington, Mr. Roger Berry and Mrs. Bridget Prentice.

STRAY DOGS

Ms Jean Corston accordingly presented a Bill to allow local authorities to permanently identify a stray dog before returning it to its owner; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 13 May, and to be printed. [Bill 82.]

London Transport (Funding)

4.22 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. At 12.30 pm today, the Secretary of State for Transport announced a major U-turn in the Government's policy with regard to funding for London Transport. Knowing how you deprecate such statements being made outside this House, and in the knowledge that the Minister for Public Transport is sitting on the Front Bench, would it perhaps be in order for me to ask the Minister a question about why this statement came when it did and precisely what is being promised in this announcement?

Madam Speaker: I am afraid that I cannot allow the hon. Lady to do that—it has to be a point of order to me and not to a Minister. However, obviously those on the Treasury Bench have heard what the hon. Lady has had to say. I have had no notification that a statement is to be made about that matter.

Business of the House

4.22 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That, at this day's sitting, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to Rating and Valuation not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; and

(2) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Sir Fergus Montgomery relating to Northern Ireland Affairs not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments to the said Motion which she may have selected and which may then be moved; notwithstanding the practice of the House the said Motion shall be regarded as a single Motion:

and the above proceedings may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.

The purpose of the motion is, I think, clear and can be stated briefly. The first half of the motion provides for the motion on rating and valuation in the name of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to be debated for up to one and a half hours, in the same way as if it were being discussed after 10 o'clock, and for the Question then to be put.

The second half of the motion similarly provides for up to one and a half hours' debate on the motion in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery), Chairman of the Committee of Selection, to determine the membership of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee—together, of course, with any amendments that may be selected. The Question would then be put on any amendments that are moved and then on the motion, or the amended motion, as a whole.

In other words, Madam Speaker, these are simple, sensible and straightforward proposals to enable the House to discuss and decide these matters in a way which I judge will be for the general convenience of hon. Members, and I commend the motion to the House.

4.23 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I do not agree in any way with the Leader of the House in his summation of the motion. As we shall be dealing later with matters concerning democracy in Northern Ireland, I am sure that the House will join me in sending our good wishes to Councillor John Fee of Crossmaglen, who suffered an appalling beating at the hands of republicans. He is the spokesman for democracy in Crossmaglen and the people of Crossmaglen have shown their support for him by putting him at the head of the poll on every occasion. He is their representative, not the people who so seriously battered him. We wish him well for a speedy recovery.

The Government's decision to allow only an hour and a half on each of these two important matters is a purely political manoeuvre which in no way reflects the seriousness of the issues to be debated. It is part of a general policy that has been followed by the Government to force through legislation without any debate or critical assessment of the Government's policies. The Government are therefore maintaining the same cavalier attitude towards the parliamentary process as they showed during the passage of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1994, which they guillotined to prevent proper debate. The decision to limit debate on the Railways (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order is yet another example of that policy.

The order is an emergency provision which will come into operation on 1 April without any proper discussion. There has been no time to consult the interested parties, despite the long-term significance of the order. The increased rateable costs which the order will introduce will inevitably be passed on to the consumer, or the passenger on the train, thus adding to the increased costs of transport which will inevitably follow the Government's ill-fated and badly designed proposals for the future of British Rail.

The establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee is not simply a procedural parliamentary decision—it has major political ramifications. Therefore, discussion of the composition of such a Committee needs more time than has been allotted. Further detailed discussion on the proposed composition of the Committee is vital and we object strongly to the severely limited time allotted to the matter.

Mr. Newton: As I said, had the Railways (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order been debated at the more usual time for such orders—quite late at night—it would have been debated for only an hour and a half. Also, it would have been debated at night rather than at this more sensible hour. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to acknowledge that if the Committee of Selection motion had been dealt with at the usual time—after 10 pm—it would have been debated for only one hour. I am, therefore, allocating more time.

Mr. McNamara: We must ask why is the Government's business so thin today that they are allocating more time? This almost Pauline conversion and generosity in allowing an entire half hour to the Opposition is without precedent. Nevertheless, whether we have an hour or an hour and a half, neither is sufficient to discuss the important ramifications of the proposed appointments to this important new Select Committee.

In the debate on the establishment of the Northern Ireland Select Committee, the Leader of the House asserted that, in the past, when considering their attitude towards the creation of the Northern Ireland Select Committee, the Government had taken account

"of all the relevant political considerations in Northern Ireland."
—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 340.]

When we examine the appointments to that Committee, we need further debate to discover the relevant political considerations behind the Government's decision to support the creation of the Northern Ireland Select Committee and to propose a composition that is patently unrepresentative.

To understand the political considerations, it is necessary to examine thoroughly the context in which the Select Committee was proposed. It would not be in order for me to do so in full, nor do I have the time, but it would be correct to examine the salient points that have governed the decision to appoint the Select Committee and which also govern its composition.

The creation of a Northern Ireland Select Committee has a significant symbolic importance that has been acknowledged by all parties represented in the House. The Ulster Unionist party is particularly aware of the symbolic value of such a Committee. In its press briefings, the Ulster Unionist party argued that, although the Committee will bring administrative benefits,

"the symbolic effects will be more immediate. This will be the first positively unionist move by the British Government since our parliamentary representation was increased in 1979."

That is the Committee's significance and it is why its composition is so important. It has very little to do with the need for proper scrutiny and more to do with the restoration of Stormont.

The Ulster Unionists identify the Northern Ireland Select Committee with the failed Stormont regime of the past. Their briefing states:

"The Northern Ireland Select Committee will probably want to sit regularly in Belfast. When we see a group of familiar parliamentarians again in Stormont with their doings reported in the local media, then Ulster folk will see something useful and purposeful in local politics . . . And this useful and purposeful achievement has been the result of Unionist pressure."

That is why we should have been given more time to consider the composition of the Committee.

A question remains over exactly what pressure was put on the Government to concede to a Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee, despite the objections of representatives of the minority community in Northern Ireland, and to concede to a Select Committee whose composition is wholly unacceptable to the Labour party and to the SDLP. That is why we need more time to consider the terms of appointment of the membership of that Committee.

In the past, the Government have accepted that a Northern Ireland Select Committee should be established only on the basis of broad cross-community support because of its symbolic significance. The Government recommended against the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee in 1990, leaving the House to conclude that, due to the sensitivity of the talks process, there should be no alteration to the status quo. Having tabled the motion to establish the Committee, the Government are now prepared to go into the Lobby—

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: In a moment. The Government are prepared to go into the Lobby to support a gerrymandered new Committee.

Mr. Peter Robinson: I follow the hon. Gentleman's argument to the extent that it appears to him that some deal has resulted in the formation of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. What I cannot understand is how that would reflect his view of what the composition of a House of Commons Select Committee should be.

Mr. McNamara: That is my exact point. We objected to the Committee as such, we were defeated on that and the House came to a decision. We are now looking to the way in which the composition of the Committee will be decided. That will be decided by a subsequent motion, for which we have only an hour and a half's debate. What I am arguing is that we must consider the political reasons that have led to those particular people being appointed to the Committee. Hence, it is our argument that we should have longer than an hour and a half and that we should oppose the Government's imposition of that time limit, despite their unbounded and unprecedented generosity of giving us an extra half hour.

The Government have not been prepared to explain their own radical change in policy. They are now prepared to ignore the forcefully expressed wishes of one section of the community. That unscrupulous betrayal of an often-pronounced principle has helped to undermine trust felt towards the Government in Ireland and underpin the continuing distrust which is gradually being felt by both communities. That sense of betrayal is only heightened by the knowledge that the Government chose to override their principled stance for the sake of the squalid deal that they have made. The deal has nothing to do with securing peace in Northern Ireland and everything to do with the Government's narrow and unstable majority in the House. That is also why they have decided to gerrymander the composition of the Committee and why we should have more time to discuss it.

The Government have allowed their actions to be dictated not by a long-term strategy to secure political settlement in Northern Ireland, but by the need to maintain their so-called understanding with the Ulster Unionist party. The Government are allowing short-term political expediency to take precedence over the peace process; we should examine the nature of the proposals that they are making for the membership of the Select Committee and have more time so to do.

The Government are casting doubt over their assertion that Britain has no long-term strategic or economic interest in Ireland. They are calling into question the whole basis of their policy because they now have a selfish political interest in Northern Ireland—being able to maintain their majority.

During Northern Ireland questions on 17 March the Secretary of State claimed that there was "no question of decoupling" strand 1 from strands 2 and 3 of the talks process that had taken place. Yet that is precisely what the Government have done by unilaterally establishing a Northern Ireland Select Committee with such an unbalanced representation. We shall discuss that matter later, and that is another reason why we need extra time.

Under the framework for the inter-party talks agreed in 1991, strand 1 covers measures affecting the institutional arrangements governing Northern Ireland. The establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee clearly came under strand 1, so its composition, too, would come under strand 1. By withdrawing the arrangements for a Northern Ireland Select Committee from the ambit of inter-party talks, the Government themselves are unravelling the strands agreed by the British and Irish Governments and by all the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. Therefore, we need extra time to discuss the principles behind the appointments.

The Government have also undermined the principle on which the talks were based—"nothing is agreed until everything is agreed." During Northern Ireland questions the Secretary of State said:

> "Whether the parties in the resumed talks wish to maintain that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed is a matter for them. That is not a matter on which I can lay down a rule."—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 998.]

That is a strange position for the British Government to adopt, given that they were a party to the original framework agreed in 1991, and given that we assume that they will still be a party to any future inter-party talks.

If that matter is to be left purely to the parties, it means that the Government are acquiescing in an unravelling of the situation. Apparently, the British Government are relinquishing all responsibility for the future structure of the talks. That would affect the composition of the Committee, because it would be within its ambit to examine those proposals. Therefore, we need more time to discuss its membership. The Government's attitude is irresponsible, because it has the potential to hinder progress towards an agreed political settlement.

The Government appear to wish to surround themselves in a fog of uncertainty. As I said during the debate on the motion to establish a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs, the Government have two agendas—one to secure their majority in the House of Commons by keeping their right wing and the Ulster Unionists on board, and the other to keep alive the peace process based on the Downing street declaration.

Obviously, that matter will come within the ambit of the discussions in the Select Committee. The membership of the Committee must be of importance when such a fundamental matter is to be discussed, so we should have more time to discuss that membership later today.

The establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee is part of the agenda for maintaining Ulster Unionist backing. However, the Government's second agenda, for the peace process, is causing some conflict with the Unionist party. There appears to be some disagreement between the Secretary of State and the followers of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, over the current status of bilateral talks taking place between that party and the Minister of State.

Doubtless that would be reflected in the attitude that might be taken by the members of a new Select Committee, were it to be appointed and were we to have more time to discuss its composition. We hear the Secretary of State saying that the tripartite talks, with the three strands, are still taking place, but the Ulster Unionist party says that it is not part of that set of talks. It considers the present talks to be bilateral only, between the Secretary of State and the different parties, including itself. Others say that because

the Minister of State is advising the Government of the Republic of what is taking place in the bilateral talks, the three strands still exist.

The questions arise: are the Ulster Unionists in the three strands or are they not, and is what the Secretary of State says accurate? That fog cannot help in the search for a solution and we may find it replicated or even made thicker by the representation of hon. Members who will apparently be on the Select Committee. Therefore, we should have more time to discuss that representation.

The Secretary of State stands accused, in yesterday's *Belfast Telegraph*, of misrepresenting the position of the Ulster Unionist party. The Secretary of State is reported to have caused offence because of his claim that, since the talks with the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram)—the Minister of State—are continuing on the same basis as before, the Ulster Unionist party is still discussing the three strands. That would be a positive development. The Labour party maintains its support for the inter-party talks. If we had more representatives on the Select Committee—a matter which we shall be discussing later—and if we had more time, we should argue that the talks should continue. However, the development would also be a surprising one given that the leader of the Ulster Unionist party has condemned the

"circus format of the previous talks process".

The right hon. Gentleman's reference to "the previous talks process" suggests that he regards the talks as being over.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for Government clarification. The clarification should come in today's debate on the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, as, presumably, the position of the Ulster Unionist party was one of the political considerations that Government took into account when they decided to table a motion to establish a Northern Ireland Select Committee and to support the inclusion of the hon. Members whose names appear on today's Order Paper. By opposing this motion, we are asking for more discussion of the membership.

All those factors behind the decision to back the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee and the Committee's proposed composition should properly be debated and examined in today's debate. This is why the Opposition object to the Government's provision of only an hour and a half.

There is absolutely no agreement on the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee and, as is shown by the Order Paper, there is certainly no agreement on the Committee's composition. Yet the Government are attempting to deny the House sufficient time even to debate the question of composition.

The proposed composition of the Northern Ireland Select Committee is still further proof of the Government's duplicity. While claiming to want equality, they have allotted representatives of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland just one seat on the Committee. This is an example of gerrymandering at its worst. They have allotted the Labour party only two seats—a gross distortion of parliamentary procedure, as there are 270 Labour Members of Parliament. The Labour party is demanding more time for today's debate because of the wide-ranging implications of the proposed composition of the Northern Ireland Select Committee.

In considering a matter as important as the composition of a Select Committee and the amount of time that should be provided, the Government have a responsibility to the peoples of these islands to secure a just and lasting political settlement for Ireland—a settlement that has the agreement and support of the people of Ireland. The Government should not jeopardise such an important objective by establishing a Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee with a wholly biased composition, purely and simply at the whim of one of the parties to the talks, in a desperate effort to shore up an increasingly shaky Government with an increasingly shaky position on the Floor of the House.

For those reasons, we oppose the motion.

4.42 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): It was not my intention to speak, but I should like to clear up two points.

It appears to have been suggested that the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee is being appointed contrary to the advice of the Procedure Committee. If that is the implication I must make it absolutely clear that the Procedure Committee, in its report of 1990, said quite clearly that it would not be possible to go on for ever refusing to appoint a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. That, the Procedure Committee said, would have to come, but it would be up to the Government, having particular regard to the evidence from the Secretary of State of the day, to decide the proper time. When we reconsidered the matter we altered not one jot or tittle of the report. In other words, exactly the same recommendation stood in 1993.

With regard to numbers, the Procedure Committee made it clear that all the political parties in Northern Ireland should be represented. I understand that to be what is happening. Somewhat strangely, the Government are not demanding a majority on the Committee. The latter aspect is slightly unusual in respect of Select Committees of this nature.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The right hon. Gentleman said that all the political parties in Northern Ireland will be represented. Will he, for the benefit of the House, enumerate the political parties from Northern Ireland that will be represented?

Sir Peter Emery: Let me correct myself: the report said that all the political parties represented in the House should be represented on the Select Committee. That is what is happening.

In normal circumstances, there would have been no means of objecting procedurally to the length of debate. If the Government had tabled the matter for discussion after 10 o'clock the debate could have lasted only an hour, and the Opposition could not have objected. In fact, the 20-minute speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) is a gift of the Government, and the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will still have an extra 50 per cent. in the actual debate. Thus, the suggestion that this is a case of Government gerrymandering is an exaggeration and indicates a slight misunderstanding. I cannot see that there are any grounds for such an implication.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The right hon. Gentleman has made two points that I should like to take up.

First, he said that it is an exception to the rule for the Government to relinquish their majority on a Select Committee and to provide representation for each Northern Ireland political party. I suggested to the Committee of Selection that the Government could keep their majority by

[Mr. Don Dixon]

taking seven seats and giving two to the Labour party and one to each of the Northern Ireland political parties. However, as the Government had done a deal with the Ulster Unionists at the time of the debate on the Maastricht treaty, they were afraid to give them fewer than two seats.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman said that the Government are being very generous by allowing this debate. The Government's conscience must have pricked them, as they tabled the motion before the Select Committee's decision. It seems to me that they felt self-conscious and guilty because of their attempts to gerrymander the Committee. Incidentally, the recommendation of the Committee of Selection was adopted on the basis of a majority Conservative vote.

Sir Peter Emery: As the Deputy Chief Whip knows only too well, I do not know what goes on in the Committee of Selection; nor can I be expected to. Indeed, I understand that such matters are normally confidential.

Mr. Dixon: It was forced through.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. It is not in order, in the debate on this motion, to discuss what happened in the Committee of Selection.

Sir Peter Emery: I understand that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was led astray by the Labour Party's Deputy Chief Whip—something I shall resist doing in future.

The Labour party is laying a false trail and the sooner we get on with the business that should be before the House the better.

4.48 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): It is quite obvious to all those hon. Members present today and to all those who attended the debate on 9 March that the Government have not provided adequate time for discussion of the various ramifications of the motion concerning the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. The pretence that this is exclusively a procedural matter is being perpetuated. It is, of course, a procedural matter, but that is almost incidental to the Government's attitude to and policy on the Select Committee. The Government have made a major political decision. But we have also seen an about-turn and a betrayal of the statements and undertakings of successive representatives of the Government over a number of years. In that context, the Government's integrity has been brought entirely into question, certainly in the eyes of the people in Northern Ireland whom we represent. The Government continue to affirm that both communities must give support before the matter is brought forward, so the Government lack integrity in that respect.

The Government also broke the integrity of the inter-party talks, which were based on a delicate and long-negotiated agreement dated 26 March 1991. That agreement stated that all matters could be put on the table and discussed, and matters relating to relationships in Northern Ireland, relationships between north and south and relationships between Northern Ireland and Westminster would be discussed in detail. The Government made a decision unilaterally without consulting my party—I do not know about the other parties—on an item that was on the agenda for the inter-party talks. Their integrity in that respect has gone by the board. This is not a procedural matter; a major political decision has been made. The Government have brought before the House a shameful and treacherous decision.

The Government have betrayed their commitment under article 4 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which says:

"in relation to matters coming within its field of activity, the Conference"—

the Anglo-Irish conference—

"shall be a framework within which the Irish Government and the United Kingdom Government shall work together

(i) for the accommodation of the rights and identities of the two traditions which exist in Northern Ireland; and

(ii) for peace, stability and prosperity throughout the island of Ireland by promoting reconciliation, respect for human rights, co-operation against terrorism and the development of economic, social and cultural co-operation."

The two-tradition approach has been abandoned totally in the approach taken today.

On several occasions over the past couple of years, the Secretary of State and the Lord President of the Council have referred to the need for cross-community and cross-electoral support for the parties represented in the House; indeed, as late as 1 December 1993, the Procedure Committee, in its report for the 1993-94 Session, stated:

"It should be remembered that the only reason given by the Procedure Committee in 1978 for its decision not to recommend the creation of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs was the continuing uncertainty over the future constitutional arrangements for the Province".

That still pertains today. The argument is still valid, yet it has been totally rejected in the business before the House both on 9 March and this evening.

A letter dated 2 December 1993—if I may read from the Committee's journal—says:

"Thank you for your letter about the Procedure Committee and the possible Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. Your letter was drawn to the attention of the Committee at its meeting yesterday.

As you will see from the Report the Committee subsequently agreed, we were not concerned with the issue whether a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs should be established now. We dealt solely with the updating of our 1990 report in respect of the possible composition of such a Committee.

Ultimately it will be for the House to decide whether to amend the Standing Orders, appoint a Select Committee and to nominate its Members."

A few days before the announcement in the House on 16 December, assurances were given regarding the necessity for inter-community support and cross-party support in the House.

On not one occasion during the whole process—the establishment of the Committee, the nominations, the decisions about the detail—has my party been consulted. Not once have we been consulted about the times at which meetings would take place. I do not know whether this is a procedure that could be the subject of a point of order but that is the fact of the case. There was supposed to be cross-party support in the House, but we were not even asked about the matter, never mind being invited to give an opinion on it. *[Interruption.]* I am prepared to take interventions if that is what hon. Members behind me want. However, if they do not want to intervene formally, I shall be obliged if they will keep quiet.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said no later than 11 November 1992 that such a proposal

"would have the support of the broad community in Northern Ireland".—[*Official Report*, 11 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 892.]

It does not. On 10 February 1993, the same statement was made by the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, who

referred to the need to examine the extent of support from elected representatives from both sides of the community in Northern Ireland. No such support exists. On 22 July 1993, the Secretary of State referred again to the

"extent of support from elected representatives from both sides of the community in Northern Ireland".

That consent does not exist.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is putting forward the pros and cons for the Select Committee, which is not the subject of the motion before the House. The Select Committee has been established and the question before the House is whether sufficient time has been allowed for debate. That is the issue.

Mr. McGrady: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your direction in the matter. I was following the lead given by previous speakers. My points illustrate—I have only touched on them—that more time is required to delve into the issues that I have raised. That is why I am stating those issues: we have not had the opportunity to make our points. You may not recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I do not think that you were in the Chair at the time—that, on 9 March, when the motion relating to the appointment of the Select Committee was introduced, hon. Members who have taken a constant interest in Northern Ireland affairs did not get an opportunity to speak. As the sole representative on that night of the nationalist people of Northern Ireland, I had only a few minutes in which to make my points on the matter.

Mr. Mallon: I appreciate the points that have been made about the time factor. I wonder how much time was spent on researching the designation of political parties in the north of Ireland. I have been active in Northern Ireland politics for the past 25 years and I recognise why someone from the DUP, the UUP or the SDLP would be appointed, but I fail to understand why others have been appointed. I simply want clarification of the basis of the political party—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is anticipating a debate later this evening in which he may well catch my eye.

Mr. McGrady: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) for his intervention, the subject of which will be dealt with again in the debate later this evening. My hon. Friend makes the valuable point that consultation of the elected parties in the House did not take place. That is categorically correct; consultation did not take place. Whether consultation should have taken place is a moot point and a matter of opinion.

The point that I have been making is that a series of important issues is at stake. Today and on 9 March, the Government tried to present their case as though this were merely a procedural matter—I do not mean that in any insulting way—and a technical matter for the House to address. It is not a technical matter—and the Government's activities and statements clearly show that they do not consider it to be a technical matter. Even the timing of the announcement—24 hours after the Downing street declaration on 16 December, the Leader of the House said that the establishment of a Select Committee had been agreed—was obviously a political statement whose intention it was to buy political loyalties. It had nothing at all to do with the needs and requirements of Northern Ireland. Going back to the needs and requirements of the parties in Northern Ireland, one should look at what the leader of the official Unionist party said about—[HON. MEMBERS: "The Ulster Unionist party"]—I take that correction. The names of political parties in Northern Ireland are apt to change depending on the venue and on the order in which the members wish to speak. I will leave it at that for the moment.

The modest demands of the UUP were for less of a procedural arrangement than that which we have now. That party said that it wanted the existing Select Committees to deal with departmental matters for Northern Ireland, as they do here; there were only one or two issues—security and, believe it or not, the Anglo-Irish Agreement—which it would be useful for the Select Committee to debate.

I believe that the point has been made. On your direction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not refer to percentages or numbers in connection with the appointments until the later debate, but they again show that there has been a lack of integrity on the part of the Government. They have not dealt even-handedly with the communities in Northern Ireland, as they have consistently alleged in statements made during the past two or three years they wanted to do . The integrity of the Government among the community that I represent is at an all-time low.

5.1 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): You properly instructed the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the matter that we must consider is whether 90 minutes is a sufficient length of time to discuss the motion concerning the membership of the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs later this evening.

I suppose that, if any political party in the House had a right to complain that 90 minutes was not sufficient, it would be my party. On 9 March, the two previous complainers in the debate so far—the Labour party's spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), and the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady)—took 19 minutes and 11 minutes respectively to speak during the debate. *[Interruption.]* Yes, 11 minutes. Hon. Members should look at *Hansard*. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) was given only two minutes at the tail-end of the debate.The Democratic Unionist party is entitled to have the opportunity to speak, and I hope that we will be able to catch your eye later this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and perhaps do a little better than the two minutes which we had on the previous occasion.

The issue is whether there will be sufficient time later this evening. I was delighted to hear the logic of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, who now clearly believes that it is essential to have a better airing of Northern Ireland affairs in the House and that one and a half hour debates are not adequate. I suggest that that is an implied criticism of the Order in Council procedure that operates for Northern Ireland affairs. I trust that we can look forward to the hon. Gentleman's support on the matter of having Northern Ireland business dealt with fully by way of Bills in the House.

Mr. McNamara: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is disgraceful that great, fat pieces of legislation that are really Bills should be dealt with by the Order in Council procedure. I put it to the hon. Gentleman, his hon. Friends

[Mr. McNamara]

and the Ulster Unionist party that the remedy lies in their own hands—in an agreed devolved government for Northern Ireland with a strong Irish dimension contained therein. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough on that.

Mr. Peter Robinson: As you have ruled the hon. Gentleman out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot reply and state that there was of course agreement between the parties in favour of a devolved assembly in Northern Ireland but that the Social Democratic and Labour party backed out of it.

It is important to Northern Ireland that there should be a Select Committee to deal with Northern Ireland business. I do not believe that it is to the merit of the House that that should be delayed. Both the previous speakers argued that there are political implications—indeed, that the prime issue is political rather than procedural. I contend that it is only political in their minds because they do not want anything to occur in relation to Northern Ireland that stops it moving increasingly towards Dublin rule. They would seek to oppose anything that is not consistent with a continued momentum towards Dublin.

Everyone knows that every Department has a Select Committee which looks at its work and can quite properly call the Minister responsible to account. A Select Committee can also bring the civil service to account, particularly in Northern Ireland where there is less accountability than elsewhere. Nowhere is it more important than in respect of the Northern Ireland Office that we should have such a procedure of the House. The key issue is therefore procedural rather than political. The argument that more time should be devoted to the consideration of political issues attendant on the motion is not well founded.

I am delighted that even the hon. Gentleman who most strongly opposed the setting up of the Select Committee —the hon. Member for South Down—has now decided to join in; he clearly recognises that the Committee is not so political as to constitute a bar on his membership of it, and he wants to be a part of the process whereby Northern Ireland business is scrutinised.The hon. Gentleman need not say that members of his party are not boycotters, because they have been boycotters in the past. They boycotted the Stormont Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1982. I am glad that they are not boycotting on this occasion and that they recognise the validity of having a Committee that deals with the Northern Ireland Office and can look into matters dealt with by Northern Ireland Ministers.

If there was an argument that more time was needed because the matter had somehow jumped out of the woodwork—that it was a surprise issue whose ramifications hon. Members had not had adequate time to consider —the House would have had to consider seriously whether more time was necessary. However, it is not a new issue. It has been considered and debated on many platforms, including in this House, over a long period. It was, of course, most recently discussed in some considerable detail by the Procedure Committee and by the Committee of Selection. The matter has had a considerable airing, which suggests that no more time is needed on this occasion to determine its membership.

The Labour party would be on very weak ground if it argued that the Labour membership should be substantially increased, considering that the Labour party has not shown sufficient interest in Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom to set up in Northern Ireland. It seems content to rely on the representation of the SDLP, which it sees as its sister in the battle in Northern Ireland. The Labour party should be content that the SDLP will be represented on the Committee and will be capable of representing that interest. If that is the contention offered by the Labour party for having more time to discuss the matter, it seems to me to be false.

The other argument advanced by those on the Labour Front Bench is that some sordid backroom deal between the Government and the Ulster Unionist party has resulted in the establishment of a Select Committee. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North quoted a press statement from the Glengall street camp that referred to the first Unionist step for many years. That set me thinking about what might be considered the last Unionist step. I suppose that it must have been the increase in the number of hon. Members representing Northern Ireland here. I wonder which party proposed that in this House. Of course, the hon. Gentleman's party supported that Unionist step. What were the circumstances in which it did so? I recall that it was looking for larger numbers to go through the Lobby. Now it has the audacity to point its finger at someone who has been trained in its school, who copies its practices, who does exactly the same as it did in the past and will willingly do in the future.

Mr. McNamara: First, as the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) will recall, I voted against that policy for precisely the same reason that I oppose what is happening today. Secondly, when it came to the vote of confidence, the result of that deal was that the majority of the Ulster Unionists went into the Lobby with the Conservative party and turfed out the Labour Government. That might yet happen to the Conservative Government.

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman can live in hope. We shall see whether that occurs.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I happened to be a party to that situation. The UUUC, as it was called, never undertook to vote for the Labour party to keep it in power in a vote of confidence.

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend has been heard and I am happy to endorse his views.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): If the hon. Gentleman does not remember, perhaps his colleague the hon. Member for Antrim, North will confirm that the Labour party was betrayed on that occasion by its sister party, the Social Democratic and Labour party and by the republican whom it brought over from Fermanagh to vote for it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I was here, too, but that that matter is not relevant to this debate.

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North attempted to attach relevance to what he considered to be the deal between the Ulster Unionist party and the Government by saying that that party was in some

way being rewarded by being given additional members and that additional time was therefore required to sort out why it should have two members instead of one.

Mr. Mallon: Surely, the remark made by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) points to the wisdom of the decision. The personnel within the Social Democratic and Labour party changed as a result of the increase in the numbers. He and members of the Committee of Selection spent an enormous amount of time properly researching the proposed Select Committee. Can the hon. Gentleman inform the House, from his own investigations, which parties represent the north of Ireland in this House?

Mr. Robinson: I shall not deal with Donegal and the rest of the north of Ireland, but if we are referring to Northern Ireland, which is an integral part of the United Kingdom, the parties in this House are the Ulster Unionist party, which sits behind the hon. Gentleman; his own party, the SDLP; the Ulster Democratic Unionist party; and the one in which he is most interested, the Ulster Popular Unionist party, whose chairman, president and Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder), is chairing a meeting of the Standing Committee on the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. It is altogether proper for the official Unionist party to have two seats. The UUP has nine Members in this House, and the SDLP has four, it would seem proper—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That debate is to come and the hon. Gentleman said that he was hoping to catch my eye. He should not anticipate that debate now.

Mr. Robinson: I was not attempting to build some insurance into the system by getting the matter off my chest now. Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was simply saying that we no longer need additional time to discuss these matters because the Select Committee has properly and proportionately allocated the seats to Northern Ireland parties and therefore that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) can be content that the task has been done well and additional time is not required to consider it.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government are trying to straitjacket Parliament by limiting debate to one and a half hours for each item, which is artificial and unnecessary? The exchanges on this issue demonstrate that it would have been preferable if a business motion had not been tabled so that we could have first debated rating and valuation and then launched into the debate on the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. That debate could have been extensive and lasted far more than one and a half hours.

Mr. Robinson: I would be the last person to try to limit the length of debate in the House. I judge only that the Government must have considered that some Opposition Members would table a series of amendments to try to change each member of the Committee, which might have kept the House voting for a considerable time.

The hon. Member for North Down advanced the argument that, in some way, additional time was required because there had been a betrayal—

Rev. Ian Paisley: It was the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady).

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Member for South Down said that the Government had betrayed the nationalist community in Northern Ireland. That was an argument that I found difficult to swallow. The hon. Gentleman over-eggs his cake if he expects the House to believe that the nationalist community in Northern Ireland has in some way been put down by the Government. The Government have done everything possible to elevate the nationalist community, as has been seen from a number of their so-called initiatives. The hon. Gentleman's argument that the setting up of the Committee is contrary to the talks agreement of March 1991 does not hold water. That agreement came to an end on the day that the talks ended.

Mr. McGrady: The hon. Gentleman referred to the fact that the talks came to end in November 1992. He mistates the case. The official Unionist party [HON. MEMBERS: "Who?"] Very well; the Ulster Unionist party. The UUP and the DUP withdrew from the talks. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] They withdrew because that week saw a meeting of the Anglo-Irish conference between the Irish and British Governments. The remaining parties to the talks were the British Government, the Irish Government, the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Alliance party. Coincidentally, those are the four parties that are still at the table.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That just demonstrates that if hon. Members are not able to prepare for the debate, all sorts of comments come up. The motion is clear. Could we please get back to it? The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) has been straying a little in the past few minutes.

Mr. Robinson: I have been given the first good reason why I should change my mind. Clearly, more time is needed if we are to educate the hon. Member for South Down. He is labouring under the assumption that the talks did not come to an end and that the Unionists left. But all the parties put out an agreed statement that showed that the talks had come to end. They came to an end because the nationalist parties demanded that there should be an intergovernmental conference meeting. Obviously, hon. Members do not require more time to discuss this issue as it was clearly dealt with in the statement.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Was not the basis of the talks that there would be no inter-party conferences while the talks were taking place and that both the official Unionists and our party said at the table, "If you bring the talks to a close by having an inter-party conference meeting, they will be finished." The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said, "Yes, they are finished" and the Irish said that they were finished. I do not know what the hon. Member for South Down has been finishing, but everyone else knows that the talks are finished.

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend's comments are accurate. It is inconsistent for the hon. Member for South Down to argue that the Government have dishonoured the March 1991 agreement when the March 1991 agreement said specifically that the talks would last between meetings of the intergovernmental conference. Therefore, as soon as a meeting of the intergovernmental conference came, ipso facto the talks must have ended. There has been no betrayal of the nationalist community. Perhaps another time I shall have the opportunity to describe the nature of the Government's betrayal of the Unionist community.

[Mr. Robinson]

It was argued that, because in that March 1991 agreement there was a remark that nothing was agreed until everything was agreed, and because during the talks there was no agreement on the setting up of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs, there should not be a Select Committee. I have already said that that 1991 agreement came to an end the moment the talks stopped and therefore the Government were no longer bound by it.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): As the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is now in the Chamber, it might be worth while drawing attention to the fact that we nearly had to drag the hon. Gentleman and the SDLP to the 1992 talks during the last week, and that they were outraged that we, the Ulster Unionist party, should introduce a summation paper during the last week. They came most reluctantly, and departed—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That has absolutely nothing to do with the motion before us.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): No one is interested in solving problems around here. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has only just come into the Chamber. Mr. Robinson.

Mr. Robinson: You can understand what we have to put up with in Northern Ireland, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that we shall have your sympathy from now on.

If the agreement of 1991 came to an end the moment the talks were ended by the SDLP insisting on the intergovernmental conference, the Government were not bound to obtain the agreement of everyone to any change and the House could never allow itself to be gagged in terms of changes that it might make.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robinson: Yes, but I had intended to sit down.

Mr. O'Brien: I have been following the arguments of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) closely. In view of the interventions and exchanges that have been made, and the fact that there is more to be said on issues involving Northern Ireland—especially this issue—does the hon. Gentleman agree that there ought to be more time to discuss those issues? This is no different from the other issues that we discuss in Select Committees. Does the hon. Gentleman accept the view that we need more time to discuss Northern Ireland issues?

Mr. Robinson: Given a little ingenuity, hon. Members still have another four hours and a little more in which they might make whatever comments they want.

Finally, the Government are not under an obligation to obtain everyone's agreement, especially on a matter that is germane to the procedures of the House. How could the Government allow the procedures of the House of Commons to be determined by the agreements of those outside the House of Commons—especially if those outside the House of Commons include a foreign Government?

5.23 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I wish to speak because I was one of the people who objected to the business motion. I am sorry that I did not hear the opening speeches, but I was chairing the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments, which is why I want to speak later about the rating and valuation order.

The business motion, to curtail debate in one case and to extend debate by a very small amount in excess of the usual amount of time in the second case, puts the House of Commons in an unnecessary straitjacket. An open-ended business motion to take the debate up to 10 o'clock would have been acceptable. In curtailing the debate to three hours, I suspect that the Leader of the House is proposing the type of limitation that we can expect if the Jopling report is ever implemented—I hope that it never will be—to curtail parliamentary discussion and to put debate in a straitjacket. That is one reason why I wanted to object to the business motion—it was unnecessary. I object to the Jopling report being brought in by stealth—because that is what the limitations represent.

The rating and valuation order, debate on which is limited to an hour and a half, is quite important. One of the advantages of Parliament is that there is always a number of people—perhaps a handful—who take a specialised interest in something as obscure as the draft Railways (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1994. I do not think that there should be a limitation of an hour and a half before 10 o' clock. There is usually a limitation on an affirmative instrument after 10 o'clock and I think that we could usefully reconsider that, because affirmative orders are as important as primary legislation. Indeed, some of them—although not this one—repeal primary legislation which has been considered by the House in great detail. Therefore, the arbitrary hour and a half is frequently inadequate to deal with the complexities of subordinate legislation. It is unreasonable to impose a limitation of an hour and a half before 10 o'clock simply because that pattern has so often been followed after 10 o'clock.

There are only two items of business on the Order Paper today, because the third item is a European Community document, which will be dealt with forthwith. If there is a vote, that will take 15 minutes; if it is a head-nodding job, it will go through in perhaps 20 seconds. The whole of the evening is before us, yet the Leader of the House proposes to finish the sitting, if we curtail the debate, at half-past 8. I do not think that, if we have the opportunity, we should limit debate in that way because of the importance of subordinate legislation.

I am happy, in a way, that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill has focused attention on the enormous powers of Ministers. I gave evidence, which was not very welcome, to the Jopling Committee to the effect that I thought that Parliament should sit longer hours, not shorter. Parliament does not give adequate scrutiny to the enormous number of statutory instruments and regulations that pour out from the present Government. As the Leader of the House knows, the number is now running at 3,300 to 3,500 per annum. When we have the opportunity to debate a very important order, we should not curtail debate to an hour and a half.

If I may remind the House without going into the debate that would ensue if people so chose, the draft Railways (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1994 places on the railways the imposition of providing a rateable value of the

English railway hereditament of £191 million, and a smaller sum, £7.3 million, for Welsh railways. We could debate how much better that £191 million would be used on improving the services to British Rail instead of abstracting that money to an organisation that will be broken up and privatised, and is already in enough difficulties simply maintaining services without taking out £200 million—which is only a transfer payment in any event. I do not want to debate those matters, but they are justified arguments about an order that would impose a significant charge on British Rail, discussion of which is, however, limited to an hour and a half.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that this is typical of how the Government deal with legislation on non-domestic rates? He will remember that, when the House debated the non-domestic rates legislation on 12 and 13 January this year, the Government decided to guillotine the proceedings. Does he agree that that is not an acceptable way to discuss such important provisions?

Mr. Cryer: Yes; and it applies to all subordinate legislation.

We accept that Ministers should be given powers to fill in the nuts and bolts of Government administration, but the Government are abusing the process. They are producing some 3,500 instruments a year, which is more than any other Government in history, whereas they are supposed to be taking legislation off people's backs. Labour Governments managed with some 2,000 statutory instruments a year; Tory Governments cannot do so because they are centralising. In the process, Parliament must have a degree of accountability—it has little enough.

To curtail debate on this limited, narrow occasion when we have the time available is entirely unjustified. Parliament normally has a good idea of self discipline. Normally hon. Members who want to promote the railways issue have a peg on which to hang their cause. They would use the railways valuation order to ensure a reasonable debate. If no Member wants that, the motion goes through in 10 or 15 minutes, with five or 10 minutes apiece for speeches by Front-Bench spokesmen.

Most controversy is on the second motion. None the less, the hour and a half limitation is not necessary. One of the great virtues of Parliament is that, unlike Ministers who have access to the Dispatch Box when they choose because they determine the agenda, Back-Bench Members must be ingenious. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who is grinning, has access to the Dispatch Box whenever his business managers organise it for him. Back-Bench Members must use such motions to get time to discuss important issues. That is why I object to the fact that the Government are centralising and concentrating Government powers, and straitjacketing Parliament to make it all the easier for them.

If I am taking a bit of extra time, it is because oodles of time is available, yet the Leader of the House wants us to finish early. The first motion is on rating and valuation and the second relates to the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. The Leader of the House should have said that the business could continue until 10 o'clock. Indeed, to judge from the exchanges that have taken place so far, it might have been useful to have a 10 o'clock business motion saying that the business, though opposed, could continue until any hour. Many more hours after 10 o'clock could be filled because the issue is controversial. If the House deals with an issue more controversial than the affairs of Northern Ireland, I have yet to know it.

The speeches from Members on both sides of the House have shown that there is great bitterness, anger and concern about the Select Committee. In addition to the motion, five amendments have been tabled to be taken in an hour and a half. They are not just Back-Bench amendments but are supported by Front-Bench Members, which in some people's eyes—not mine—makes them more important. Back-Bench Members cannot table a prayer and have it debated unless it is supported by members of the shadow Front Bench. When dealing with subordinate legislation, Back-Bench Members must have the support of Front-Bench Members to get time on the Floor of the House. So there is a rule that items supported by Front-Bench shadow Members are more important.

The meritocracy of this place—the sort of thing that gives preferential treatment to Privy Councillors, which ordinary Back-Bench Members find outrageous—means that motion No. 3 on Northern Ireland affairs should have been given more time than the hour and a half allocated to it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) said, the exchanges tonight illustrate the controversy surrounding the motion.

I look forward to hearing the argument of the Leader of the House. He should abandon the idea of introducing Jopling by sleight of hand in business motions such as this. We should kick it out and let the House decide the priorities. He should stop interfering with the business of the House in this way.

5.35 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) spelt out plainly and adequately why we should press for more time to discuss the motions. In my experience of discussing motions on Northern Ireland, this is the first time that I have heard Members representing Northern Ireland say that they do not need more time. I have always agreed with them that we need more time to discuss Northern Ireland issues because of the controversies that arise.

In my intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), I said that today's exchanges reinforce the demand for more time to discuss Northern Ireland issues, whether they are political or matters of principle. We are in danger of giving too much away to the Executive if we do not show them that we need more time to discuss issues, particularly on Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East referred to the fact that, because the Labour party does not organise in Northern Ireland, its membership of the Committee should be considered. If it is right to criticise the number of Labour Members on the Committee, should not the same principle apply to the Tory party?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman was not here at the beginning of the debate—

Mr. Vaz: He was.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I apologise if the hon. Gentleman was here. However, I made it clear that hon. Members must not anticipate the debate that is to come, which concerns membership of the Committee. This business motion is specifically about motions Nos. 2 and 3, not about how much time should be given to debating

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Northern Ireland as such. I should therefore be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would be specific in addressing the issue.

Mr. O'Brien: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was referring to the orders and my intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Belfast, East. May I finish what I was saying? The hon. Gentleman's reference was relevant to the discussion, but I accept your ruling on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Tory party is organised in Northern Ireland and some of us got here having defeated Tory candidates.

Mr. O'Brien: I accept that point, but will not pursue it, as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have ruled on it.

Given the exchanges across the Chamber and the concerns expressed by hon. Members about the principles set down in the motion, I support the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South that more time should be allocated so that we might hear hon. Members' views on significant issues relating to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman has said that this is the first time he has known Northern Ireland Members not to use all the time available to make their points. Lest that be misconstrued as a lack of interest or concern on our part, I should point out that we are acting in recognition of the Chair's ruling that the debate should be only about the time factor. Perhaps we should all make a small sacrifice and deny ourselves the opportunity to listen to our own voices in this of all weeks. That might allow us to get on to debate the Northern Ireland issue.

Mr. O'Brien: I acknowledge that point, although it prompts certain other controversial questions—which I could put to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that there is more that he could say on this issue.

The restriction on the time for debate on the orders is a retrograde step—especially when people press for even less time to discuss them. I appeal to the Leader of the House carefully to consider our request for more time in future to discuss these issues.

5.40 pm

Mr. Newton: This has been a debate of what I may tactfully term endless fascination to those of us who have witnessed it. I can only say how much I envy my hon. Friends who are to have the chance to serve on the Select Committee, following what I have seen this evening—

Mr. McNamara: When are they to have that chance?

Mr. Newton: I hope that they will have it following the recommendations of the Committee of Selection. Given that the Select Committee is to include the hon. Members for South Down (Mr. McGrady), for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder), and the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), I suspect—based on what I have seen this evening—that its members will spend less time scrutinising the Government and the Northern Ireland Office than scrutinising each other. It will be interesting to see what happens.

Another fascination of this debate—there were many—was to witness the transformation of the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), not present in the Chamber now, from glowering at us from one side of the Gangway to glowering at us—after an intervention—from the other side of it.

Yet another fascination offered by the debate was the the speech by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). It reappeared like a familiar friend from our previous debate on the establishment of the Committee. I cannot say that it reappeared by popular demand, but it doubtless made a contribution to the recycling industry—I listened to it with great interest.

Both the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) referred to the iniquity of the guillotine on the non-domestic rating legislation. I remind them that, so draconian was that guillotine, that the Opposition could not even fill the time for which it allowed.

This further "draconian" measure on rating and valuation—allowing an hour and a half for discussion of the proposals—has led the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Leicester, East to demand a £200 million reduction in the money available to local authorities this year. If British Rail does not pay £200 million in rates, local authorities will not receive that revenue—a most interesting demand betokening a welcome conversion, somewhat unexpected, to restraint on public expenditure.

Mr. Vaz: The point that my hon. Friend and I were making was that there was no need to bring in this measure three days before it was due to come into effect. There has been plenty of time to debate it since November 1993, when the Railways Act became law. Our objection is to the fact that the order has been brought in at such a late stage.

Mr. Newton: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, and I will deal with it in my conclusion.

Although there has been a good deal of point in my comments so far, I should like to end on a more serious note. I do not know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether I am allowed to advert to this fact, but the rating and valuation order went through another place on 21 March. So awful is it—so important is it—that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is not about to debate the order.

Mr. Newton: I was merely about to observe, having been told that there is not enough time to debate the order, that when this allegedly dreadful measure went through another place on 21 March, Her Majesty's Opposition did not see fit to offer a single word on it, let alone to discuss it for an hour and a half.

I should tell the hon. Member for South Down that it is my understanding that there were conversations through the usual channels with his party. For all I know, the problem may lie with the usual channels in his party—

Mr. McGrady: I reiterate what I said: there was no communication of any sort with my party about the setting up of the Select Committee or the appointment of its members.

Mr. Newton: That is different from my understanding, but I do not question the hon. Gentleman's integrity; I

regard him as an hon. Gentleman and I respect his veracity. Perhaps it is all a misunderstanding, but I have put my view on the record, as he has his.

The last fascination of this debate is that it has been rather like those Adjournment debates when the Leader of the House offers the House a holiday, only to be confronted by a solid phalanx of Members simultaneously demanding more and more work and praying that the Leader of the House will not accept their blandishments. There has certainly been an element of that in this debate.

I have provided an hour and a half each of prime time for the rating and valuation order and for discussion of the Select Committee membership. That has resulted in my being here to listen to some rather strange speeches for the better part of an hour and a half or more. The alternative would have been to table the rating and valuation order for 10 o'clock tonight or tomorrow night, followed by an hour —not an hour and a half—on the Northern Ireland Select Committee motion. If that is what hon. Members want, they had better tell me. I think that what I have offered the House is sensible, reasonable and right, and I hope that the House will accept it.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 303, Noes 233.

Division No. 183] **[5.47 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John

Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. John Cummings.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, at this day's sitting, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to Rating and Valuation not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; and

(2) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Sir Fergus Montgomery relating to Northern Ireland Affairs not later than one and

a half hours after their commencement; such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments to the said Motion which she may have selected and which may then be moved; notwithstanding the practice of the House the said Motion shall be regarded as a single Motion:

and the above proceedings may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.

Orders of the Day

Railways (Rateable Values)

6 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I beg to move,

That the draft Railways (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th March, be approved.

The order was made under the powers in schedule 6 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, and sets the 1994-95 rateable values for the British Railways Board and Railtrack in England and Wales respectively.

Before I deal with the details of the order, it may be helpful if I remind the House about the prescription of rules for determining rateable values in England and Wales, and their application to the railways. In certain cases, assessment of non-domestic property by local valuation officers is impractical; the 1988 Act therefore contains powers for the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales to prescribe rules for assessing such property.

I should point out that there is nothing new in that: it follows a long-set precedent. The practice of prescribing the rateable values of certain public utilities was started many years ago, to overcome various technical problems associated with assessment by conventional means. Indeed, the railways' rateable values were first set by statute in 1946, before nationalisation. The General Rate Act 1967 and the Local Government Act 1974 included powers to prescribe rateable values in such cases, and in effect the current provisions simply continue that treatment.

The national rail network comprises property of a highly specialised kind, which consequently presents complex problems of valuation. It is also so extensive that the resources needed to value it by conventional means simply have not been available. The powers to prescribe the rateable value for the British Railways Board for the 1990 revaluation were therefore used in 1989.

Those powers were also exercised at that time for the telecommunications industry, the water industry, canals, the electricity generation, transmission and distribution industries, gas supply, statutory docks and harbours, the London underground, the docklands light railway, Tyne and Wear metro and the Glasgow underground. British Coal, whose values had been set by statute, moved into conventional assessment for the 1990 revaluation.

I am aware that some industries that do not suffer from that manner of assessment consider it a type of beneficial special treatment. It is not. There is no financial benefit whatever to be gained from a rateable value that is prescribed rather than assessed by the Valuation Office agency or the Scottish Assessors Association; the end result should be, and is, the same.

The most important difference lies in the fact that, unlike businesses in conventional assessment, these ratepayers have no right of appeal against their assessments. We therefore intend to end the prescribing of rateable values by statute as soon as possible for all industries. To that end, the Valuation Office agency and the Scottish Assessors Association have conducted a review of the alternatives to prescribed assessment for the industries involved.

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

I am pleased to say that, as a result of the review, a number of industries will move to conventional assessment for the revaluation of 1995: the telecommunications industry, canals and certain light rail systems—Tyne and Wear metro, the docklands light railway and the Glasgow underground. The threshold at which docks and harbours will become subject to prescribed assessment will be raised from a turnover of £50,000 to a turnover of £1 million. We hope that, for the revaluation in the year 2000, the remaining docks and harbours, water and gas supply, electricity transmission and distribution will be conventionally assessed.

The main reason why it was not thought possible for them to move to conventional assessment in 1995 was that the resources to carry out such assessments were not available in the remaining time—not only at the Valuation Office agency and the Scottish Assessors Association, but in the companies themselves. A great deal of information about all the properties occupied by the companies concerned must be drawn up by those companies; that requires considerable time and effort, especially when national networks are involved.

To ensure that the necessary information will be available in good time for 2000, we are starting now. In discussions with the industries over the 1995 revaluation, attention is being given to what facts will be necessary, and to what time scale should be used to allow a move to conventional assessment in the year 2000. At this stage, however, the valuation difficulties involved in assessing the rail network and electricity generation seem unlikely to be resolved in time for the revaluation in the year 2000: those industries appear set to remain in prescribed assessment after that time. We intend, for the 1995 revaluation, to change the rateable values of the industries remaining in prescribed assessment by a factor based on the movement in comparable conventionally assessed properties; but that is for 1995.

The draft order that we are discussing deals with the financial year 1994-95. It makes provision for the change in rateable occupation of railway hereditaments in England and Wales as a consequence of the privatisation of rail services. The provisions of the Railways Act 1993 allow for transfers of property between the British Railways Board and other companies; the largest of those transfer schemes is the one concerning Railtrack. On 1 April this year, Railtrack plc will become a new Government-owned company, and the occupier of the majority of the property previously owned by British Rail.

We do not want the change in the organisation of the railway system to alter the local tax burden on the property. The order—I stress that it has an extremely narrow compass—simply divides up what would have been the British Railways Board's rateable values for 1994-95 between the board and Railtrack; no more and no less. The ratio of the split is 95 per cent. for Railtrack—including the operational track and stations—and 5 per cent. for the board. The values are given separately for England and for Wales. Attendant negative resolution regulations, laid before Parliament on 21 March, define the property to which those values apply.

Separately, we are already consulting Railtrack and the board about the rateable values of their property, as part of the preparation for the 1995 revaluation of all non-domestic property. A separate order will reset the rateable values for the rail network in Scotland in the same way; but, as there are powers for that to be done with retrospective effect—that is not the arrangement for England and Wales—the order will be presented in due course.

We have consulted both the British Railways Board and Railtrack about the content of the order, and about the regulations. They are in agreement with the order, and I commend it to the House.

6.7 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): When I heard that the Minister was to move the motion, I thought that he would try to beat his record of 66 minutes—established last Friday, when he spoke in the debate on inner cities. I am delighted that he bustled along, almost at the speed of a 125, to tell us all that he has to tell us about the order in the space of seven minutes.

That, of course, is what the Government would like us to do: they would like to enable the House to speed along in considering this important provision, so that no proper time is allowed for discussion of its merits and examination of its content in the context of the way in which the Government have approached non-domestic rating.

Yet again, the Government are trying to force through an order that will complicate our existing business rating system still further. As I said earlier, during the debate on the allocation of time, this follows in the footsteps of a debate that took place on 12 and 13 January, when the House discussed the Non-Domestic Rating Bill. I am sure that the Minister will remember that debate: he was present, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

On that occasion, for the fifth time in four years, the House was asked to discuss non-domestic rating legislation. This is another example of an order that must be discussed and passed, because the new company that will benefit from it will start trading on 1 April—in 72 hours' time. As with the non-domestic rating legislation, the time that we can spend discussing the order has been guillotined. The Opposition believe that it is extremely important that the House should be given sufficient time to discuss and contemplate the implications of such an important issue, especially as it will affect the amount of money that is to be distributed to local authorities.

In the previous debate, the Leader of the House threatened my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South and myself by saying that local authorities would lose £200 million if the Opposition refused to allow the order to pass. The Minister is the longest serving Minister in the Department of the Environment—I do not know what he has done right or wrong to be kept there while so many others have been moved on—and he and the Government will know that the Government have passed 155 Acts of Parliament over the past 15 years, and that the latest settlement for local authorities will greatly restrict the amount of money that they will receive.

So the idle threats about £200 million being lopped off the amount to be given to local authorities are not something which we take seriously. The Opposition want to know why the Government are so frightened that they will not allow sufficient time for a proper discussion of the order.

The order seeks to apportion the rating liability between British Rail and the wholly owned, stand-alone, Government company, Railtrack plc. I suppose that it is for that reason that the Minister for Public Transport has joined the debate. In effect, the Minister wants to apportion a bad system between two bodies. That does not automatically make right what the Government are proposing to do.

The system is intensely unjust, and it is time for new measures to be proposed so that it is equitable for small and large national companies. If that is not done, the burden on local authorities will become unbearable and, yet again, it will be the struggling businesses and home owners who are called upon to make up the lost revenue through higher taxes.

We have heard from the Minister a rather half-hearted argument in favour of formula rating. Perhaps his mind was not quite with us as he bustled along in his speech. Perhaps he is thinking about the tour of the far east that he is about to undertake. I did not think that he put his usual passion into arguing in favour of keeping formula rating —a system which has been discredited by everybody, and is now used by the Government only in order to complete the collection of the rates in an unfair and slapdash way.

As the Minister said, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 opened the way for phasing out all formula rating assessments. We know from previous debates that the Government have accepted that formula rating has outlived its usefulness as a means of valuation.

Mr. Baldry: I just want to reiterate that point. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman was listening. I said clearly that we feel that the system has outlived its usefulness, and that that is why we are changing it. I hasten to add that the system was introduced a long time ago, and was reintroduced by Labour Governments in 1967 and at other times.

Mr. Vaz: I did listen to what the Minister was saying, even though he spoke at such great speed.

The Opposition believe that the system that has been operating with regard to the public enterprises is inherently unfair. We should like to know when the Government propose to abolish the entire system. The Minister talked about 1995. As we know from previous debates on non-domestic rating legislation, the Government have promised that certain things will happen by certain dates but, like the Non-Domestic Rating Bill this year, they have not happened.

It is our view that formula rating never purported to be a proper and true reflection of rates liability, although it did serve a purpose when one Government body paid another Government Department. I am not impressed by the Minister's argument that lack of resources makes a proper assessment impossible. We do not believe that there should be a further delay until 1995 in the abolition of this unfair system. I hope that the Minister can give us a date a little nearer than the year 2000 for the removal of other items on the local rating list.

Railtrack plc will be liable for only 95 per cent. of its current rating liability. Therefore, it will receive extremely preferential treatment, as it will be exempted from at least a full 5 per cent. of its liability. The Minister should explain how decisions were made about what level of rating liability was acceptable to the Department of the Environment and the Treasury, as the revenue that they are failing to collect is owed to the taxpayer. I know that the Minister said that he would prefer to have an opportunity to consult the various bodies involved. The two principal bodies are Railtrack plc and British Rail, so it should not be too difficult for him to explain why the percentages were agreed at that level.

It is important to know why the Government have decided to bring the order before the House only 72 hours before the new company starts trading. After all, as the Minister for Public Transport will know—he piloted this legislation through the House last year—the last pieces of the jigsaw fell into place in November 1993. Therefore, there has been plenty of time to bring this order before the House, and plenty of time to enable us to discuss the matter properly. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South has said, many points need to be raised.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend think that the lateness of the order may be due to the fact that Railtrack plc in its embryonic non-trading stage will have had to take into account the payments in the order before deciding what sort of charges it will levy to franchisees? Does my hon. Friend agree that the recent announcement about the charges by Railtrack plc, which are much more enhanced than originally prescribed by the Department of Transport, might reflect the provisions of the order, and that the order was tabled late so that those calculations could be made?

Mr. Vaz: My hon. Friend has raised an important point. Unfortunately, because of the short time between the publication of Government business and the debate, it has been impossible for me to contact those who run Railtrack plc.

However, I have had discussions on the telephone with representatives of British Rail. They cannot comment on why the Government have decided to bring this order forward at this late stage—72 hours before the company starts trading. As I pointed out to them—I have yet to hear a different argument from the Government—there has been plenty of time to discuss this matter. There is no reason on earth why there could not have been a debate later this evening, when there would have been plenty of time to discuss these proceedings.

We have heard that the Government have extended the scope of formula rating, which will just serve to complicate rating law instead of simplifying it. The most pressing concern, as outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South, is that there is a possibility that the burden of rates that is to be placed on Railtrack will mean a subsequent increase in the amount that will have to be paid by consumers.

I see that the Minister is chatting to the Minister for Public Transport. Perhaps the latter is helping him on this point. I hope that the Minister will give assurances to the already hard-pressed train users—such as those who may travel to Leicester or Kettering through the constituency of the Minister for Public Transport—that they will not have to bear the burden of the increase in charges as a result of this order.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) will raise this matter should he catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not think that there is a Member of the House who knows more about

[Mr. Vaz]

the railway industry, and I look forward immensely to hearing what my hon. Friend has to say about these pertinent matters.

It is important for Ministers to understand that orders of this kind carry certain implications. It is quite easy for Members and Ministers to come into the House and make fine speeches supporting or opposing orders, but it is essential that we understand the implications of what we are doing.

They are precisely the lessons that we have had to learn from the way in which the Government have dealt with non-domestic rates. We learnt those lessons earlier this year, when the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1994 was forced through the House at such speed. The effect of that measure was a fundamental change in the way in which non-domestic rates were collected and the amount of money that went into the non-domestic national pool.

That is why we decided that it was important to discuss the proposal very carefully and highlight the changes that were going to occur. It is extremely important—especially as the Government are starting a new enterprise and they do not know what the future of Railtrack plc will be; it is a wholly new company—that we examine the measures very carefully.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend not agree that the order is entirely inadequate? The legislation was originally designed for a national network, but British Rail is to be broken down into a series of separate operating entities. Therefore, there will, of necessity, have to be a breakdown in the charge for rateable valuation in the order. The public at large will have no knowledge—the order provides no such knowledge—of how the assessment was made. This means that Railtrack can argue for higher charges for each section based on this order, without providing detail which the consumer could challenge.

Mr. Vaz: My hon. Friend raises a very good point—he is tempting me away from what I intended to say. I hope that he will catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, and therefore participate in the debate.

It is important for the Minister to understand—he alluded to it in his introduction—that formula rating was originally introduced to deal, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South said, with national enterprises. It was introduced to deal with very large publicly owned companies which could not be assessed at a local level.

The Minister is saying—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East will pursue this point also—that we are no longer in that situation. Because of the work of the Minister for Public Transport, we face the prospect of the huge rail network being divided into little pieces, as a result of which it will be much easier to have an assessment of each area. I do not welcome that, because I think that what the Government have done will come back to haunt them. We do not support the breaking up of our railway system, but I do not wish to rehearse the arguments advanced during the passage of the Railways Act 1993.

The break-up of the railway system shows that it is possible to make a proper and effective assessment; an assessment that is much more just than the current system and an assessment that will result in a much more accurate account of the various parts of British Rail.

With regard to non-domestic rates, at the moment local businesses are paying their money to central Government. It is being paid because of the national system that was devised by the Government—a national system that is still not in place. As we heard in the debate on 13 January this year, the Government are not sure of the precise nature and scheme of the non-domestic rating legislation that will have to be debated in the House again next year. Local non-domestic rates paid by local businesses to the Government constitute a local tax for local services, but there is no local accountability, because the tax is national and not local.

We have seen yet again the Government's multi-standards—I was going to say "double standards", but the Government have so many standards when dealing with local authorities and local enterprises—as they have tried to hide the real situation from the House. We call for more time to debate this measure, and to get a clearer picture of the Government's intentions, so that the proposals can be considered much more fully.

The current situation is a negation of democracy. The Government have all the resources—an army of civil servants are assisting the Under-Secretary of State, advising him, tending to his every whim and providing him with all necessary advice. They have had more than four months in which to bring this measure before the House so that we could discuss it calmly and properly, not under threat of guillotine and without the knowledge that in three days' time a new company would take effect.

The House deserves an explanation of why it has taken so long for the order to be brought before us. We also need an explanation of why it is going to take so long to bring the discredited system of formula rating to a close.

6.26 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): As my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has said, there is little point in rehearsing the arguments against privatisation that we debated at length during the passage of the Railways Act, which brought about this unhappy situation. The Government proved not to be amenable to listening to reason during the passage of that legislation and there is no reason to suppose that they have become more sensible since then.

Having listened to the Under-Secretary, one can understand my hon. Friend's reference to the battery of loyal and dutiful civil servants. The Under-Secretary is the perfect Minister. My hon. Friend wondered why the Under-Secretary has been in his post for so long. I can answer the question: he is the perfect Minister; he gabbles through prepared briefs without deviating, by one word, from what is written for him. I am sure that the Department of the Environment hopes that he will carry on in his present position for many years.

The Under-Secretary did not give any explanation for the enormous sums that we are being asked to approve in this order. They are not inconsiderable sums by any stretch of the imagination, totalling as they do £209.4 million. The fact that that is money which, in the opinion of most, would be better spent within the railway industry than on the matters that we are debating tonight is amply illustrated by news from the railway industry over the past week or so.

For example, there was the loss of 700 jobs at Derby and the last-ever press release from the Central Transport Users Consultative Committee. The committee chairman, Major-General Lennox Napier, said:

"Unless there is a high level of sustained investment in rolling stock and infrastructure, privatisation will not be a success from the passenger's point of view."

I think that we all agree with General Napier. Why are we spending £209.4 million under the terms of this order and why did the Minister—or his civil servants—not provide a comparison so that we could judge the expenditure of £209.4 million? As my hon. Friend and the Minister reminded us, the railway industry has paid rates for a considerable number of years—not, understandably, on stations and signal boxes but on land that it owns, on office blocks, with which I shall deal in a moment, and on other parts of what I shall call the support tail of the railway industry.

There is an easy comparison that the Minister could have drawn had he chosen to do so or if his civil servants had written the brief accordingly. He could have compared the amount being paid in rates this year by all sectors of British Rail with that being demanded from British Rail and Railtrack in the next financial year under the order. The Minister nods his head, but he did not give us the comparison—I do not know whether the figures were prepared for him or whether he chose not to deliver them but I shall read them out.

In the current financial year, which ends on Thursday, all sectors of British Rail are paying a total of £98.1 million in rates but, under the terms of the order, British Rail and Railtrack together will be paying £209.4 million. The Minister for Public Transport shakes his head, but they are the facts and there is no denying or gainsaying them. If he wants to intervene instead of sitting there like a nodding dog, I shall be delighted to allow him to do so.

Mr. Baldry *rose—*

Mr. Snape: The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment must have another brief.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman is labouring under a number of misapprehensions. The figures in the order are exactly the amount that British Rail would have paid if it had remained a nationalised industry. The order simply divides the amount between Railtrack and BR and does so on the basis of the proportion of property. In addition to the property highlighted by the hon. Gentleman, prescribed rating includes such matters as the track bed and other property owned by Railtrack, so the portfolio is rather wider than the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr. Snape: I realise that that is the case and I was unaware that I had even implied otherwise. I hope that the Minister is not questioning the two figures. I have ascertained from British Rail and all its constituent sectors exactly what is being paid this year and what will be demanded under the order, and the figures are as I read out. There will be a total increase of 213.5 per cent.

Mr. Baldry: In his desire to comment on privatisation, the hon. Gentleman is confusing rateable values and rates. We are dealing with rateable values, not rates. If the hon. Gentleman asks the wrong question, he of course gets the wrong answer.

Mr. Snape: I am not unaware of the difference between rateable values and rates. I said what I did because I was surprised that the Minister did not raise the issue in the first place. We are discussing the rateable values of properties owned by BR and Railtrack in the forthcoming financial year. The reason for the enormous disparity in rateable values—I accept the Minister's correction because I mentioned rates rather than rateable values—is the mushrooming bureaucracy which we warned would be a direct and inevitable consequence of privatisation. The Minister looks a bit doubtful while the Minister for Public Transport, who has at least stopped shaking his head, looks shocked.

I have here a copy of British Rail's house magazine *Railnews*, which has the somewhat optimistic headline "A New Era Dawns". It states:

"A new railway was born on April 1st."

Never let it be said that British Rail is always behind the times—its magazine is talking in the past tense two days before we reach the dawning of the new era. In a box to one side but also on the front page a small heading states:

"The new railway: your full colour guide to all the changes in the centre pages".

I have extracted the centre pages and I have here details of the new railway. Alas, it is the old railway for which the rateable values are being increased under the order.

The magazine's chart includes a long list of offices that have been opened in the past few months and which form the bulk of the rateable values under the order. For example, in Birmingham the administration tail of various sectors of BR in that part of the world operates from a building called Stanier house in the centre of the city. Under the new railway, as from 1 April, not only is Stanier house to be occupied by no fewer than two train operators or shadow franchises and one Railtrack headquarters and zone but other organisations will also be based in Birmingham directly as a result of privatisation. Two will be at Meridian house in Smallbrook Queensway and one at Quayside tower, although I am not sure where that is in Birmingham. They are the direct result of privatisation and form part of the total rateable values in 1994-95 under the order.

I draw the attention of the House to the right-hand side of the chart. Running the length of the page is the list of offices for the new privatised railway structure in London.

Mr. Baldry *rose—*

Mr. Snape: When I have finished this point, the Minister can of course intervene.

That list contains no fewer than 14 buildings which were not listed as being under the control of British Rail or any of its sectors before the nonsense of privatisation on 1 April. Unless the Minister can tell me otherwise, I presume that they, too, will form part of the burden under the order.

Mr. Baldry: I hate to spoil the hon. Gentleman's speech, because he is obviously enjoying himself. The truth is that the list of offices to which he referred is nothing to do with the order because, being offices, they are conventionally assessed and do not come under the prescribed rating. The prescribed rating is to cover those aspects of British Rail's estate, such as the track bed, signalling and other equipment which, since before nationalisation in 1945, it has always been accepted were too difficult to assess under conventional assessment. The list of offices that the hon. Gentleman read out in great fun are conventionally assessed and are not part of the order. I hate to destroy his point.

Mr. Snape: May I ask the Minister another question? Exactly which parts of railway-owned property are covered under the terms of the order? Will he accept that, traditionally, stations and signal boxes are not covered? I and the House should have great difficulty in believing that we could reach a total rateable value of £209.4 million based only on the 11,500 miles of track and the signals —not the signalling, because I have already said that signal boxes are outwith the terms of the order—that British Rail currently has. If the Minister can prove to the House that none of the buildings that have fallen into British Rail's ownership or leasing arrangements in the past year is covered by the order, I shall of course have to accept it, but it is incumbent on him to prove that point. People outside the House who follow our debates with some interest will have great difficulty in believing that such is the case.

Mr. Cryer: Would it not have helped the users of the statutory instrument if what the Minister is saying had been set out in the explanatory note? It would have shown that he had some confidence in his assertion and it would have helped the users. The explanatory note is brief to the point of obscurity. As the order will apply to a new organisation in a supposed new era which, I am sure my hon. Friend will agree, is an era of potential disaster, the participants should at least be informed that the order is in fact a Titanic.

Mr. Snape: I thought—seemingly erroneously, from what the Minister has said—that

"'English railway hereditament' means a hereditament described in regulation 2 of the Non-domestic Rating (Railways) and Central Rating Lists (Amendment) Regulations 1994",

to quote from the new part VI that is to be added to the Railways (Rateable Values) Order 1989. It was always my understanding that that regulation applied to office blocks under the control of, or owned by, or leased by, British Rail, rather than purely the railway installations, which the Under-Secretary has outlined. If I am wrong, I am obviously prepared to concede that.

Mr. Baldry: As I have already made clear, the offices that the hon. Gentleman has listed are conventionally assessed, they have always been conventionally assessed and shall continue to be so. The order is repeating what has happened year on year for a good number of years over the prescribed rating of certain estate belonging to British Rail. The property covered is explained, if I may respond also to the point made by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), in the attendant regulations SI 834 of 1994.

To answer another point made by the hon. Member for West Bromich, East (Mr. Snape), freight depots are included in the prescribed rating system. It is set out in some detail in the statutory instrument. That is nothing new. It will not come as a surprise to anyone at BR or associated with BR because it is a pattern which has occurred year on year for a long time. All that is happening in the current year is the division of that sum between Railtrack and BR. That is all that the order does, no more and no less. As I said, it turns on a very narrow compass.

Mr. Snape: I accept what the Under-Secretary says and the "narrow compass" as he has defined it. I find it amazing, to say the least, that a figure has been provided for which I can find no comparable figure in the existing financial year. I hope that, in his winding-up speech, he will explain to my satisfaction, and that of the House, that apparent disparity.

I shall conclude as I began. The order may well be fairly narrow, but in the long term, the railway customers will pay for the costs of the futile privatisation. We shall see many more debates on orders such as the one before us and, of concern to the Minister for Public Transport, on legislation emanating from his Department over the next 12 months.

6.41 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Minister introduced the order by saying that it was a traditional method of assessing rates. I am familiar with the system of assessing rates because, unlike him, I have been a director of a private railway company and I was the chairman of the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway Preservation Society. It was one of the pioneering railway preservation societies, it was formed in 1962 and it negotiated a separate rating and valuation system for five miles of track—as distinct from British Rail. It was one of the first railway societies to do that following nationalisation in 1948 and the compulsory purchase legislation in 1922.

Before that, there were 140 separate railway companies in the country. The order does not recognise the fact that the aim of the Government is to take us back to before that 1922 compulsory amalgamation of the railways, which created the four big railways—London and North Eastern Railways, Great Western railways, Southern Railways and London, Midland and Scottish railways, which were subsequently nationalised. I am fully aware that valuation of the track bed, the track and the signalling equipment has been done in the past and that the valuation normally included operating facilities as well. No doubt the order does that, too.

It would have helped the user of the statutory instrument —which costs 65p for a single sheet—if the explanatory note had not merely referred to other parts of legislation, but had put in the whole background. Various Government Departments imagine that every citizen—the order applies to every citizen—is governed by legislation. When people travel on the train, they will be governed by the order, indirectly and perhaps remotely, so why should not an interested citizen have access to legislation? Why do not the Government include an explanatory note which covers all the parts of the delegated legislation to which the order refers, instead of referring to the original Railways (Rateable Values) Order 1989, as though anybody knows what that order does, except if they working in the Department, specialise in that section and have it coming out of their ears? The Minister did not know what the Railways (Rateable Values) Order 1989 did until somebody told him. He is no different from any other citizen, so why not provide explanatory notes that explain the backgrounds?

The distribution of *Hansard*, if people are interested, is not very wide; it costs too much. The information from Parliament, of which, unfortunately, the Government are in control, is now so costly that ordinary people simply cannot get hold of it. It is 65p for a sheet of paper and if an order runs to two or three sheets, they can cost £2, £3, £4 or £5. For example, the Register of Members' Interests for the House of Commons costs £20, so ordinary citizens cannot possibly find out what their Member of Parliament is up to and whether they are moonlighting and lining their pockets, let alone deal with rating and valuation. I make a plea for a better explanatory note.

The statutory instrument is not defective. It is quite true that it falls within the narrow terms of the legislation. As Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, I can tell the House that if the instrument had been defective, the Committee would have reported it as such. Whether that report would have been in time for the debate is a matter of conjecture because the business managers of the House do not always trouble themselves to take into account the Committee's reports.

As I said earlier, the order is based on having a national railway network, but that is not the point of the legislation that governs it. The point is that we should not have a national network owned by a central body and providing rate revenue on a rateable valuation nationally. The network will be broken into various organisations which will take over sections of track that are to be owned by Railtrack plc, as set out in the order. What concerns me is the basis on which the charge to the franchisee will be made in incorporating the rate payments which will have to be made—approximately £200 million. If each section of track were assessed separately, it would obviously reflect the value of that track.

Let us take, for example, the east coast main line which has been recently electrified. The *Yorkshire Post*, as one would expect, takes a considerable interest in that main line between Leeds and London and further north through York to Aberdeen and Edinburgh. The electrification of the line presumably means that it will carry a larger proportion of the rateable value laid down in the order and therefore a larger proportion of the amount of money that Railtrack will have to hand over as rate revenue to the Treasury because of the national assessment. Is that part of the charge that Railtrack is proposing? It would make the operation by a franchising operator virtually unprofitable.

Take, for example, another section of line that is not yet electrified, but is in the process of being electrified—the line between Leeds and Bradford, through Airedale to Skipton and Ilkley. That will surely attract a higher charge by Railtrack plc because it will be regarded as a more attractive piece of real estate. It will, therefore, be subject to a higher yield of revenue than a single branch line with relatively low standards of maintenance with, perhaps, dodgy fencing and bridges with inadequate coping stones. The section of line from Leeds to Bradford—

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham) *rose*—

Mr. Cryer: May I finish the point? The Leeds to Bradford and Airedale branch line has just been provided with new fencing and new bridge parapets for protection, because the 25 kV overhead electrification has been installed and, no doubt, some of the track work has been improved. I should have thought that that would reflect a higher charge.

The Minister may regard that as extremely inconvenient, but it will happen because, instead of dealing with a national network, we shall be dealing with many smaller networks operating within the framework of the 11,000 route miles as a whole. That will give rise to complications in the operation of the order. One of my concerns is the fact that, because it is based on legislation for a national system, the order does not provide the breakdown.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend is right that we shall be dealing not with a national integrated network but with many different routes throughout the country with little connection between them. However, I believe that my hon. Friend is wrong that Railtrack will apply a system of charges such as he describes. I suspect that Railtrack will succumb to Government pressure and apply charges in the best possible way to franchise out the various lines. If the lines can be franchised more easily, the charges will reflect that fact, and be higher or lower according to that main criterion, rather than according to any of the sensible criteria to which my hon. Friend seeks to draw the attention of the House.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention, but the truth is that we simply do not know. The opaqueness of the explanatory note for the order is not exceptional. Government Departments have a certain style —and the orders are always signed by Ministers; it is they, not civil servants, who take the responsibility. Departments seem to consider that one of their aims in life is to issue opaque explanatory notes for equally opaque statutory instruments, so that the general public cannot understand either the instrument or the explanatory note. This order is no exception to that rule.

Whatever the basis of the charges, the rating and valuation is likely to be a component. The Government will not like it, but there may be some cross-subsidisation between one section of the railway and another. One section will be more attractive in terms of route mileage, so the charges may not be worked out using a strict and accurate accounting system. We simply do not know.

If that large charge of £200 million is drawn out of the railway network when it is being broken up, at a time of much greater administrative costs, services will inevitably suffer. If I am right that the rateable valuation allotted to modernised sections of railways is higher and will therefore result in higher charges, potential franchisees will not be able to afford Railtrack's charges. If they pay those high charges they certainly will not be able to obtain the new rolling stock necessary, for example, on the Airedale and Leeds-Bradford lines.

The Minister for Public Transport, having lost the Menwith Hill station the other week, can now consider the Leeds-Bradford route mileage to find out whether, before we get into the mess of privatisation, we can secure an order for new rolling stock on that section of newly electrified railway. The charges may be levied on the sort of basis that I have suggested—but the Minister will not know about that, because he is not really concerned about the charges. He is concerned only with getting the order through. Then, by hook or by crook, the revenue will come in as laid down on the valuation assessed under the order. The Minister will not be able to tell us what will happen, because he does not know. Frankly, I suspect that, provided that the revenue comes in, he does not much care.

Mr. Snape: Will my hon. Friend reflect on the likely outcome of the electrification of the Aire valley line? In the short term, the passenger transport authority will have to pick up the additional bill, but if the rateable value is increased once the overhead electrification masts are replaced and switched on, that will make it less likely that new rolling stock can or will be introduced.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. We have been battling to try to persuade the Government to incorporate expenditure on new rolling stock for the new electrified railway. In view of the massively increased administrative charges under privatisation and the difficulties that will occur in any event, the Government might have taken the

[Mr. Cryer]

expenditure into account in assessing the rateable values, and reduced the totals significantly so that the charges would represent an encouragement to provide services rather than a disincentive. I fear that there will be disincentives. My fears are not based on a belief that privatisation will be a success; privatisation is a potential disaster, as I said when the legislation was before the House—but I do not want to go over those arguments again.

I am concerned about the passengers, because it is they who will pay the revenue stipulated in the order. The passengers and freight users will be the means of providing that income. When starting on this disastrous course, the Government might have at least considered the passengers and freight users, so that we could expand the use of the railway network rather than diminish it. Under the order, I fear that it will be diminished.

Although there are emergency provisions in the legislation, if a service is diminished because a franchisee goes into liquidation and cannot sustain it, the rate revenue will be required whatever the circumstances. That is a grave fault.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): My hon. Friend mentioned Menwith Hill station. I understand that that is a GCHQ listening station, so can my hon. Friend explain why British Rail is being charged on its rateable value?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. Unfortunately, the Minister for Public Transport mistakenly thought that Menwith Hill station, which is a spy listening station, was a British Rail station. I mention that by way of explanation in response to my hon. Friend's intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker. When the Minister asked British Rail where the station was it could not tell him, for the simple reason that Menwith Hill is a 250-acre site on the moors above Harrogate, with 21 radomes. It would have made a most unusual railway station. I shall not go any further down that road, Madam Deputy Speaker, having clarified the question. Unfortunately, the mistake was due to the lack of knowledge—some may say ignorance—of the Department of Transport and of the Minister for Public Transport.

The debate has been useful and the fact that it has not gone to its full length should not detract from that. Its brevity is partly due to the narrowness of the debate and the minimal amount of information conveyed in the order, which simply refers to the current state of legislation. If British Rail is broken up—I hope that, because no franchisees come forward, that will not happen—the Government will have to examine their method of applying the rateable value, because it will no longer be possible to apply it nationally.

Because the arrangements will apply in a completely new context, I urge the Minister to provide a better explanation. There should be an explanatory note on every statutory instrument, to enable the user to understand the background as a whole. Understanding should not depend on possessing all the other relevant statutory instruments. Although no consolidation is required in this instance, statutory instruments often span a wide range of activity. It is unfair that people should have to buy three, four, five or six statutory instruments to obtain a full explanation and full knowledge of the position.

That is unfair because, as with every other activity, the Government impose a charge of such magnitude to cover services provided. People are denied the right to information, but every week cartons and cartons of discarded current public documents are taken away from this place for shredding. If the statutory instruments were given away for nothing the Government might have a case —but as they charge so much for them, the explanatory notes should give as full an account as possible.

6.59 pm

Mr. Baldry: The Opposition have tried very hard, and on occasion quite humorously, to make this order appear much more complicated than it really is. I believe that everyone now accepts that we are simply dividing 100 per cent. of what would have been paid by British Rail, if it had remained a nationalised industry, between two bodies—the British Railways Board and Railtrack. The split represents the rateable value of the prescribed property occupied by both bodies. The reason for the impossibility of bringing the order before the House earlier is that care needed to be taken in arriving at proportions for division of the relevant property. But the same property as last year stays in the formula rating; nothing changes there. The rate bill stays exactly the same as would have been the case if British Rail had remained a nationalised industry; nothing changes there. The effect on the money going to local authorities is exactly the same; nothing changes there. And the amount of money that the railways have to pay out is exactly the same as would otherwise have been the case; nothing changes there, and any suggestion that more money is being extracted from the railways is complete bunkum.

The order simply adds one ratepayer. It does no more and no less, and on that basis I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Railways (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th March, be approved.

Northern Ireland Affairs

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Madam Speaker has decided that all the amendments on the Order Paper are selected for debate but that any that are to be moved will be moved formally at the conclusion of the debate.

7.2 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I beg to move,

That Mr. James Cran, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Sir James Kilfedder, Mr. Eddie McGrady, Mr. Ken Maginnis, Mr. Jim Marshall, Mr. Peter Robinson, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Richard Spring, Mr. John D. Taylor, Mr. David Wilshire and Mr. Mark Wolfson be members of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

I should like to pay tribute to the hon. Members who serve on the Committee of Selection. We may disagree from time to time, and we often have to debate issues, but we never descend into matters of personality, and we always maintain a sense of humour. I believe, indeed, that most members of the Committee would agree that it is a pleasant one on which to serve.

The setting up of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee was always going to be a difficult matter. I do not think that any hon. Member in any part of the House would disagree with that assertion. I realise that it was impossible to accede to the requests of all the political parties involved. The minority parties are normally entitled to one place on departmental Select Committees, but there are exceptions. On the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs a Scottish nationalist Member takes one of the Labour party's places, and on the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs Plaid Cymru does likewise. The situation in Northern Ireland is different, and it is very complex. Northern Ireland has 17 constituencies. The seats are held by Members from four different political parties, none of the three major political parties on the mainland being represented. Herein lies the crux of the problem.

The unique character of Northern Ireland's parliamentary representation meant that the usual formula would have to be adapted. The Committee of Selection took into account the views of the Committee on Procedure, which had looked at the issue twice in recent years. In its 1990 report on the working of the Select Committee system, the Procedure Committee envisaged that a future Northern Ireland Select Committee would consist of 16 members, and the suggested break-down was eight Conservatives, three Labour members, two Ulster Unionist representatives, one Democratic Unionist, one Popular Unionist, and one representative of the Social Democratic and Labour party. This was revised by the Procedure Committee in December last year, when a membership of 13 or 15, which the Committee thought would be procedurally acceptable, was suggested. It was also observed—and this is a very important point—that it seemed sensible that all Northern Ireland political parties represented in the House should be represented on the Committee.

It has always been the case that the Government of the day can expect to have a majority on Committees of the House. That is not in dispute. On 9 March 1994, the House, by 324 votes to 221, approved the setting up of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and decided that it should consist of 13 members. The Committee of Selection was then faced with the task of setting up a Committee that would give all Northern Ireland parties representation, would accommodate the Opposition and would guarantee a Government majority—not an easy task. The difficulties involved in meeting all these criteria must be readily apparent to all hon. Members.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): If the Government wanted to have a majority on the Northern Ireland Select Committee, as they have on the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and every departmental Select Committee, they could have implemented the Procedure Committee's recommendation that there should be seven Government members, two Labour members and one from each of the political parties in Northern Ireland. That would have been the simplest way of dealing with the matter. Why did the Procedure Committee decide that the Select Committee should have 13 members rather than 16, with the Labour party's representation reduced by one but the Ulster Unionists' representation remaining at two?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I shall, in fairness, deal with those points in due course. The hon. Gentleman's basic point is that the Labour party should have three seats rather than two.

The composition that we decided recognises closely the Procedure Committee's original proposal, which was that the membership should consist of six Conservatives, two Labour representatives, two Ulster Unionists, one Democratic Unionist, one Popular Unionist and one SDLP representative. In 1990, the Procedure Committee recommended a Committee of 16. On that basis, the Conservatives have lost two places, having come down from eight to six, and the Labour party has lost one seat, having come down from three to two.

To ensure full participation by all the Northern Ireland parties, the Government were prepared to allow their majority to be maintained by the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder). Although there is no formal link between the Popular Unionist party and the Conservative party—the hon. Member for North Down certainly does not take the Conservative whip—the hon. Gentleman is a consistent supporter of the Government in the Division Lobbies. I suggest, in fairness, that if the boot had been on the other foot—if there had been a Labour Government and a Labour Chairman of the Committee of Selection—the Labour party would probably have taken six seats and that one seat would have gone to the SDLP, which, while it does not take the Labour whip, has a link with the Labour party and agrees with it in respect of many things. I believe that the Labour party would indeed have relied on the SDLP for its majority. It goes without saying that there can be no guarantee that the hon. Member for North Down, or, for that matter, any other hon. Member, will always support the Conservative side of the Committee.

In reply to the other point that the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) put to me, I have to say that we considered it right that the Ulster Unionists should have two places on the Committee. After all, it has more than twice as many seats as any other Northern Ireland party, and it has just over half of the Northern Ireland seats in the House. This is a Northern Ireland Committee, and it would be nonsensical to fill it with members from the mainland. The whole purpose of setting it up is to bring Northern Ireland Members together to discuss issues that are of

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concern to their constituents. Surely it is logical and reasonable for the Ulster Unionists to expect greater representation than the other Northern Ireland parties.

Mr. Dixon: How, then, does the hon. Gentleman justify the fact that the Government have a majority on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs even though there are very few Scottish Conservative Members and a majority on the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs even though there are very few Welsh Conservative Members?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The hon. Member has been in the House a long time and knows as well as I do that the Government have a majority. I do not know whether he was a Member of Parliament between 1974 and 1979, when the Labour Government lost their majority in the House. The then Opposition—the Conservative party—always accepted that the Government must have a majority on Committees. That has always been accepted.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): In view of the point that the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) has just put to my hon. Friend, I must say that the Northern Ireland situation is entirely different from those in Scotland and in Wales. We know that it is a very delicate and difficult political decision. There are exceptional problems in that area and one feels desperately sorry for the people who live there. Therefore, the Committee of Selection had to look at Northern Ireland in a different light compared with Wales and Scotland. That should deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon).

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I do not argue that our nominations are a statistically accurate reflection of the composition of the House. It is clear that the Labour party would ordinarily expect to have more than two places. However, I had hoped that Labour, like the Government, would be prepared to accept less in order to ensure that every Northern Ireland party was represented on the Committee because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) pointed out, special factors apply to Northern Ireland.

Earlier today, we had a debate on the business of the House, when the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) was rather unfair in his criticism of the Committee of Selection. The House made its decision on 9 March. I had hoped to set up the Committee on 16 March. The other Northern Ireland parties had all let me have their nominations; I did not have to ask for them. That is the usual procedure. However, there were no nominations from the SDLP.

The Clerk of the Committee, who was very efficient and hard working, spent the whole of the morning trying to find an SDLP Member. As we had no nominations from the SDLP, I deferred the setting up of the Committee for a full week. We set up the Committee in the following week when we had the nominations from the SDLP. There was no intention on our part of being unfair to the SDLP; we wanted to ensure that it had representation on the Committee.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I take cognisance of the veracity of the hon. Gentleman's statement. Nevertheless, it does not alter the fact that my party was not contacted about the proposed meeting or the subsequent meeting. I made contact because I had heard rumours in the House that there was a meeting taking place. There were no lines of communication. There was no direct contact with me or with any other members of my party to enable us to be aware that nominations were required for a meeting on a particular date. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take that as a genuine expression of the truthful position.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: There is an hon. Member who represents the minority parties in the House—he does that extremely well. When the Committee was set up, he relied on the parties concerned to get their nominations to him. That happened. The nominations came to the hon. Member or to me. All the other Northern Ireland parties got their names in on time. Because we wanted to be scrupulously fair, the meeting deferred for one week the setting up of the Committee so that the SDLP could be represented. I hope that the hon. Member for South Down understands that.

Mr. Dixon: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for continuing to intervene. Is it not a fact that at the first meeting of the Committee of Selection to set up the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs the only thing that we decided was the composition of the Committee—the number of members on the Committee from each political party? After we decided that, the meeting was adjourned for a week to allow names to come in. The SDLP could not put in any names because it did not know who would be on the Committee. Indeed, the Labour party did not put in any names because we were still arguing about whether we should have three or two positions on the Committee. At the first meeting we talked about only the composition; we talked about the names at the second meeting. There was no need to look for SDLP Members—they would not be represented because we had not decided on the representation.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: At the beginning of my remarks, I said what a pleasant Committee the Committee of Selection was. Perhaps I should rethink what I said in the light of all the hon. Gentleman's interventions. I must refresh his memory. The reason why the setting up of the Committee was deferred for one week was to get the names in. That is true.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I shall refresh my memory. I believe that the week that the hon. Gentleman is referring to was the week of the last Northern Ireland Question Time, during which my hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) and I were present. If my memory needs further refreshing and it was the previous week, that was the week that we debated the renewal of the prevention of terrorism Act when my hon. Friends the Members for South Down and for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and I were present. At least we should put that on the record, and the record will show that that is right.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. When I was explaining the procedures of the Committee, all I was trying to say was that it is up to the parties concerned to get their nominations in on time. As the House had decided that we should set up the Committee, it is funny that the other Northern Ireland parties understood that and got their names in.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am not sure whether this hard-working hon. Member from another party looks after Northern Ireland and the minority parties because I have been consulted three times in the whole Parliament by that hon. Member. That should be put on the record as well.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: A lot of things are being put on the record tonight. All I can say is that, in all the speeches that I have made in the House, I have never had so many interruptions.

There are five amendments on the Order Paper. If all five of them are carried, the Labour party would have seven members on a Committee of 13.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Hear, hear.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The hon. Gentleman says "Hear, hear". It may be very pleasant for the Labour party. Certainly it would not be pleasant for the Tory members who will be kicked off the Committee if the amendments are carried, and it would not be fair on the Northern Ireland members. We should be happy to see more Northern Ireland members on the Committee because the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs is there to look after their interests. I simply say to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg), whom I always find agreeable, that when he is asking for more members, he should remember that this Committee is for the needy, not the greedy.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Gentleman has expressed an important principle—that there is a strong case for having more Northern Ireland members on the Committee. Would he extend that principle to Scotland and Wales? Can we have more Scots on the Scottish Affairs Committee?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: If the hon. Gentleman checks, he will find that there are 11 members on both the Scottish Affairs Committee and the Welsh Affairs Committee. On the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs, we have made a great concession—there are 13 members because Northern Ireland is represented by four separate political parties. The number of members of the Committee was increased to 13 to meet that.

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): Would it be true to say that the intervention of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) overlooked the crucial fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) mentioned earlier that the two major mainland parties will not be represented in Northern Ireland and that is what makes it a different Committee from the Scottish Affairs Committee and the Welsh Affairs Committee?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I agree with my hon. Friend, who is a valuable member of the Committee of Selection. He is right that that is one of the difficulties that we had to bear in mind all the way through.

We thought of all sorts of different arrangements for the composition of the Committee. In fairness, most people would agree that, no matter what we decided, there would still be aggrieved hon. Members in the House. Several Tory Members desperately wanted to serve on the Committee, but we could not place them on it because we had only six places to fill. We voted on the six hon. Members whom we thought were the best choices. That was a great disappointment to some of my hon. Friends, and some of them have had harsh words to say to me since then.

Given the peculiar circumstances, the composition that we eventually presented to the House is as fair as it was possible to be to all the parties involved. Therefore, I hope that the House will agree with and accept our nominations.

7.18 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to move the amendment—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Speaker has instructed that the amendments will be taken formally at the end of the debate but it is perfectly in order for hon. Members to discuss them now.

Mr. McNamara: At the end of the debate, I shall beg to move the amendments standing in my name and that of my hon. Friends.

Let I say at the outset to the Government Members whom we are suggesting should be taken from the Committee that we do not attack them in any personal way. Everybody admires their sterling qualities—the problem is that they are overshadowed by the sterling qualities of my hon. Friends, whose names we have proposed.

The House will have noted that we have not put up a candidate against the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter). That is because he is a class apart—from which stream, of course, is a question for the House to judge. However, it is not true, as has been maliciously suggested, that he is regarded by the Opposition as being a member of the Ulster Unionist party. That cannot be true, as he sits on the Government Benches. However, he is the chairman of the Northern Ireland Back-Bench committee and it seems correct not to oppose his membership of the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee.

The House will have noted that the composition of a Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee is not merely a procedural parliamentary issue. It has significant political consequences. Until recently, the Government were prepared to acknowledge the wider implications of a Northern Ireland Select Committee, and accepted the need for cross-party support for it. The Northern Ireland Select Committee is not viewed in Ireland simply as an administrative issue—it has a profound symbolic significance.

A Northern Ireland Select Committee is an integral part of the Ulster Unionist party's political agenda and is seen as an integrationist measure. The fact that the Government now support the new composition is seen as evidence of their own political inclination, and belies the Government's self-proclaimed aspiration to be merely a facilitator to the agreement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why having one Select Committee looking after most of the issues affecting Northern Ireland is integrationist when having six is not?

Mr. McNamara: Had the hon. Gentleman graced our earlier debates, he would have known of the symbolic importance which is attached to the Select Committee, in particular by the Ulster Unionist party. It is part and parcel of its agenda, which includes altering the legislative procedures in the House and having a devolved assembly

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if it can have one without a broad Irish dimension. It is part and parcel of a political party's agenda, and of what was regarded as being strand 1 of the talks—

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone) *rose—*

Mr. McNamara: May I answer the question, and then I will be only too delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman? It is part and parcel of strand 1 of the talks which are now beginning to be unravelled.

Mr. Maginnis: Was it the hon. Gentleman's political philosophy that it was his task and that of his party to frustrate the wishes of the largest political party in Northern Ireland and merely to act as a spokesperson for one of the smaller political parties? There appears to be little logic in his argument that, because the Ulster Unionist party believes that there should be accountable democracy, he should set out almost single-handed to defeat it.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman flatters me if he thinks I have such power.

It is the policy of the British Labour party to work for a united Ireland by consent. It follows that any measure that is seen as being integrationist in any way or as tightening the bands between this island and Northern Ireland is something to which we are opposed. It is because of that—

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton) *rose—*

Mr. McNamara: Could I finish my point? We oppose it because we regard it as an integrationist measure.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) asked a good question, to which he has not so far had anything that amounts to an answer. How can it be more integrationist to have a single Select Committee focused on the Northern Ireland Office than to leave the affairs of that office to be treated as part and parcel of the activities of the Agriculture Committee, the Environment Committee, the National Heritage Committee, the Transport Committee and dozens of others? That appears to stand reasoned argument on its head.

Mr. McNamara: If the right hon. Gentleman does not appreciate the symbolic significance in Northern Ireland of the establishment of the Select Committee, he should not be establishing it. That is why it is being fought for. It is not being fought for to provide better administration for the Northern Ireland Office. The Leader of the House himself has said that half a dozen Committees are quite capable of doing it any way. All that the Government are doing with this Committee is increasing bureaucracy, and I thought that the Government were against increasing bureaucracy.

Mr. Bowden *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman gets truly launched, may I point out that we are concerned with the composition of the Committee and not its functions or whether or not it should be set up?

Mr. McNamara: I agree with you entirely, Madam Deputy Speaker. The points are being put to me by hon. Members, and I am trying to facilitate the debate.

Mr. Bowden: It is important that the hon. Members whom we are to put on the Committee tonight—because as you say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is what we are discussing—are more than a symbol. Surely they must form an important working group of hon. Members looking in detail at some of the serious problems which Northern Ireland is facing. Is it not a mistake just to call the Committee symbolic, as it is much deeper and more important than that?

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, I do not think that it is. The Ulster Unionist party, in a reference that it made to the press in a briefing paper, spoke of the symbolic importance of the Committee, and of restoring responsibility back to Stormont. Those are not my words but those of the UUP. That is the significance of the Committee and that is why its composition happens to be of particular importance.

The Government have claimed that they have no selfish strategic or economic interest in Ireland, but they have now allowed a selfish, petty and short-term party interest to dictate their policy towards the establishment, and therefore towards the composition, of a Northern Ireland Select Committee. The political dimension in the composition of the Committee is clear for all to see.

The negative impact of the creation of the Committee is compounded by its proposed composition. The Government are still simply replicating majority rule. Indeed, the Ulster Unionist party said in a briefing paper that the Northern Ireland Select Committee is already harking back to the Stormont regime. The population of Northern Ireland is now split roughly 43 per cent. to 57 per cent., and yet there has been no attempt to ensure that the minority community has a fair representation on the proposed Committee.

The Social Democratic and Labour party received twice as many votes as the Democratic Unionist party and 10 times as many as the Ulster Popular Unionist party, and yet it is to receive exactly the same representation on the Committee. A party that stands in just one constituency and receives just 2.5 per cent. of the votes cast in Northern Ireland—the UPUP—is to get one place on the Select Committee, and possibly even the chairmanship. That gives a completely new definition of the word popular. The SDLP has been allocated one place on the Select Committee, despite receiving 23.5 per cent. of the votes cast in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *rose—*

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect, there is only one and a half hours for the debate. The hon. Gentleman may wish to speak, and the Northern Ireland parties probably wish to contribute. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Fergus Montgomery *rose—*

Mr. McNamara: I am prepared to give way to the Chairman of the Select Committee.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The hon. Gentleman complains bitterly that the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) has been given a place. May I remind him that the Government could have taken seven places, and

only took six? The hon. Member for North Down was given a place from the Government side, which did not affect the placing of Opposition Members.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman's point would lead me to an argument that I shall advance later.

The Leader of the House said that the Government
"should expect to be able to command a majority"—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 345.]
on the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee, yet they have accepted that there should be only six Conservative places on the Committee. That is because they consider the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) to be an honorary Tory. That may be an unfair thing to say about the hon. Gentleman, but, as the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) said, the Government have conceded that the circumstances of Northern Ireland are peculiar, which is what we argued to the Secretary of State.

We suggested that both the Government and the Opposition should be prepared to surrender seats to the Northern Ireland parties. We proposed that the Government should have five seats and the Labour party four, with the remainder divided between the Northern Ireland parties. Instead, the Government allotted only two seats to the Labour party, despite the fact that it has 270 Members in the House. That is an outrageous distortion of the principle of proportionality on which the Select Committee system is supposed to be based. That gross misrepresentation cannot possibly be justified, even though the Select Committee on Selection agreed that my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) should press for three Labour members, despite our first proposal to the Secretary of State.

In Northern Ireland, such gerrymandering serves as a reminder of past abuses of power. The decision to allocate the seats in such a biased way damages the Government's reputation in Ireland and thereby damages the peace process. It is vital that, in any future inter-party talks, there is no question of the Government entering discussions with a hidden agenda, which the composition of the Committee implies that they have.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has repeatedly claimed that the Government have no blueprint or master plan, yet the decision to establish the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee with such an unrepresentative composition casts serious doubts over that assertion. Many have been left with the suspicion that the Government's squalid deal with the Ulster Unionist party has meant a series of concessions to its integrationist agenda, including changes in legislative procedures and the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee.

The biased composition of that Committee aggravates the matter still further because it means that the Conservative and Unionist party and Ulster Unionist party will have an overwhelming majority of 10 to three. Yet the Government had pledged that there would be no return to majoritarian institutions in Northern Ireland. Indeed, the Secretary of State said in speech on 20 January:
"there can be no going back to a system which has the allegiance of, and is operated by, only one part of the community."

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The hon. Gentleman has just made me a Tory.

Mr. McNamara: I can understand the hon. Gentleman's unhappiness about such a description, but it would be fair to say that, on most matters regarding Northern Ireland, he would tend to support the Unionist and Conservative and Unionist position rather than that of the Opposition. However, I am prepared, in the interests of fairness, to make it a majority of nine to four.

Such a cynical short-term policy as the Government have adopted represents a betrayal of the people of these islands. In Britain and Ireland, the overwhelming majority long for a political settlement that will bring peace to these islands. That is not helped by the composition of the new Select Committee.

Such a political settlement must inevitably include some form of devolved power-sharing assembly to govern Northern Ireland and the decision to grant the UUP the Select Committee reduces still further any possibility of agreement on a devolved assembly with a broad Irish dimension.

The Ulster Unionists have always managed to secure a large measure of their integrationist agenda. As a result, there has been no incentive for them to compromise and accept a form of devolved Government, with adequate recognition of national rights and aspirations. A devolved assembly in Northern Assembly should establish committees to monitor the government of Northern Ireland. That should not be done by a Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee at Westminster dominated by the Conservative and Unionist alliance. Those are reasons why we are concerned about the composition of the Committee.

I know that the fact that we have tabled five amendments has caused concern to Conservative Members, no more so than to the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale, who is the Chairman of the Selection Committee. He is terribly afraid that, if all the amendments were carried, the Conservative party would be left with only the hon. Member for Basingstoke on the Committee. Let me assure him that once we have carried the first two amendments, we shall cease to push for any more.

7.34 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): On behalf of the whole House, I thank the Chairman of the Select Committee on Selection, my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery), for his contribution to the debate.

It is important to remind ourselves why we are here and of the purpose that led us here. We are here to appoint Members to the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee. Our duty is to respond to resolutions and votes of the House. First, I should like to place on record, as is the fashion, that the Government by convention and precedent always have a majority of seats on Select Committees. Secondly, the House voted that the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee should have 13 members. Thirdly, the Select Committee on Procedure, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) also recommended that all Northern Ireland parties should be represented on the Select Committee.

The Selection Committee had to try, therefore, to reconcile two competing tensions. We had to accommodate a Government majority in the Committee of 13 members and to accommodate all the parties represented in Ulster. That would pose a difficulty for the Government if they stuck with the concept of a majority. For that reason and that reason alone, the Selection Committee decided to give up one of the Government's places on the Select Committee to the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J.

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Kilfedder), thereby allowing the Selection Committee to accommodate the recommendation that all parties should be represented on the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee.

I became slightly confused by the comments of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on the concept of representation by proportion of population and membership of this House. After all, many parties stand for election to the United Kingdom Parliament and do not win seats. The logic of his argument is that those people who vote for parties that are not represented in the House should, by some process of osmosis, be represented on Select Committees. We can appoint only Members of this House to Select Committees. We have no power to do anything else. The way in which our recommendation has accommodated all the parties in Northern Ireland is the right way forward.

It is not for us to argue the pros and cons of a Select Committee for Northern Ireland. The House has voted for it. In the same way, I presume that the House voted for Select Committees for Wales and for Scotland. Equally, I could argue that my county of Kent, which is represented by 16 Members, should have a Select Committee. I do not intend to do so; it would not be wise or sensible. As Kentish Members we can make a major contribution to the work of the Conservative party. The logic of the argument of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has to stop somewhere, and it must stop here tonight.

The important point is that the Selection Committee is abiding by a requirement of the House. Hon. Members should, therefore, think carefully before voting for the amendments that have been tabled by the official Opposition. They would destroy the work of the Selection Committee, which is so ably chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale.

7.38 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and to clarify one or two misunderstandings. In the light of the comment by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on the 53 per cent. to 47 per cent. division of Northern Ireland's population, I was perhaps fortunate to be told this morning that two people from Northern Ireland told the papal nuncio in Dublin that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and I were their pastors. I make it abundantly plain that in this House we represent a broad cross-section of the people in Northern Ireland, not the sectarian head count that has been set forth here tonight. We represent the constituents who sent us here.

I also happen to be one of the few Northern Ireland Members who have served consistently on a Select Committee of the House. Although we did our best to include Northern Ireland, we could do it only on occasions. Other things had to be done. To criticise the setting up of a Select Committee for Northern Ireland on the ground that there are six already and it is an integrationist approach, fails to recognise that the Members whom we appoint tonight to that Select Committee will have the task of scrutinising intimately the Northern Ireland Office, which will remain, irrespective of what happens in a devolutionary settlement in Northern Ireland.

In that context, I have been perplexed about why this elongated debate is taking place. I remember only two other occasions when the membership of a Select Committee necessitated a Division. Speaking for the Ulster Unionist party, when we found out that there were so many seats on other Select Committees for Members from Northern Ireland we could have put up four names, but we put up two names to allow the other parties in Northern Ireland to be represented. In the broader pattern of Select Committees, Northern Ireland parties have been under-represented as a result of the failure of parties to put forward representatives. Therefore, I welcome the fact that a Committee that is to monitor—scrutinise—the Northern Ireland Office will have a broad cross-section of members from Northern Ireland.

Perhaps it will be worth while, since other hon. Members have been refreshing memories, if I put on record the fact that although the Select Committee system is reputed to have taken its inspiration from the American Congress, Lord Glenamara recalls in his book, "Whip to Wilson" that Lord Wilson advocated such an idea in the 1960s. It is fascinating that Labour Front-Bench Members are using delaying tactics to prevent it from being set up now.

It is also worth remembering that it was under the Labour Administrations of Lords Wilson, Callaghan and Foot that the system was developed, before being brought to fruition in 1979 under Lord St. John of Fawsley, then Leader of the House in the new Conservative Government.

When we bear in mind the fact that, in 1970, the Labour party demonstrated a clear understanding of the need for an accountable democracy, there seems to have been some change in pattern. Admittedly, that Administration were kept in power by the Ulster Unionist party and colleagues, who supported them—you will recognise this sentence by now, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

"so long as they governed in the best interests of the United Kingdom in general, and of Northern Ireland in particular".

That Labour party presided over Northern Ireland's great democratic change in 1970—the redrawing of constituency boundaries, which gave fairer representation to the people of Northern Ireland. It was implied tonight that the people of Northern Ireland, especially the Unionists, had been guilty of gerrymandering, but it is interesting to note that it was pressure from a Northern Ireland Assembly and the Members of the House which led to the Speaker's Conference that ultimately granted us better proportional representation in the House and which allowed more representatives of the nationalist community to come to the House. We have to keep those things clearly in mind, even though I admit that some people might disagree with it.

What is wrong with the motion tonight, which purportedly would give a better distribution of the seats? Like the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I have nothing against the nominees from the Conservative party, or the nominees from the parties in Northern Ireland and I believe that the Labour party has a right to nominate its own representatives.

We shall all discover that, despite newspaper headlines that seek to portray a scenario such as "Tory-dominated Committee savages Government", the task of a Select Committee, irrespective of what party its members come from, is to scrutinise the affairs of the Department and the Government and, in the light of the evidence, to bring a report to the House. I do not doubt that in the chemistry of

a Select Committee there will be movement; there will be changes of opinion. I should like to think that hon., as well as right hon., Ladies and Gentlemen would go with the evidence rather than simply being in a partisan mood.

I find it difficult to understand how Members of the House who support accountable democracy can listen to the arguments made tonight by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. According to a recent speech by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North in the House, he does not object in principle to the Select Committee system but does object to such a system being extended to Northern Ireland. What nonsense! We see here at work a republican agenda, which seeks to separate Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom.

Amazingly enough, it was Mr. Haughey and later Mr. Reynolds who, publicly and privately—although perhaps privately they said some things differently to different people—said that it was the responsibility of the House to decide how it scrutinises the Departments of its own Government; it was not a matter for the Dublin Government or anyone outside the House.

Tonight I am happy to support the motion.

Mr. Maginnis: I do not want to quarrel with my hon. Friend at this stage, but it is a misnomer to describe the agenda of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) as a republican agenda. Tonight it was obviously a bitter, sectarian agenda, as we heard from the figures that he misquoted. It is the type of performance that we hear from bitter third generation expatriates and we would not even hear it from representatives of the nationalist community.

Rev. Martin Smyth: My hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) makes his own point, but I say to him that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North wishes to remain British but seeks to deny the people of Northern Ireland their right to have the affairs of their Province scrutinised by their Parliament.

Does it not seem strange when we contrast the efforts of the shadow Northern Ireland spokesman to thwart the democratic process with the amazing conversion of, and support for, the British judicial system shown by the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams? Mr. Adams has seen the light and has chosen to throw himself, with a bag of British taxpayers' legal aid gold in his pocket, on the mercy of British courts in an effort to regain the right to peddle word of his organisation's terrorism throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman is going rather wide of the motion. Will he get back to it?

Rev. Martin Smyth: I have no difficulty getting back to it, but the comparison still stands and the people of Northern Ireland know the very point. It is amusing that for—

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Before he finishes his interesting speech, will he take the opportunity at least to distance himself and the Ulster Unionist party from the remarks that were made about the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and, indeed, about many right hon. and hon. Members of the House who are first, second and third generation Irish and have no trace of sectarianism about them, as my hon. Friend has not? I think that it is incumbent on that party to distance itself from that remark, in the interests of fairness.

Rev. Martin Smyth: In the interests of fairness, I will say to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) that he has made his point, as the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. McGrady) made his point. As far as I am concerned, as I am speaking on behalf of my colleagues here, I support the motion and I trust that the House stands firmly behind the recommendations of the Committee of Selection. I also pay tribute to the representative of the minority parties, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who consults those who should be consulted.

7.49 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I was amazed—perhaps I should not have been—at the speech by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). He put forward a series of arguments about why the House should not have a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs and why we should not be voting Members on to that Committee.

It was strange because the hon. Gentleman talked about strand 1 of the talks held in Northern Ireland. He was not present at those talks and does not know what he is talking about. The basis of the strand 1 talks was to find a way to govern Northern Ireland and, once that was settled, to decide what relationship the Government or Administration would have with Dublin. To suggest that the Government are now breaking their pledge on strand 1 and that they should not be democratically accountable to the House through their own Select Committee is ridiculous. I do not know how the hon. Gentleman feels about strand 1, but it has nothing to do with whether the House has a Select Committee. At the strand 1 talks, everyone except the SDLP agreed that the Select Committee was a matter for this House and that the House should do for Northern Ireland what it does for every other part of the United Kingdom. That shows that the hon. Gentleman's argument was in tatters before he started his speech tonight.

The hon. Gentleman went on to say that, because the Government have said that they have no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland remaining within the United Kingdom, they should not set up the Select Committee. The Select Committee will look at the present government of Northern Ireland. Will not the people of Northern Ireland be allowed to scrutinise their own Government as those in every other part of the United Kingdom do?

The hon. Gentleman argued that, because the Government have said that they have no selfish, strategic or economic interests in keeping Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom if the majority of people in Northern Ireland do not want to remain within it, Northern Ireland should cease to have the same sort of government as the rest of the United Kingdom. He also argued that we were breaking with the status quo, but we are only establishing it. Every other part of the United Kingdom has that privilege.

Why should not we be allowed to have the Government scrutinised and to look at how they govern Northern Ireland? Why should not we be allowed to ask how the

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money is spent? Why should not we be allowed to question civil servants, who have a hundred times more power in Northern Ireland today than they ever had—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Will the hon. Gentleman get back to the establishment of the Committee rather than arguing for it?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I should have thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the members of the Committee were the right people to find out what this matter is about and to scrutinise it. I am responding to the various suggestions made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. Those must be answered, for the people of Northern Ireland will say to us—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This debate is about the constitution of the Committee. If the hon. Gentleman will stick to that, he will be in order; otherwise, he will not.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North also mentioned some percentages. I noticed that he conveniently left out the fact that, in the European elections, the Ulster Democratic Unionist party took 30 per cent. of the vote. He forgot all about that. He also discovered a statistic that the Roman Catholic population now represents almost 50 per cent. of the people of Northern Ireland. It is amazing that he puts up those arguments in recommending—I am coming to the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that more Labour party members should be on the Committee. If this Committee is so wretched and bad and should not exist, the hon. Gentleman should ask to give up his party's two seats on it and let other Northern Ireland Members get on the Committee to do the work in which they are interested.

The hon. Gentleman's argument is ridiculous. May I say on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland that this debate is a microcosm of what has happened in Northern Ireland throughout the years. No progress can be made because certain people will not let us, except if it is progress towards Dublin and a united Ireland. Tonight's debate simply holds up the people of Northern Ireland from having the same rights as people in the rest of the Kingdom.

We have argued about the basis of the Committee. My party has no seat on any Select Committee in the House because we were never offered a seat. I was thrown off the Select Committee on Agriculture and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) was put on it. He had to be taken off the Agriculture Committee because he did not attend, whereas I was a good attender. I do not know who is responsible for the Committee of Selection, but my party has never been approached to have a member on any Select Committee. I raised that matter with the Prime Minister and he said, "Oh, we'll see about it." So I could have a grouse tonight and say that, although my party has three Members in the House, we sit on no Select Committee.

I pay tribute to the Chairman of the Select Committee, who did a difficult job. What would be better than to have every party represented? After all, at the talks we have a party that has no members in the House—the Alliance party. Yet because one Member has his own party—the UPUP—and has been returned to the House, the Labour party thinks that he should have no say and should not be allowed on the Select Committee. It is reasonable that all parties from Northern Ireland should be on the Committee.

Other members of the Committee do not know the whole position, the questions to ask or what needs to be probed. They do not know the difficulties that we have in Northern Ireland and they will depend largely on the representatives from Northern Ireland to put the questions that need to be put.

I am sure that the Government are not over-enthusiastic about that. Their civil servants have already told me that they are not and—I do not refer to those presently in the Box. They must realise that the tragedy of Northern Ireland, where we have been unable to scrutinise the Government, must come to an end. The Committee can do that job and I hope that it will do it well. Under the circumstances, it is reasonable to have the numbers proposed on the Order Paper.

7.57 pm

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): May I say a few words in support of the Select Committee and the amendments in the name of my hon. Friends?

A Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs is long overdue and I am pleased that it is being set up. There is an amazing democratic deficit in Northern Ireland and the people of Northern Ireland are neglected in all sorts of ways. Before getting back to a devolved Government in Northern Ireland, the least that we can do is to get this Select Committee going and begin the scrutiny that is needed.

I support the membership of my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) and in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who has done an enormous amount of work on Northern Ireland matters and who put forward his name for the original selection list. I hope that he will get on the Committee.

Some of my hon. Friends and I are sad that my party still does not allow people in Northern Ireland to join it. We are rightly asking for more Labour Members to serve on the Select Committee, yet if I went back to live in Northern Ireland I could not remain a member of the Labour party. That is disgraceful. My party needs to deal with that problem—indeed, it is dealing with it.

Recently members of the Union of Communications Workers and the Amalgamated Engineering Union were asked whether they should have the right in Northern Ireland to join the Labour party. Protestants and Catholics alike overwhelmingly stated that they wanted the right to join the Labour party and wished that they had the right to vote for it. That is not to say—unfortunately—that they would all vote Labour, but our party should at the very least be in Northern Ireland arguing for our policies and organising. Only in that way can we in the Opposition claim really to represent the people of Northern Ireland.

Attitudes to the people of Northern Ireland are often patronising. Every time we hear of another dreadful incident, we say that they just want to fight and kill each other. Yet the Labour party does not give those people the chance to cross the sectarian divide and to join a party that would fight for their jobs, their health service and so on.

I know that this debate is about only one aspect of the situation—the setting up of the Select Committee—but I hope that it will mark a new recognition of the fact that, as

long as the people of Northern Ireland want to stay part of the United Kingdom, they should have the same rights and responsibilities as everyone else. And that means that the Labour party should be involved. If it were, we could change the whole nature of politics in Northern Ireland.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East is elected to the Select Committee tonight. I hope that that Committee will carry out the scrutiny of Northern Ireland affairs that they so desperately need and give the people of Northern Ireland back their faith that the people in this part of the United Kingdom care about them and understand what is happening there.

8.1 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): As a member of the Committee of Selection, I cannot resist pointing out that until this evening I used to wonder why that Committee holds all those difficult meetings. Now that I have witnessed this debate in the House I can see the justification for all the work that we do in the Committee. Certainly, there have been robust exchanges of irreconcilable views this evening.

I pay tribute to the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). His is a difficult job. Although I do not entirely accept the recommendation that our Committee put to the House, I believe that the hon. Gentleman did everything conceivably possible to try to reach a consensus. The fact that that proved impossible was not for want of trying on his part. The House owes him a debt for the work that he did, even though a consensus eluded him.

It is always difficult to reconcile competing interests of this sort, as the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) pointed out. Some of the cross-currents cannot meet smoothly, especially since the Procedure Committee set out the rules to be followed, in the form of the motion that the House passed a few weeks ago.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) saying that his interests were not vigorously represented in the Committee of Selection. I take it that he would like to serve on more Committees scrutinising rating and valuation statutory instruments. Good Unionist that he is, I am sure that he would love to gain my recommendation that he serve on such Committees. If his name does appear on future Committee lists, he will learn that casting aspersions on members of the Committee of Selection can have its downside.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North did make a serious point, however. He was worried about the lack of places for minority parties on Select Committees. The rules of proportionality for Select Committees make it difficult to guarantee places for parliamentary groupings of only three hon. Members. As the unofficial shop steward for the minority parties, I do my best to ensure an element of rotation—but I completely understood the hon. Gentleman's complaint.

This Select Committee is extremely necessary. That is why I found the speech by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) perplexing. I could not follow the logic of what he was trying to say. He was looking for bogeymen around every corner. Whatever birth pangs may have attended the setting up of this Committee, I hope that they will in no way make it more difficult to achieve a satisfactory resolution of the issues with which it will be concerned.

The working methods used by Select Committees—the hallmark of their success—are needed now more than ever in the Province. The hon. Member for Antrim, North rightly said that there are urgent and compelling issues to do with the governance of the Province that need scrutinising—how money is allocated, and so on. There is much work to be done; I hope that the Committee will get on with it.

The membership is not satisfactory from the point of view of the Liberal Democrats. The Chairman of the Committee of Selection said, I think, that a statistical balance had to be observed. Arithmetically speaking, he was right; but he must accept that my party played a robust part in setting up the Committee. We have always said that it should be set up, yet we have been denied membership of it. The hon. Gentleman and I have gone into the reasons for that at exhaustive length, but it is a shame that my party has not been able to nominate anyone to serve.

Certain alternatives should have been canvassed. For instance, do the Government really need a majority? It would have been better if the Select Committee covering Northern Ireland had left the Government without a majority. That would have enabled it more comprehensively to represent the shades of opinion from the Province.

The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale said that the Alliance party has no representative in the House but has a role to play. It is essential that the strand of opinion which it represents be given a voice in the conduct of the affairs of the Province—if that is true of Northern Ireland in general, it is even more true for the membership of this Committee.

Mr. Norman Hogg: The hon. Gentleman says that he is dissatisfied with the selection that has been made, but he has not yet said how his party intends to vote on the amendments. I commend to him amendment (c)—I have done many things in politics, but I have never before been an amendment. I hope that he will feel able to support it.

Mr. Kirkwood: I can give the hon. Gentleman the satisfaction that he seeks. There is no one I would more like to see on the Committee. Speaking as a fellow Presbyterian, I know the hon. Gentleman's prejudices well, and I look forward to giving him the opportunity to argue for them at length in the Select Committee.

Mr. Mallon: I do not wish to interfere in this Presbyterian convention, but is there any significance in the fact that amendment (c) is to leave out Mr. Dick Spring?

Mr. Kirkwood: I would be out of order if I answered that.

There is always a danger of pigeonholing people. I hope that that danger can be averted on the Select Committee. While it is reasonable that people will want to advance the political point of view of their parties, I hope that they will not be stuck in the trenches of party-political warfare. The Select Committee would suffer as a result. I should have liked more imagination and flexibility from the Government. For example, they could have set up a joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament. It would have provided access to talent from the other place—people with distinguished careers and experience in the Province—and made the structure and composition of the Committee that much easier. A number of other

[Mr. Kirkwood]

possibilities could have been considered to make the composition better suited to the range of political opinion and community interests in Northern Ireland.

In conclusion, as the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) requested, although I repeat my tribute to the Chairman of the Committee of Selection and all our labours to get the circle squared, I cannot support the current membership of the Committee. I shall vote accordingly and ask my hon. Friends to support all the amendments, particularly amendment (c) which seeks to include the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. Why he wants to spend time trying to wrestle with the intractable problems that the Select Committee will face defeats me. We could achieve a better reconciliation of the different views by putting forward a different membership of the Committee, and I shall recommend that my hon. Friends vote accordingly.

8.10 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): I shall be brief. I add my tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Mongomery). His dignity and understanding of other people's points of view enables the Committee of Selection to work effectively. It is a great service to the House that we manage to iron out most problems and ensure they do not reach the House. It is regrettable that tonight we have not achieved as much as we have in the past.

The Northern Ireland Select Committee will make an important contribution to the affairs of Northern Ireland, so its composition is absolutely vital. I return to an intervention that I made regarding the description of the Committee. Of course it can be called a symbolic Committee, but its composition will ensure that it is much more than that; it is representative of the people of Northern Ireland and it will have the widespread powers that are available to Select Committees in the House. When the Committee is in full operation, the important role that it can play will be seen in Northern Ireland.

I agree with the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) that it is a pity that the Committee was not established some time ago. Nobody suggests that it will produce magic answers to many of the appallingly difficult problems in Northern Ireland, but it will have a major contribution to make in relation to the views that it will hear from the range of witnesses that it will be able to call, on whatever topic it decides to investigate in detail.

The composition was a difficult decision for the Committee of Selection and now we have to decide it in the House tonight. The recommendations are just about right and, frankly, I believe that the time has now come to get the Committee established and operating as quickly as possible, to allow it to make its contribution to the grave problems facing all the people of Northern Ireland. Let us stop the talking and get the Committee set up.

8.13 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate, however briefly.

Hon. Members present tonight may not have attended the debate this afternoon, or the debate on 9 March in which I tried to argue that, although some hon. Members might think that we are engaged in procedural matters of the House, we are without doubt involved in a political decision.

I am glad to see the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister of State on the Front Bench. Earlier today, I quoted some of his comments that suggested that the Committee could not and should not be formed unless it had two qualifications: first, that it had cross-community support in Northern Ireland, and secondly, that it had cross-party support in the House. Neither of those two qualifications is present, yet the decision has been made to go ahead.

The reason can be seen in the timing of the announcement by the Leader of the House—24 hours after the Downing street declaration. The announcement was on 16 December, the day after 15 December. After all the words of the previous two years, the statements by Ministers were wiped out by that action, which clearly demonstrated that we are engaged in a political rather than a procedural process this evening.

I know that I will not be allowed to continue this train of debate, because we are talking about the Select Committee—its composition, numbers and representation —yet it is important because it affects our view of the integrity of the Government's even-handed approach to the affairs of Northern Ireland.

As to the composition of the Committee as proposed by the Committee of Selection, the best yardstick one can use is the popular vote, which was obtained in June 1987 at the last general election. On that basis, it would appear that my party, the Social Democratic and Labour party, is the only party among all those in the House from Northern Ireland which is under-represented. The other three are over-represented, by however marginal a fraction. One at least is over-represented by a factor of 10.

I listened with great interest to the ingenious arguments of earlier speakers.

Mr. Peter Robinson: I would be interested to hear how the hon. Gentleman works out the statistics. We are discussing a Select Committee of a United Kingdom Parliament. Every party in Northern Ireland represented on the Select Committee is over-represented when taken against the whole United Kingdom figure.

Mr. McGrady: I do not know whether or not to thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. Much has been made of the quality of representation from the Northern Ireland political parties. I reiterate the point that my party, the SDLP, is the only party which is under-represented on the Committee, and that each of the other parties is over-represented.

Some earlier speeches suggested that the Popular Unionist nomination, the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder), was not a Northern Irish nomination but was the Government representative—a Tory, but not a card-carrying member of the Tory party. I remind those who made that suggestion of the debates in the House on the Maastricht treaty and on the closure of the mines, when Ministers referred to the Conservative and Unionist party, looking at the Members of the House who sit behind me in the official Unionist parties, or whatever name they wish to use.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Neither provisional nor official.

Mr. McGrady: But they used to be official.

Why did the Government not carry forward the logic of their statements—that the appointees of the Unionist parties in Northern Ireland were extensions of the Conservative party—when their brethrenship had been claimed at the Dispatch Box on two vital occasions in the past 12 months? I find that argument disingenuous.

The fact that it is an unfair allocation of seats is not the opinion of my party alone. I have a one-sentence quotation from a editorial from the *Belfast Telegraph*, which cannot be described as a nationalist newspaper:

"The membership, six Conservatives, two Labour, two Ulster Unionists, one DUP, one Popular Unionist and one SDLP, does not mirror the political balance in the province".

As I have said, that newspaper has no nationalist leanings whatever.

Except in regard to the political aspect referred to earlier, proportionality has not applied. It will be a great pity if the Government do not take this opportunity to display even-handedness. No later than December 1993, the central community relations unit of the Northern Ireland Office issued a circular—5/93—which stated categorically that the Government must not only respect equality of representation when dealing with various communities, but be proactive in achieving that. In my view, they have signally failed to be proactive this evening in supporting the Select Committee's recommendations; we shall therefore vote against the motion.

Reference has been made to correspondence, and the way in which arrangements for nominations were made vis-a-vis my party. Having heard accidentally that the Committee of Selection was meeting, I sent a fax to its Chairman, dated 16 March. I received his reply on 17 March, when we were all present for Northern Ireland Question Time. I took on board what the Chairman had said, and we then submitted our nominations on 19 March. The process could not have taken place more swiftly or accurately.

Until then, no communication of any nature regarding the meetings, appointments or procedures of the Select Committee was made known, through the so-called usual channels, to my party or any member of it.

8.21 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Let me make two linked points.

We ought to be concerned about a question that has not been answered tonight: when has each of the six Select Committees currently considering Northern Ireland administration looked into certain issues? Between 1989 and 1990, when I served in the Northern Ireland Office, the Select Committee on Environment visited Northern Ireland, questioned me here and produced a report. I have served for a year on the Select Committee on Transport; that Committee has not considered Northern Ireland issues, and, as far as I am aware, other Committees have not done so either.

I believe that the new proposal will bring more Northern Ireland Members on to the Committee, which is why I support the recommendations of the Committee of Selection. I hope that, after tonight's votes, Northern Ireland will receive more attention, with more Northern Ireland Members and others considering the issues; that Departments will become more accountable; and that the people of Northern Ireland will benefit.

8.22 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): If anyone had any illusions about the problems involved in legislating for Northern Ireland, today's debates should have dispelled them. We have spent about four hours debating the matter, and the Select Committee has not even met yet.

I speak with the advantage of having been nominated for membership of the Committee, and I am actually looking forward to it: I think that it will be very interesting. I hope that people will not think that I am a masochist. Let me say to the Government—and to the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery), who made a pretty good fist of a difficult job—that the numbers problem is a problem for Northern Ireland Select Committees in any event. The Unionists may not be so keen on the experiment in the coming months.

As always in Northern Ireland, the problem is that legislation takes place in a way that shows the area to be different from the rest of the United Kingdom. In an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale, the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) mentioned the special delicacy involved in Northern Ireland legislation: it is that special delicacy which makes Northern Ireland different.

Let me tell my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) that all three political parties that organise, vote, campaign, put up candidates and so on in Great Britain do not do so in Northern Ireland, for very good reasons. People in Northern Ireland are quite capable of organising a Labour, Tory or Liberal party, but do not choose to do so, because the question of the border is too important.

When the Tory party tried to organise there, it was crushed; when the Liberal party toyed with the idea, it was wisely advised not to become involved by the Alliance party, which presented itself as something like the Liberal party in Northern Ireland, and still does so.

There used to be a Northern Ireland Labour party—a small party, which once told me that there was a strong case for putting a gas pipeline between Northern Ireland and Scotland, that there was a far better case for that than for putting it through the south of Ireland. The party argued on the basis of there being more jobs. I am a great believer in creating more jobs, but the real reason was that the party was tending towards the Unionist position.

Rev. Martin Smyth *rose—*

Mr. Soley: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me; I have not much time to make this point.

If the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale were setting up a Select Committee dealing with Scottish or Welsh affairs—which he is obliged to do in his capacity—he would seek to put only Scottish or Welsh Members on that Committee. The one thing that changes the position is the existence of a Government without a majority.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) made a good point when he said that the Government should not automatically have a majority on Select Committees, but the reality is that they do. In fact, both the main political parties would support that, because in government they would want that arrangement.

The hon. Gentleman said, very fairly and bluntly, that this was a political question: it was about political power. As political power in this country comes not from the barrel of a gun but from the ballot box, there is a case for

[Mr. Soley]

that argument, but the hon. Gentleman knows that in Scotland only Scottish Members would be involved. The only reason for the existence of English Members on the Scottish Select Committee is the fact that the Government have no majority there, and they stack the Committee with English Members to make up the numbers.

Logically, a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs should consist only of Northern Ireland Members, except when the Government must stack it with English Members to obtain a majority. Straight away, we see the anomaly. As I have told the Unionists, the same applies to the Government of Ireland Act 1947, which states that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom for as long as it wishes. The same legislation cannot be framed for England, Scotland or Wales. It is there only because no British political party for donkey's years has treated Northern Ireland as a normal part of the United Kingdom—and we shall not be doing so again.

Having said that, let me add that we are going to have a Northern Ireland Committee, and we must make it work. My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall was right in one respect: Northern Ireland does not receive the coverage it deserves. However, we are not going about it in the right way by establishing a Select Committee. It is very important that the Committee does not become a mini-Stormont; if it does, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), and others who have spoken, will have their worst nightmares proved correct.

It was the Stormont parliament—which was virtually a one-party state—that produced so many of the problems with which we are now trying to cope in Northern Ireland. Other hon. Members have also referred to it as a one-party state—but, to be fair, the new Unionist parties have now splintered into several different groups.

Let me say to any Conservative Members who will be with me on the Committee that I hope they will join me in encouraging it to meet occasionally—I emphasise the word "occasionally" deliberately, because of what I just said—in Northern Ireland. That would be useful. It would also be useful if they joined me in suggesting that the Committee visited Dublin from time to time; it will need to do so. *[Interruption.]* Again, we see divisions of opinion, but this is very important. We should meet in Dublin and in Northern Ireland because—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not talking about where the Committee should meet; I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is well aware of what the motion says.

Mr. Soley: You are absolutely right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point is that Unionist Members will want the Committee to meet in Northern Ireland; they will not want it to meet in Dublin.

As Select Committee members, we must ensure that the Committee examines the problems of Northern Ireland in a bipartisan way. That is why the membership is important: it is useful for the Committee to have non-Unionist members from both sides of the House, because it is impossible to consider such matters as transport, agriculture, industrial investment, tourism and many other matters in Northern Ireland without also examining the link with southern Ireland—for instance, electricity prices and the price of the national grid for the whole of Ireland.

Those issues would not be addressed in that way by Unionist Members. In a perverse way, the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale was right to ensure that hon. Members from both sides of the House were represented on the Committee. He will not be surprised to hear me say that where he has gone badly wrong is that he has too few Labour Members. In an intervention, he made it perfectly clear why he wanted only two Labour Members on the Committee. He thought that, if there were to be a Labour Government, the Tories would have only two members. He may be right.

However, I hope that we would not have set up the Select Committee in this way, because Northern Ireland needs something better than a Select Committee. It needs proper legislation which addresses the needs of the Unionists and the republicans in Northern Ireland, and the relationship between the north of Ireland and the south. Until we do that, Northern Ireland will always be under-represented.

8.30 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): This is one of the better attended meetings on Northern Ireland. I hope that, by getting more involved in the affairs of Northern Ireland, the members of the Select Committee will join those of us who are concerned about Northern Ireland affairs when, late at night, we discuss appropriation measures, which are the equivalent of the Budget in Northern Ireland.

There is a great deal in which people can become involved. If the POLIS record—the parliamentary on-line information service—is examined, it will be discovered that the Conservative Members who have been placed on the Committee, with the exception of the chairman of their Back-Bench committee, have not, until now, been much involved in Northern Ireland matters in the House. That does not mean that they should not be on the Committee, as it will provide an opportunity for them to become interested in these matters.

It can do nothing but benefit Northern Ireland if we are all be interested in its affairs and concerned about its well-being.

It being one and a half hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Questions which he was directed to put at that hour, pursuant to Order this day.*

Amendment proposed to the Question: (a), leave out 'Mr. James Cran' and insert 'Mr. Thomas McAvoy'.—*[Mr. McNamara.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 239, Noes 312.

Division No. 184] **[8.31 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bell, Stuart
Adams, Mrs Irene	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Bennett, Andrew F.
Allen, Graham	Benton, Joe
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Bermingham, Gerald
Armstrong, Hilary	Berry, Dr. Roger
Ashton, Joe	Betts, Clive
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Blunkett, David
Barnes, Harry	Boateng, Paul
Barron, Kevin	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Battle, John	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Bayley, Hugh	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret	Burden, Richard
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Byers, Stephen

Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas

Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed to the Question: (b), leave out 'Mr. Charles Hendry' and insert 'Mr. Harry Barnes'.—*[Mr. McNamara.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 241, Noes 313.

Division No. 185] **[8.44 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria

Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard

Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed to the Question: (c), leave out 'Mr. Richard Spring' and insert 'Mr. Norman Hogg'.—*[Mr. McNamara.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 239, Noes 307.

Division No. 186] **[8.56 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*

Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings, and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony

Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed to the Question: (d), leave out 'Mr. David Wilshire' and insert 'Mr. Andrew Mackinlay'. —[*Mr. McNamara.*]

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 235, Noes 308.

Division No. 187] **[9.08 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart

Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter

Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed to the Question: (e), leave out 'Mr. Mark Wolfson' and insert 'Mr. Austin Mitchell'.—[*Mr. McNamara.*]

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 234, Noes 307.

Division No. 188] **[9.21 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*

Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put and agreed to.
Ordered,

That Mr. James Cran, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Sir James Kilfedder, Mr. Eddie McGrady, Mr. Ken

Maginnis, Mr. Jim Marshall, Mr. Peter Robinson, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Richard Spring, Mr. John D. Taylor, Mr. David Wilshire and Mr. Mark Wolfson be members of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

European Social Policy

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10401/93, relating to European social policy; and shares the Government's view that future social policy in the Community should promote jobs and competitiveness and not impose unnecessary costs on industry.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

The House divided: Ayes 300, Noes 211.

Division No. 189] **[9.33**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard

Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Shipbuilding (Wearside)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

9.44 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I want to speak tonight about the one remaining shipyard on the River Wear in Sunderland. Sad to say, it is mothballed now. A certain air of mystery and a certain amount of misunderstanding surround this whole business, which is why I am pleased to bring it to the attention of the House.

Earlier today, I was in South Shields, at a function organised by the RMT union: the function was organised on behalf of the seamen's campaign known as Save Our Shipping. At the meeting, it was pointed out that the British merchant fleet is now 20 per cent. of the size it was in 1979. That statistic coincides almost exactly with the running down of the British shipbuilding industry.

Recently, an early-day motion on the subject of British shipping and Government intervention was tabled and signed by 70 Conservative Members. I only wish that they would all vote with the Opposition; then we could reverse the seemingly irreversible drift towards the decimation of our merchant fleet and of our remaining shipyards.

My predecessor, Bob Clay, was the Member for Sunderland, North when the last two shipyards on the Wear came under threat in 1988. I pay tribute to his attempts to keep at least one of those shipyards open. The best site on the river, the former Thompson shipyard—capable of launching ships of 100,000 tonnes draught carrying capacity—was sterilised by the Tyne and Wear development corporation. As most people know, the corporation is an arm of Government and carries out Government instructions on how localities are to be run.

Unfortunately, it was decided to build a university campus on the site, and on the site of the adjoining wharf, an excellent fitting out yard. The river is therefore almost denuded of shipbuilding capacity, and the one yard that is left, run by Pallion Engineering Ltd, has been mothballed. It is about a mile and a half up the river and it cannot produce such large ships anyway. It is nothing like as good a site as the Thompson site would have been.

In 1957, when I started serving my apprenticeship as a fitter at the Austin Pickersgill yard at Southwick, there were no fewer than seven shipyards on the River Wear —all extremely viable. Because the old merchant fleet was to be gradually replaced at the time, it appeared that there were many years of work to come. All that started to collapse in the 1960s, however, and eventually only two yards were left—one of them, Pickersgills, the most modern yard in Europe. It built the famous SD14 cargo ships, which were acclaimed throughout the world for their quality and utility.

Nevertheless, the quality did not seem to stop the yard closing. It became obvious that the EC, together with the British Government, was determined to get rid of all shipbuilding capacity on the River Wear. Bob Clay was active in trying to keep open some remnant of the industry, and he was instrumental in setting up what became known as Pallion Engineering. This was a fairly unusual company, in as much as 75 per cent. of it was owned by a Greek shipping conglomerate, Tycoon Marine, which was registered in Liberia: beggars cannot be choosers. The other 25 per cent. was owned by a works co-operative known as an ESOP—an employee share ownership plan.

Well-wishers put their money into the concern on behalf of the workers; it would have been nice if they had had some return for their good work, because their motives were of the best philanthropic kind.

It took almost two years to get agreement that the Pallion yard would be leased for a period of 10 years for a down payment and also a peppercorn rent. I had heard of a peppercorn rent, but only once have I seen a lease that mentioned that the annual rent would be one peppercorn. Not being a lawyer, I thought it was a derisory term, but we live and learn.

Eventually, it was agreed that the yard would be leased and that at the end of the 10-year period it would become the property of the conglomerate. I know Bob Clay and others who worked tirelessly in the campaign, including my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), who was the convener of the campaign to keep the yard open, and Jacquie Apperley, who is now my research assistant and who also worked with Bob Clay. Everyone was under the impression that there would be no shipbuilding, ship repair or maritime work for five years and that at the end of five years the position would be re-examined. There was a strong possibility that, by then, it would be possible to continue with some shipbuilding work. I have spoken to numerous people, and what happened subsequently was quite amazing.

The yard staggered on; it was always run on a shoestring, yet the Greeks probably put more than £1 million into the yard to maintain it as a going concern so that should there be an upturn in trade it could be utilised.

As the end of the five-year term approached, the Greek shipowners made it obvious that they wanted to use their property to carry out some ship repair work. They produced a business plan which would have led to the employment initially of perhaps 250 people, eventually increasing to 600 or 700 people.

When I was approached, the yard had lain dormant for many years. Bob Clay had left the scene for reasons I do not know and, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), I had several meetings with the management of the yard to appraise what was going on. It was never a very happy scenario. The yard was staggering from one crisis to another. There was a little prefabrication work and it was possible to employ 80 or 90 people at the most, but eventually that work dried up and the Greek shipowners reluctantly put the yard on to a care-and-maintenance basis.

At that time, we became aware that they wanted to carry out ship repair work. Following the meeting that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South and I had with the yard management, I wrote to the Minister and asked for his assistance in trying to get the terms relaxed or varied in such a way that at least some ship repair work would be done. That point is paramount for the owners and it should carry some weight.

The shipowners said that if they could refurbish six to eight ships, it would provide two or three years' work and would make the yard viable. They made the point forcefully that they were not looking for financial assistance from the Government or from what is now the European Union. They also stressed that if the yard was not allowed to carry out the work it would not be carried out within the European Union, and would probably go outside what was then the EEC to some other foreign country.

They stressed that this would not in any way affect the other yards and ship repair facilities within the Community.

In all our discussions, everyone took the view that there would be no difficulty in getting that agreed. When I wrote to the Minister on 13 July last year, he replied that meetings were in progress between two of the directors, one representing the ESOP and one representing the Greek shipowners—Canon Brian Hales and Alan Dickinson—and the regional officials of the Department of Trade and Industry in Newcastle. The Minister said that he would write to me again following the outcome of the talks.

At that time, we also sought the assistance of the MEP for the region, Alan Donnelly. He eventually arranged a meeting for us in Brussels. Originally, it was to have been with Karel van Miert, the Commissioner; as it happened, he was not available, and we saw one of his senior civil servants who had advised him on the subject. We understood that we were meeting someone with a certain amount of knowledge and prestige.

We met on 22 December last year—that is, the two directors Brian Hales and Alan Dickinson, Alan Donnelly, Askar Petersen, the EC civil servant, and me. We had a long and constructive discussion. The civil servant told us that, if we couched the application in terms of ship repair, it should be possible to obtain sympathetic consideration from the Commission. It was not the best time to be travelling: I did not particularly enjoy coming back on Christmas eve through airports. I do not do much flying in any event, and that was rather a burden. Nevertheless, I felt content that we had made some progress.

At the meeting, it was agreed that Alan Donnelly, Karel van Miert and his civil servant would arrange a meeting with the directors and people in the EC to try to make some progress. On 10 January, I wrote to the Minister to explain what had happened, and again asked for his assistance. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South and I wrote again on 1 February to ask for a meeting. On 24 February, I received a reply refusing the meeting and saying that there was no point.

As always, the Minister's reply was very polite but somewhat daunting. It read:

"Thank you for your letters of 10 January and 1 February about the prospects of re-opening the former Pallion shipyard in Sunderland for the purpose of ship repair.

You asked whether it is correct that the terms on which the Sunderland yard was leased to Pallion Engineering precluded its use for shipbuilding, ship conversion and ship repair until 31 January 1999. I can confirm that that is indeed the case.

With respect to Mr. Petersen's remarks last December, my officials have established that there had been no softening of the Commission's policy on ship repair. Mr. Petersen left open the possibility of ship repair because of his unfamiliarity with the detail of the 1988 agreement which wound up North East Shipbuilders Ltd."

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Are we not all unfamiliar with the detail of that 1988 arrangement? One of the useful things that the Minister could do tonight—if he were listening, which he is not at the moment—is make clear the details of that arrangement, or at least agree to put them in the Library. Over the years, it has proved particularly puzzling. I recall that it even puzzled the Lord President of the Council—or, at any rate, he did not know about it until after he should have. It is good to see him here this evening.

We are all puzzled about that agreement—and we would like to see it, would we not?

Mr. Etherington: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. As I said earlier, he has been actively involved in the matter. In what is now the city of Sunderland, it does not matter very much where any manufacturing output is; people in his constituency are affected, and we have tended to take a joint approach.

My hon. Friend is right to say that we are all unfamiliar with the details. Perhaps some of us are more unfamiliar with them than others. I was very unfamiliar with them: all I had to go on was hearsay. I had no direct inkling of what had gone on. I shall return to that shortly. I intend to quote from another rather disturbing letter.

The letter continues:

"I am sorry to disappoint you but I am sure that you will agree that, in these circumstances, there can currently be no question of re-opening the Pallion yard. For that reason I do not think that it would be useful to hold a meeting."

We should bear in mind that only nine months before that talks were being arranged between the regional officials of the Department of Trade and Industry and the yard management, presumably to see what could be clarified. It had not been clarified by December when we went to Brussels and it was only finally clarified on receipt of the letter from the Minister dated 24 February.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Mr. Etherington: I am a little puzzled about that procedure, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The hon. Gentleman should simply carry on speaking. We have just dealt with the 10 o'clock business motion.

Mr. Etherington: I thought that it might have been meant as a bit of a sprag in my wheel, but it is obviously of no real consequence.

You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I mentioned the letter that I wrote in July to which the Minister replied by stating that talks were going on within the region. All the dealings that I have had with our MEP, the Commission and the management of the shipyard have given me the impression that the regional DTI officials were supportive and encouraging. However, as is often the case, we do not have anything in writing to that effect.

I have another letter which pre-dates the Minister's response to me last August. It is from Karel van Miert of the Commission of the European Communities to Bishop David Jenkins. We all appreciate what Bishop Jenkins is doing within our region to try to alleviate the high unemployment and other social problems. I will not read it all, but the relevant parts state:

"The British government committed itself to the irreversible nature of the closure"—

referring to the Pallion yard—

"for a period of not less than five years."

That is what everybody understood. It went on:

"The agreed closure date was 27 January 1989. In 1991 the Commission approved the sale of the yard to 'Pallion Engineering', after having been informed that a clause was included on the contract prohibiting its use for shipbuilding, ship conversion and ship repair until 31 January 1999.

The Pallion yard is still in the first five year period (ending 27 January 1994). After that period and before ten years, the Commission would have to give its prior approval to the eventual reopening of the yard."

[Mr. Etherington]

I do not think that I am alone in being confused. I hope that I have not made the confusion any worse by my speech tonight. I am rather puzzled.

While those gyrations are taking place, we have problems in my constituency. We have lost the last colliery in County Durham. It may be reprieved if private enterprise takes it over. That is a bitter pill for me to swallow. It is a little like Hobson's choice. We do not see a week go by without some group of people becoming unemployed or put on short-time working. Despite what we are told about the strenuous efforts being made in the area, the unemployment level remains about the same as it has been for the past three or four years. New jobs are being created, but they are unable to keep up with what we are losing.

I should have thought that a Government who were committed to, I will not say full employment, but perhaps less unemployment—that is what they say—might have been a little more constructive in their offer to provide jobs in my constituency. As I have stated already, the work will not affect the overall position within the European Union.

I have written to the Minister on a number of occasions and I keep getting the reply that this is a matter for the European Union—a fact of which I am only too well aware. All I have asked is for the Minister and his Department to say, "Yes, we back the people of Sunderland. We will go to the Commission and ask whether something can be done". That is what it is all about: the Minister should ask whether there can be a variation.

The proposal that has been put forward is very good; there can be no doubt about that. But I get the impression that there is some ambivalence. The regional office of the DTI is saying one thing and the Minister is writing letters to me which say something entirely different. We want to know where we stand. I do not want to spend another 18 months running about unnecessarily, and I do not want to waste another European trip, perhaps next year, seeing some Commissioner about getting something changed and knowing full well that the matter has been decided before I go.

In this short speech, I have given the Minister the opportunity to reply—my hon. Friends might have something to say about this matter also. As a former shipyard worker, I have seen the River Wear slowly destroyed, I have seen our merchant shipping fleet slowly denuded, and I have watched the number of seamen dwindle. I am always conscious of the fact that the National Union of Seamen was formed in Sunderland, which has a very proud tradition of shipbuilding and seamanship.

I get the impression that the Government, through the Tyne and Wear development corporation, have sterilised the river. It now seems more important to provide flash, yuppie-type university campuses than to produce jobs, enabling people to make a meaningful contribution to society and the economy.

The site that has been chosen could hardly be worse. Even before the university has been built, we face a problem with traffic. As the Tyne and Wear development corporation, in its wisdom, has decided to build student accommodation on the other side of the river, perhaps we will see a reincarnation of the ferry service that was ended some 25 years ago. Those are the sorts of planning decisions from which we seem to be suffering. It is a very sad state of affairs.

I want to know exactly where we stand. I ask the Minister: will he join us in trying to put some pressure on the European Union to see whether we can get the shipyard operating and perhaps see a return of some semblance of shipbuilding on the River Wear, or are we to allow our assets to go to waste? The Greeks will not wait another five years. The yard has been standing idle for five years and they have invested a lot of money in it—as have other people. Something must be done in the reasonably near future.

There is work available; we are not talking about chasing orders. The orders are there in black and white, which is more than I can say for what we will get from the regional branch of the DTI. In those circumstances, I make that request of the Minister and I hope that he will respond to it.

10.7 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): This is the situation: a fine facility—one of the best of its kind—is lying idle in Sunderland. It has survived the bulldozers only through enormous efforts, led by our colleague Bob Clay, the former Member for Sunderland, North. The company which holds the lease on the facility owns a large fleet of ships which it wants to repair there. There is an agreement with the EC, the details of which have never been fully disclosed to us, which appears to say that no ships can be built at the yard for five years but that the situation is reviewable after five years.

Therefore, for the last five years all who have been associated with this matter have laboured under the illusion that, come the end of the five years, we might persuade the EC—we always thought the EC was the source of the difficulty—to allow this company to start using the Pallion yard to repair its fleet of ships at no cost to public funds. But what happened? When my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) went to the EC before Christmas, the EC still seemed to be under the impression that there was a possibility of opening the yard for ship repairs. We came back and discovered that the problem did not lie with the EC but with the Department of Trade and Industry. It appears that the terms that the DTI has imposed on the Pallion yard are stronger than those demanded by the EC. That is the source of our frustration. As I said in my intervention, it would be most helpful if the Minister could disclose the details of the 1988 agreement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North quoted a letter from Karel van Miert to the Bishop of Durham. It clearly refers to a period of not fewer than five years, which implies that the matter was at least renegotiable and that there was a window of opportunity at the end of those five years which are now coming to an end. However, everything that we hear from the Minister and his Department suggests that it is absolutely impossible and that nothing can be done until 1999 when, as we all know, it will be far too late.

We should like to hear that the Minister is going to help us in our efforts and is going to back Britain, and that the next time it will not be a question of the Member of the European Parliament, Alan Donnelly, and my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North going cap in hand to Brussels, but that a Minister could also come to try to

persuade the EC to allow us to use the fine facility for the purpose for which it was created, because the work is available. I cannot stress too strongly the fact that the work is there and would involve no public subsidy. We cannot understand why the DTI appears to be more anxious than the EC to close the facility. I want to hear not only the explanation but what the Minister is going to do to resolve the issue.

10.11 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) on securing this Adjournment debate. It is a very important subject, certainly to the people of Sunderland. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and support the representations that they have both made to the Minister.

I know a fair bit about the Sunderland shipyards as I have worked in almost every yard on the River Wear. I worked at Bartrams, Pickersgill, Laings and Thompsons. I have worked on oil tankers, cargo boats, refrigerator ships and the SD14s which were successfully built by Pickersgills. They were well known across the world and did a tremendous amount of good for the shipbuilding industry in this country. I worked on the Timeroo Star which was built at Bartrams and 200 joiners worked alongside me, insulating the holds and chambers between the decks. I do not know how many houses would have to be built to employ 200 joiners, but such employment was available on the River Wear at that time.

Sunderland was always known as the biggest shipbuilding town in the world. Now that it has city status, it has no shipbuilding, which is a tragedy. Sunderland, or the Wear, cannot be separated from the Tyne. It has always been called Tyne and Wear—the county council was called the Tyne and Wear county council and my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) did a tremendous job as its deputy leader for a long time until the Government abolished it.

Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North, I stayed in the shipyard while he left to take a cushy job down the pits.

Mr. Etherington: It cannot have been that cushy a number or my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) might have done the same thing, although there are not many shipwrights down the pits.

Mr. Dixon: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. He has more faith in the EC than I have. Since I was elected to the House in 1979, every debate on the EC has involved discussion of a maritime policy. We have talked about getting orders for more ships for the shipyards to build. We have talked about a scrap and build policy. Indeed, the European Union has been talking about scrap and build since 1977 and it has not made a decision yet. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North has far more faith in the EU than I do. The Government must take the decision and they must act on behalf of shipbuilding in our areas.

I certainly support the representations made tonight by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and I have the same problem on the River Tyne. There is a shipyard up the river, Swan Hunter, which, as the Minister knows, is just hanging on. It would be a tragedy if that yard was to go. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would support the retention of shipbuilding on the River Tyne.

When we talk about Sunderland shipyards and the 10-year embargo that the EC imposed, to which my hon. Friends have referred—

Mr. Mullin: It was supposed to be a five-year embargo, but that is the question. It was either a 10-year embargo or a five-year embargo, but we do not know.

Mr. Dixon: That embargo was certainly discussed widely when Sunderland received an amount of money to create enterprise zones and so on in the area. Sixty years ago in 1934, Jarrow was one of the biggest shipbuilding towns in the world. Ships used to come into the old Palmers yard as iron ore and leave as complete ships. It was closed in 1934 by an organisation called Shipbuilding Security Ltd. That was an organisation of shipbuilders, ship owners and bankers who decided that there was too much shipbuilding capacity in the country, so it closed yards and put embargoes on the building of ships. Those embargoes used to be for 40 years, such as in Jarrow. Views on shipbuilding have not changed a great deal in 60 years.

One of the yards where I worked for a considerable time on the Tyne, Hawthorne Leslies, is now a housing estate called Hebburn village. We built some of the finest ships in the world at that yard. That is the tragedy of shipbuilding in our area. I certainly support my hon. Friends the Members for Sunderland, North and for Sunderland, South and I know that we have the support of those hon. Members who have stayed for the Adjournment debate. There are not many such audiences for an Adjournment debate and it is because of the importance of the subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) was involved in the campaign to save the Sunderland shipyards for a considerable time before he became a Member of Parliament.

I hope that the Minister will take on board what my hon. Friends have said and do something about saving Sunderland shipyards because it is vital. The entire Tyne and Wear area depends a great deal on shipbuilding and I hope that our representations will be taken up by the Minister tonight.

10.16 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I well understand the concerns for Tyne and Wear and for the shipbuilding tradition of the area which have been expressed by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington). I congratulate him on securing the Adjournment debate and his hon. Friends the Members for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) on their comments. The hon. Member for Jarrow has a double reason to comment from his long experience and involvement in the industry and, even if the hon. Member for Sunderland, North opted for the cushy job later, he did serve his apprenticeship with Austin and Pickersgill. All hon. Members are aware of the long and distinguished history of shipbuilding on the Tyne and on the Wear.

It may help if I put the situation into the context of the privatisation of the shipbuilding industry, which was an objective of the incoming 1979 Conservative Government. The vehicle created to achieve privatisation was the British

[Mr. Tim Sainsbury]

Shipbuilders Act 1983, which allowed the Secretary of State to direct British shipbuilders to dispose of special assets or subsidiaries. As hon. Members will be aware, the war shipbuilding yards were sold in 1985 and 1986. Of course, that is another story, especially in connection with the present situation at Swan Hunter.

Due to the worldwide depression in shipbuilding, which existed then and, as hon. Members will know, has persisted, the merchant shipbuilding yards were not sold until later. By May 1988, many of the smaller yards and the engineering facilities had been sold or closed. By then, support given by the Government to British Shipbuilders since the inception of BS in 1977 had amounted to almost £2 billion with no foreseeable return to sustained viability. It was therefore decided that subsidies should cease for BS and that the remaining companies be closed or sold.

In June 1988 the remaining yards were Appledore Shipbuilders, Govan Shipbuilders Ltd., Ferguson Shipbuilders and North East Shipbuilders Ltd. Buyers were found for the first three yards and, as the House will know, all three remain in production today. Sadly, however, it was not possible find a buyer for North East Shipbuilders Ltd. NESL was formed in February 1986 through the amalgamation of two British Shipbuilders companies, Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd., which operated at Pallion, and Austin and Pickersgill Ltd., which has also been mentioned. A third yard, North Sands, was used for fitting out the ships built at the other two yards. In 1977, the yards employed between them some 7,500 people, but when closure was announced in December 1988, employment had fallen to about 2,000.

After the yards were put on the market in 1988, the original deadline for bids was extended from September to October 1988, because of various problems with contracts then current. That series of extensions demonstrated how hard my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who was then the Secretary of State—

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sorry; my right hon. Friend was then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, not Secretary of State. The series of extensions shows how hard he tried to find a buyer and to keep the thing going—with the help of Mr. Bob Clay, then the Member of Parliament for Sunderland, North. But the vital ingredients that were absent were customers and the likelihood of profitable business for the yard.

Further evidence of the efforts that were made is the fact that another extension, to the end of November, was given following rejection of the previous unsatisfactory bids, to allow a further expression of interest by a consortium led by Bob Clay. However, the bids were judged by British Shipbuilders and ourselves not to provide the basis of a viable future for merchant shipbuilding at Sunderland, and in December my right hon. Friend, who was not only the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster but the Minister for Trade and Industry, announced the closure of NESL and the institution of remedial measures.

To facilitate the completion of a ferry contract, it was announced that British Shipbuilders would keep the yard intact until at least the end of June 1989 to allow any other potential interests to come forward. Four positive proposals emerged over that period, two involving shipbuilding operations and two non-shipbuilding operations. Again, regrettably, the shipbuilding bids were not seen as viable because of the continuing depressed state of the shipbuilding market and the fact that they would not be eligible for intervention fund money.

Furthermore—here we come to the role of the European Commission—the Commission suggested at the time that if shipbuilding were resumed at NESL it would mean the reinvestigation of the whole British Shipbuilders remedial package, which had been agreed and which was beginning to be put in place. It would have been most undesirable if the Commission had disallowed it.

When it became clear that closure was inevitable, the Government negotiated with the Commission and secured an aid package worth some £45 million to assist those who would be affected. The major elements of that package, which had to be approved under Community competition rules, were an enterprise zone, which will last until the year 2000, a radical retraining programme and the establishment of Wearside Opportunity, a business-led team specialising in training and development grants for small firms and in the promotion of Sunderland generally.

I realise that some hon. Members may not always agree with everything that the Tyne and Wear development corporation does, but I believe that it has achieved a great deal for the area. At that time, it extended its Wearside activities in redeveloping the riverside, and it will remain in being until 1997. Its most recent development, the Doxford Park site, is nearing completion and will provide a hi-tech business environment for new investment. English Estates, as it then was, provided a substantial number of industrial units at Hylton riverside, on the site of an old colliery.

Labour Members, especially the hon. Member for Sunderland, North, have described what they saw as the confusion surrounding the arrangements that accompanied the closure and the agreement to the substantial aid package. However, when the Commission agreed to the closure of North East Shipbuilders and to the remedial package, it was acting in line with its policy at the time, which was to reduce excess capacity. It perceived that only in that way would the industry be able to return to normal competitive conditions.

After negotiation, we agreed with the Commission to close the site permanently for all shipbuilding activities. The Commission interprets permanent closure in this context as meaning that no shipbuilding, ship conversion or ship repair should take place for five years. It may be that the confusion has arisen from what follows from that. In this connection, I shall pick up the point made by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South. For the next five years—this was provided for in the original agreement with the Commission—no such activity would take place without the consent of the Commission. That lasts until 1999.

From approaches that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North, the Member of the European Parliament for the area and others have made to the Commission, hon. Members will know that the Commission is very conscious of continuing over-capacity in the European merchant shipbuilding sector and that the Commission, in conformity with the agreement originally entered into, will not permit any shipbuilding, ship conversion or ship repair to take place at Pallion. That is the unfortunate situation.

The agreement was an absolute ban for five years, followed by a continuing ban unless the Commission agreed to relax the rules.

Labour Members, particularly the hon. Member for Jarrow, will know that it has been very difficult indeed and has taken a great deal of time—much longer than I should have wished—to get out of the Commission a very limited agreement in respect of Swan Hunter. That reflects the problems that the Commission envisages arising if it were to open up one of these agreements. Opposition Members are no doubt aware that the whole shipbuilding industry of the European Community was substantially restructured and that over half the total capacity throughout the Community was eliminated during this period in an attempt to bring capacity more into line with demand.

Mr. Mullin: What representations has the Minister or his Department made to the European Community with regard to the question of another look at this agreement after five years? We get the impression that the Department takes a much harder line than does the EC. That is what concerns us.

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure the hon. Gentleman and all other hon. Members that that is not the position. My officials and I have had a continuing series of discussions with the Commission to see whether, at any time, there would be a likelihood of a change in its attitude. On the basis of my personal discussions with Commissioner Van Miert and of the numerous meetings in which my officials have taken part, I am well aware of the fact that the Commission takes a very strong line on this point because, as the House knows, there continues to be over-capacity in the European shipbuilding industry—indeed, in the world shipbuilding industry. We have all been waiting for some time for the revival of demand. It has continuously been forecast as being about two years away, but, so far as I can see, it remains two years away, although a number of authorities still expect it to come. There is a desperate shortage of orders and there continues to be over-capacity.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does that mean that the Minister would support an application for the use of these facilities for ship repairing? That is the practical possibility on offer. It is that proposition, and no other, which the people of Sunderland ask the Minister to support.

Mr. Sainsbury: If I had any indication that there might be a softening of the Commission's attitude, yes, but, from my discussions with Commissioner Van Miert and from the continual contact between my officials and the relevant parts of the Commission, I know that the Commission is very firm in its view. The ban applies not just to shipbuilding, but, as I have explained, to ship conversion and ship repair. That, I am afraid, continues to be the position.

It was unfortunate that Mr. Petersen's remarks of last December gave a misleading impression. I am afraid that the reason is that Mr. Petersen was not fully conversant with the situation.

Mr. Etherington: I should like to put a fairly blunt and straightforward question to the Minister. In view of what he has said, will he write to the Commissioner and ask for a meeting involving himself, the interested Members of Parliament from the area, the company, the Euro Member of Parliament and the Commissioner to see whether some progress might be made?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am always happy to make approaches. I shall do so yet again when I next see the Commissioner. Indeed, I might take up the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. I shall also investigate the possibility—there may be questions of commercial confidentiality—of placing a copy of the agreement in the Library of the House. That might help to explain the position. Although it is not up to me to do so, I can only apologise on behalf of the Commission for the fact that it was the cause of confusion.

I wish that we could see an upturn in demand. That would change the attitude and enable—

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 30 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kashmir

1. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indian Government to ensure that Amnesty International is given every facility to monitor the situation in Indian-held Kashmir.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The Indian Government have recently allowed visits to Kashmir by various independent organisations and groups. We did much to promote this. We shall continue to encourage the Indian Government to allow a visit to Kashmir by Amnesty International.

Ms Lynne: Do the Minister and the Secretary of State agree that although Amnesty International's visit to India was welcome and shows much more openness by the Indian Government, they would have shown their commitment to human rights a little more had they allowed free access to Indian-held Kashmir and allowed the prisoners of conscience—the political viziers of Kashmir —to be released? Will the Minister continue to press the Indian Government about that?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Lady said, there was a visit to Bombay and Delhi by Amnesty International. I understand that the Indian Government have agreed to further visits to different parts of India on a case-by-case basis. I must point out that other human rights groups have visited India. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross has a group of people in Kashmir at this moment, and last August the International Commission of Jurists visited India. The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has also just been to that area.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: While recognising the significant human rights abuses reported by the Indian authorities, their troops and others in Kashmir, may I ask whether my hon. Friend agrees that it is important to recognise that, in the long term, the Kashmiri problem will be properly solved only if the Kashmiri people are given an opportunity of self-determination, as originally laid down in the UN agreement on that matter? Although Kashmir may not be a sovereign state, it should at least have an opportunity to govern its own affairs.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The important point is that bilateral discussions between India and Pakistan must take place to resolve that problem. We have always recognised that and advocated that there must be a political process and respect for human rights in Kashmir, and a cessation of outside interference in the process.

Mr. Madden: What pressure are Her Majesty's Government putting on the Indian Government to enable the Indian Human Rights Commission to investigate alleged gross human rights violations by Indian security forces?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Discussions about Kashmir took place between Mr. Narasimha Rao when he visited this country and my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister. I understand that in 1993, four Indian human rights groups visited Kashmir: the Committee for Initiatives on Kashmir; the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre; Citizens for Democracy; and the People's Union for Civil Liberties. All those Indian human rights organisations have been in the area during the past 12 months.

Peru

2. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Peruvian Government regarding the presidential decision on the La Cantuta case and its implications for Peru in the international community.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): On 23 February, ambassadors from the European Union expressed concern to the Peruvian Government about the handling of that case. They also emphasised the need for human rights violations to be speedily investigated and appropriately punished.

Mr. McFall: Despite international pressure on Peru, President Fujimori decided to refer that case to a military rather than civilian court. The issue is causing a great deal of international concern. The Minister will know that I led a parliamentary human rights delegation on the issue in September and have given him a copy of our report. Will he read the report regarding the opinions of judges and prosecutors, and join his counterparts in Europe and the United States in putting pressure on Peru to introduce a transparent and international system of justice that can be examined?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Gentleman is not quite right. It was the Peruvian Congress which altered the law to permit that case to be tried by a military court. Although the judicial process was not altogether satisfactory, nine of the soldiers have been convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from four to 20 years. The hon. Gentleman has sent me a copy of the report that he mentioned. I shall read it and endeavour to discuss it with him in due course.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Should not we bear it in mind that the Peruvian constitutional assembly passed the legislation that allowed the transfer of jurisdiction and should not we consider the reasons why it did that? Is not the least of the reasons that the elected president and

constitutional assembly of Peru have to cope with the barbaric terrorism perpetrated in that country by the Sendero Luminoso?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As I said, it was not an executive act that permitted the case to be heard by a military court; it was an act of the Peruvian Congress. Peru faces a particularly violent and ruthless terrorist threat from the Sendero Luminoso, but that does not excuse breaches of respect for human rights by the security forces.

India

3. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations relating to trade he received from the Indian Prime Minister during his recent visit.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and, separately, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, discussed bilateral trade and the Indo-British partnership initiative with the Indian Prime Minister during his recent visit. Both sides welcomed the success of the initiative. Since it was launched in January last year, business close to £2 billion has been generated.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Following the most welcome visit by the Indian Prime Minister, his excellency Narasimha Rao, is not the Indo-British partnership initiative, which has signed £2 billion worth of trade agreements, even more important? Does not the recent visit cement the final order of £1 billion by British Aerospace for Hawk trainers, providing jobs in my constituency and elsewhere? Is not it thoroughly good news for British industry, as a result of the 1994 Budget which deregulated industries involved in the Indian trade agreements?

Mr. Hurd: Our exports to India are doing extremely well. They reached £1,130 million last year—a 20 per cent. increase. New contracts were signed, including those that my hon. Friend mentioned with British Aerospace. New contracts were signed during the Prime Minister's visit, in particular a memorandum of understanding for a 1,000 MW power plant in Maharashtra state worth £700 million.

Dr. John Cunningham: Good political and economic relations with the Republic of India should be welcomed and so should our developing trade relations with the republic. I made that clear during my visit to India last week. As we all claim to be friends of the Indian Government, should not we take every opportunity to remind them of their duties and responsibilities for the human and democratic rights of all their people, including the people of Kashmir—which, as the Under-Secretary of State said, I was allowed freely to visit last week—and the people of the state of Punjab?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. We do not have any substantive conversations with Indian Ministers without drawing attention to that problem, as, indeed, he did. He will know that there has been a substantial improvement in the Punjab. There are now elections there and the position has been transformed for the better since a couple of years ago.

Middle East

4. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the Israeli Foreign Minister to discuss the middle east peace initiative.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): At the moment my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no such plans.

Mr. Gallie: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister is about to lead an Israeli delegation to Oman—the first Israeli delegation to a Gulf state? Does he welcome this, as he welcomed in the past the talks that were initiated with the Israelis and the PLO? Will he urge the PLO to resume its place at the negotiating table?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right. The impending visit of Yossi Beilin to Oman is greatly to be welcomed. As to the second part of the question, the answer must be yes. Negotiations are taking place in Cairo at the moment and it is important that the Palestinians and the Israelis get into full negotiations as soon as possible.

Mr. Faulds: Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree with me that the British Government should be putting pressure on the Israeli Government, first, to accept an international presence in the occupied territories to protect the Palestinians, and, after many years of not doing so, to implement international law in those territories, again to protect the Palestinians?

Mr. Hogg: That is an important point. The hon. Gentleman will bear in mind the fact that we were a co-sponsor of the resolution passed through the Security Council on 18 March, which contained a call for an international or foreign presence in the occupied territories. The British Government support that and would be anxious to participate in such a presence if the conditions were right.

Mr. Brazier: In any such meeting, will my right hon. and learned Friend stress the importance of taking into account the interests of the Lebanese people in the middle eastern settlement? They have rights as well, and the presence of large numbers of both Syrian and Israeli troops in their country makes their claim to independence rather hollow at present.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend will know that Security Council resolution 425 calls for the withdrawal of the state of Israel from southern Lebanon. We support that resolution and take every opportunity to make it plain to the Israeli Government that they need to comply with it as soon as possible.

Malaysia

5. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he has had with representatives of the Malaysian Government to discuss trading relations with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: Malaysia and our trade with that country matter greatly to us. We cannot afford to see our hard-won market in Malaysia, a thriving south-east Asian economy, surrendered to our competitors.

I have taken a close interest in efforts to resolve the difficulties. The British high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur and his staff, and members of my Department in London, have been in close touch with the Malaysian Government, the business community and others here and in Malaysia. The Malaysian Government have made it clear that the embargo is limited to new Government contracts. Private sector business is not affected. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education will visit Malaysia after Easter to pursue a range of opportunities in the education sector.

Mr. Eastham: Is not it becoming increasingly clear that the so-called job benefits of the dam scheme turned out to be entirely specious? Far more economically advantageous work could have been done with, say, gas turbines rather than the hydro scheme. Moreover, are not we denuding other, more deserving, countries of aid—countries in Africa and Latin America, for instance? Jobs would have been created if we had dealt with those countries instead.

Mr. Hurd: The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is looking into questions such as that. I entirely disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The aid and trade provision in the aid budget was introduced in 1977 by Mrs. Judith Hart, as she then was, and I think that it was justified. We tightened the rules then, but we do not see why we should find ourselves in a position in which soft aid is given only by our competitors, within the rules, and never by us.

Mr. Couchman: In regard to the dam project—and, in particular, the Public Accounts Committee report on the issue which was published today—will my right hon. Friend make it entirely clear in discussions with Malaysia that that country, as a sovereign state, had a perfect right to diversify its power supply into hydro-electric, particularly in view of its previous experience with unreliable gas turbine supplies?

Mr. Hurd: That is essentially a matter for Malaysia. I cannot comment on the PAC report today, but my hon. Friend is entirely right: we have invested heavily in building the friendship between our countries and we want to return relations to a sound and flourishing basis as soon as possible. Despite what is sometimes written, Malaysia's international reputation and economic success are beyond dispute and its vigorous leadership puts a strong emphasis on education, training and determination. We cannot allow the press to get between us.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that a very careful and deliberate set of negotiations will be needed to sort the matter out and get the show back on the road? In view of what has occurred over the past fortnight, the lesson is clear: do not send the Prime Minister.

Mr. Hurd: I thought for a moment, given the job description, that the hon. Gentleman was volunteering himself. I am sorry that that is not the case.

South Africa

6. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on what consultations he has had with President F. W. de Klerk about the safeguarding of the interests of all the peoples of South Africa under its new constitution following elections at the end of April.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met President de Klerk on 8 December. He made it clear that we strongly support the establishment of a stable, non-racial and democratic South Africa in which the rights of all citizens are equally respected, and we are prepared to help in any useful way.

Mr. Winterton: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply. Having had an opportunity to spend some time in South Africa recently—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Missing a three-line Whip.

Mr. Winterton: —for which leave of absence was officially granted, and having met representatives from all population groups, may I ask whether my right hon. Friend is aware that there is considerable opposition to the unitary state constitution that could come into effect after the elections at the end of April? Bearing in mind the lack of safeguards for all the peoples of South Africa under the proposed constitution and the vital part that the South African economy plays in the whole of the African continent, not just for the people of South Africa, will my right hon. Friend urge upon F. W. de Klerk and other political representatives the importance of considering a federal structure to safeguard all interests in that important country?

Mr. Hurd: It is for South Africans of all communities to discuss and resolve that point. I understand that a summit meeting is soon to take place between the leaders of the main parties. We call on the leaders of the parties to spare no effort to ensure that the transition to a multi-racial democracy is peaceful. All differences, such as those mentioned by my hon. Friend, have to be resolved by peaceful negotiations. That means speaking out clearly against violence, urging restraint among their followers and promoting reconciliation by pursuing their aims and objectives with flexibility and a view to a compromise.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that by far the best opportunity for peace and progress in southern Africa after the elections is the absolute need for people to accept the results of the elections as being free and fair? Therefore, will he not listen to the siren voices who advocate federalism and thus give encouragement to Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha, who will not take part in the elections? Will he make it clear even now that if Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha refuse to accept the elections, they will stand condemned and isolated and will have no friends in this country?

Mr. Hurd: I and many others have made it clear over many months that the elections are crucial to the future of South Africa. Therefore, we hope that all concerned will take part in them. The hon. Gentleman mentioned observers. There will be about 40 British observers in the United Nations team, 30 in the European team and five in the Commonwealth team. A group of about 20 parliamentarians is, with agreement, going to take part also. It is crucial that the elections should be free and fair and should be seen to be free and fair.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the long-term stability of the Republic of South Africa will depend very much on the ability of the Government who are elected on 27 April to meet the economic and social expectations of the people of South Africa? What

initiatives are Her Majesty's Government taking with regard to trade and investment in South Africa which would assist economic progress in that country?

Mr. Hurd: Like South African Ministers and the African National Congress, we are certainly encouraging British business men to look with fresh eyes at the new South Africa and to find there the opportunities that undoubtedly exist for trade and investment. The main incentive for trade and investment will be free and fair elections and an end to the violence. An end to the violence is the most crucial incentive.

Dr. Howells: Since this is the last session of Foreign Office questions before the South African elections, will the Government take the opportunity to condemn the terrible slaughter being visited upon that country even this very day by Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha movement and his supporters in the security forces? Will the Government make clear to the people of South Africa and the rest of the world their total and unequivocal support for the free and fair elections that have been organised in that country and for the emergence of the sort of multi-party, non-racial democracy that is so vital for the economic and political well-being of the southern half of the African continent?

Mr. Hurd: I have already met the hon. Gentleman's second point twice in answering the main question. On his first point, it is not sensible for us to start allocating blame for death and terrorism to one particular group after a particular incident. That is not our business, but it is our business, and that of all friends of South Africa, to emphasise the two points that I have tried to emphasise, I hope on behalf of the House as a whole. The elections are crucial to the future of South Africa. They will not be successful if they are marred by the terrible violence of the type that we have seen in recent days.

China

7. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the record of the People's Republic of China on human rights; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): There are a number of areas where China's human rights record does not meet internationally accepted standards. These include harassment of religious believers, detentions without trial, use of torture on detainees, lack of access to legal representation and continued use of labour camps.

Mr. Waterson: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that it is in our interest, as well as that of the People's Republic of China, to keep up the pressure on China to continue to make advances in the areas that he mentioned, such as the rule of law as we know it, religious tolerance and all the matters that we regard as everyday human rights here and in other countries in the west?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right, and we take every suitable opportunity to do so. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State raised human rights at both his meetings last year with the Chinese Foreign Minister and handed over a list of prisoners. The matter was also raised by the European Union troika. We co-sponsored the resolution at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, but the Chinese again got a "no action" motion passed. My noble Friend Lord Howe led a human rights delegation to China in December 1992 and we are pressing the Chinese to follow up the issues raised by Lord Howe and to send a return delegation to study our legal systems. We have invited various people here—the deputy procurator-general, prison governors and young lawyers —and we are providing training to young Chinese judges and lawyers under Overseas Development Administration auspices.

Dr. Godman: Has the Minister read Amnesty International's report on the 14 Tibetan Buddhist nuns who have had their prison sentences doubled or even trebled for daring to sing pro-independence songs in their prison cells? If the Minister has not done so already, will he raise that disgraceful affair with the Chinese authorities? Some of the nuns are still teenagers and will serve many years in prison unless the repressive regime is told that it cannot get away with such disgraceful behaviour.

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman raises a very serious matter and I am conscious of the report to which he refers. We have raised a number of human rights issues in Tibet with the Chinese and we will continue to do so in the future.

Mr. Allason: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one way of instilling confidence in the People's Republic of China's administration of Hong Kong after 1997 would be for the Beijing authorities to exercise some restraint in their treatment of dissidents now?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. The 1984 joint declaration on the future of Hong Kong lays down a series of guarantees for human rights in Hong Kong after 1997. In addition, the Hong Kong Government enacted a Bill of Rights which enshrines in Hong Kong law the international covenant on civil and political rights which the joint declaration and the future Basic Law guarantee will remain in force. However, to do what my hon. Friend suggests, which is what we and others continually urge the Chinese to do, would certainly reinforce that.

Rev. Martin Smyth: We will continue to urge the Minister to keep pressure on the Chinese Government. Does he accept that the improper claims on Tibet and the treatment of the Tibetan people deserve condemnation from all communities throughout the world? Will he continue to deal not only with individual rights, but with that territorial claim over Tibet?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support, and I can give him the undertaking he seeks.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister is absolutely right to condemn the Chinese for the conditions that prevail in their gulags, but, rather than just criticise them, why does he not take some positive action? There are 1 million political prisoners in China, many of whom are involved in producing goods and materials, which are imported into this country—especially, for example, coal, cast iron, paper, tea products and so on.

If the Minister is really concerned about the human rights situation and the condition of people in Chinese prisons, the Government ought to block the import of those

goods under the Foreign Prison-made Goods Act 1897, in the same way as the Americans have blocked Chinese goods that are made in prisons from entering their country.

Mr. Goodlad: The import of goods from prisons in China is, indeed, illegal, as the hon. Gentleman says, and we continue to deplore with the Opposition the use of forced prison labour. There are severe practical difficulties in identifying products manufactured by forced labour, given the complex channels of production and distribution. The United States customs authorities may detain goods on suspicion and have had some access to prison camps, but they have had exactly the same problem as us in identifying specific consignments.

I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is advocating general trade sanctions, since that would be damaging to the people of China rather than its Government.

Mr. David Atkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the new wave of repression against Christians in China, together with the continued suppression and occupation of Tibet, isolates China as the last of the evil empires in the world? Will he ask the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate the situation in China as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right to say that two new regulations have recently appeared in China to ban foreigners from setting up religious organisations, schools or offices, and from proselytising, giving money and supplying religious materials. The European Union has successfully pressed for a call to respect freedom of religion in the current year's draft UNHCR resolution, and we will continue to include freedom of religion among the human rights topics that we pursue with the Chinese.

India And Pakistan (Human Rights)

8. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Indian and Pakistani Governments to discuss human rights.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed human rights with the Indian Prime Minister during his visit to Britain earlier in the month. I last discussed human rights with the Pakistani Foreign Secretary in February.

Mr. Michie: Will the Secretary of State stress vigorously that the Indian Government should make public the names of those who are in detention from Kashmir and the Punjab?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I understand that a great deal of information is disclosed in that area. If the hon. Gentleman has any cases that he wishes to draw to my attention, I will of course pursue them, as they are always pursued to seek information on any special subject.

Mr. Jessel: Is my hon. Friend aware that the most important human right is the right to stay alive, but that no terrorists should be given any quarter anywhere? Only yesterday, in Srinagar, there was a bomb blast in which several Indian army officers were killed. Does my hon. Friend agree that such mindless violence should be rigorously denounced?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The violence in Kashmir must be handled by the Indian security forces and forces for order, who are the Government of that area. We recognise that. It has to be handled properly and that is why our concern for human rights in that policing operation is expressed on every suitable occasion.

Israel

10. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to press Israel to dismantle Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas and to hand back the Golan heights to Syria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We regularly make representations to the Israelis urging them to cease the construction of settlements which we regard as illegal. The Golan heights are occupied territory. Under Security Council resolution 242, Israel should withdraw from territories occupied in 1967.

Mr. Young: In view of Prince Philip's impending visit to Israel, where he is to receive a posthumous award on behalf of his mother—[*Laughter.*]—his mother's posthumous award for rescuing Jewish families, is it not now time to remind the Israelis that peace will be more stable in the middle east if they return to Syria territory that they hold and which is legitimately Syrian, if they dismantle the settlements where Palestinians are harassed in their own lands, and if they further control their army units, which wish to behave to the Palestinians as the Germans did to the Jews?

Mr. Hogg: I feel that Prince Philip will be a bit depressed by the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks. But leaving that aside, he made two goodish points: first, the settlements are an obstacle to the peace process; and, secondly, if there is to be peace between Israel and Syria, Israel must be ready to withdraw from the Golan heights.

Mr. Hicks: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the positive involvement of Syria is central to the middle east process and, clearly, the illegal occupation of the Golan heights by Israel is a major obstacle to achieving that objective?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right—full participation by Syria in the peace process is essential. To make an effective peace settlement between Israel and Syria, it is important that Israel makes it plain that she will withdraw from the Golan heights. It is important that Syria makes it plain that there will be a full treaty of friendship between Syria and Israel.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: Given that the Labour Government in Israel have made clear their willingness to discuss the return of the Golan heights and the future of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, does the Minister welcome the many initiatives that the Labour Government have taken, including the initiative mentioned earlier by the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie)—the impending visit of Yossi Beilin to Oman?

Mr. Hogg: Yes. The Labour Government under Mr. Rabin have indeed made important steps towards achieving an agreed settlement between themselves and the Arab states and between themselves and the Palestinians. However, we must recognise that there

remain a number of important obstacles—for example, how best to secure the safety both of Palestinians and, indeed, of settlers who are in the present difficulties. That question must be considered positively by Prime Minister Rabin and the Israeli Government.

Mr. Batiste: Is not it clear that the closer any of the negotiations in the middle east gets to success, the more likely it is that extremists on both sides will do their best to disrupt them by further atrocities, such as those at Hebron? Is not the best role for this Government to get the parties to the negotiating table and keep them there, despite the severe provocations they may face, because lasting peace can be achieved only through bilateral agreements?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right. As the parties to the negotiations get closer to a final agreement, there is a real risk that extremists on both sides will use violence in a way that this House understands. It is, therefore, important that the parties to the negotiations commit themselves to an early agreement, because it will reduce the risk of a permanent disruption in the process.

European Union

11. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the nature and content of any provisional or draft text of any treaty for the enlargement of the European Community or Union, including details of the likely date of initial signature and the nature of the ratification process in the United Kingdom Parliament.

Mr. Hurd: The text of an accession treaty with Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden is nearly ready. The applicant countries and member states will sign the treaty after the European Parliament has completed its assent procedure. A Bill giving effect to the treaty in United Kingdom law will be put to Parliament once the treaty has been signed.

Mr. Spearing: Does not the acceptability of the content of that treaty by Her Majesty's Government depend on various undertakings that the House heard specifically yesterday? Will the Foreign Secretary tell us which of those undertakings will be incorporated in the content of the treaty and, if they will not be so incorporated, where else they will be written down? Has not the right hon. Gentleman seen reports to the effect that when the undertaking said to have been given by the Commission was put to Mr. Delors yesterday, he said, "No, no, no"? How does the Foreign Secretary reconcile that answer from Mr. Delors with what we were told yesterday?

Mr. Hurd: On the hon. Member's first point, once the treaty has been signed, Parliament will be asked to consider a Bill giving effect to the accession treaty in United Kingdom law. The Bill will seek to add the accession treaty to the Community treaties listed in section 1(2) of the 1972 Act.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's second point, the Commission has confirmed that its legislative programme does not envisage the use of the health and safety articles of the treaty, other than for measures directly and demonstrably relevant to health and safety at work.

The Commission has also confirmed that proposals brought forward under the social chapter will not apply to the United Kingdom. For the purposes of the agreement, the United Kingdom will be considered as a third country. These assurances were given by the Commission, with the full authority of Mr. Delors, and have been reconfirmed this morning.

Mr. David Howell: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that there have been some rather confused and mixed reports about what the Commission has agreed to in the way of relinquishing health and safety and social provisions? Can he confirm that firm undertakings have been given that those functions will be relinquished back to national level? I refer to very important regulations and controls over important health and safety and social legislation of the kind that we have always backed, but have always argued are best worked out at national rather than Community level.

Mr. Hurd: The assurances given are the ones to which the Prime Minister referred yesterday and which I have again detailed today. As I have said, they were given by the Commission, with the full authority of Mr. Delors, and have been reconfirmed this morning.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On the question of minority and majority voting, was the issue of the threshold specifically excluded from the 1996 agenda prior to the agreement into which the right hon. Gentleman entered last weekend?

Mr. Hurd: No, but it is now specifically included.

Mr. Churchill: While warmly welcoming the enlargement of the Community, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he is aware that an overwhelming majority of people in the United Kingdom and a significant element of opinion among our European Union partners do not wish to see us end up in a centralised federal Europe? Will he undertake to fight all the way to ensure that, when this matter comes up again for decision, in 1996, we shall have as many allies as possible to ensure that national rights and national sovereignty are not ridden over roughshod?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Right across Europe, a growing number of people reject the idea of a centralised super-state. There was a time when people felt that in order to be a good European one had to believe that executive power should be moved gradually, step by step, to the centre. That is no longer the belief of sensible people—for example, Chancellor Kohl. However, we shall not have to wait until 1996; this will be a principal issue in the forthcoming European elections in the United Kingdom, as it is a point which separates Conservatives very clearly and plainly from both the main Opposition parties.

Mr. John Cunningham: Before the right hon. Gentleman continues to do what he did on Monday—misrepresent the position of the Labour party and, for that matter, I believe, the Liberal party, although that is a matter for its members—may I ask whether he recognises that there is no question of the Labour party's supporting a federal Europe? No part of our policy commits us to abandoning the so-called Luxembourg compromise. Nor is there any part of our policy that would abandon our position on the need for unanimity on the issues of economic, foreign and defence policies. It is quite dishonest of the right hon. Gentleman to suggest otherwise.

Mr. Hurd: It is nice to have the right hon. Gentleman so clearly on the back foot and on the defensive. What I did on Monday—or whatever day it was; I am happy to do again today—was remind the right hon. Gentleman what the Leader of the Opposition put his fist to in the Euro-socialist manifesto. I do not know whether he read it before he signed it, but what he said was that majority voting should be the norm. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is now."] It is not the norm now. I do not see how one can possibly make any sense of that sentence without supposing that it will at least dilute the unanimity rule, to which the Government hold firmly.

Mr. Paice: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the accession of the four countries will bring a shift in the voting balance from the south to the north of the continent of Europe, and from the recipients to the contributors?

Will he confirm also that, by 1996, we will have a good idea whether there has been a perceptible shift in the direction of Europe, which we believe could come from the accession of the four countries? Will not that be the time when we will rightly be able to address the questions of majority voting, the threshold and the weighting? If that shift has not taken place at that time, will not the Government stand up for Britain?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is exactly right. The three Scandinavian countries and Austria—for whose entry we have worked for a long time, particularly my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—will be net contributors. It is certainly true that, when they take a full part in the discussions in 1996, they will be clearly equipped to make judwoments of their own.

I should take the point further than my hon. Friend. In 1996, I believe that we will be looking forward to a Community not of 16 countries, but considerably larger. The arguments that have been tossed about in the House during recent months and, indeed, years will be well out of date by then. I cannot think that the European Union will be able to accommodate more than 16 members without a radical look at many aspects, both of its institutions and of its policies, such as the common agricultural policy.

South Africa

12. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to discuss with the South African Government the extent of international support for the democratic process in that country.

13. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been offered by the United Kingdom for the proper administration of the forthcoming general elections in South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in regular contact with the South African Government and other main parties to discuss international support for the transition to democracy. We have so far pledged 75 election observers to the United Nations, European Union and Commonwealth operations.

Mr. Grocott: Is not the crucial lesson of the tragedy in Angola—and, it must be said, the dreadful failure of the international community in Angola—that it is no use sending observers before elections and monitors during them unless there is full support from the international community for the democratic decision once it has been made?

While those who decide to abstain in the South African elections will have made their decision, will the hon. Gentleman and the Government do all in their power to ensure that once the people of South Africa have made their decision on election day, the full and unequivocal weight of the international community will come in behind that democratic decision?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that we give full support to the democratic process in South Africa and we will give full support to the people's democratic decision when it takes place. That is why we are doing so much to help bring that about.

The hon. Gentleman talks about other matters which must be done before elections. One thing to bear in mind is the help—in a small way, but none the less significant—that Britain is giving. Seventeen British police officers have been attached to groups involved in electoral administration, and a further nine for other electoral matters. Seven Army officers are involved and help with the media is coming from the BBC and from other consultants. We are giving practical help to the South African election process in that way.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Speaking as somebody who has lived and worked in South Africa, I am conscious of the significant role that has been played by the Government in dismantling apartheid. I hope that that will be recognised one day in the history books.

In welcoming my hon. Friend's answer, may I ask him to assure the House that he will react positively to any further requests from the South African Government for civilian, police or military aid, which this country is so superbly equipped to offer?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend may rest assured that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering sympathetically requests of that nature. When they are made, they may well be accommodated in the way that he would wish.

Mr. Gapes: Will the Minister make the strongest possible representations to Inkatha and make it clear to that organisation at this stage that its behaviour, its murderous activities and its refusal to participate in the elections will mean that there is no question of support of any kind from his Government, or even from some of the voices on the Conservative Back Benches?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has referred to a meeting that he and I hope, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman hopes, will take place shortly between all the leading representatives, including Inkatha, Chief Buthelezi, the South African Government, the African National Congress and others.

Mr. John Carlisle: Given the wide range of political activity in South Africa, from active communists in the African National Congress to the so-called neo-fascists in the AWB, does my hon. Friend agree that many people will feel ostracised after the election in April and that, therefore, international support could be given to the idea that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) proposed, of some sort of federal state, so that

there will not be too many people outside a system which many will find distasteful and, indeed, extremely dangerous?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said in answer to earlier questions, all these matters must be for the South African people. As I have repeated, and repeat now for the third time in the House this afternoon, there is shortly to be a meeting between all the leading parties at which we hope, and I am sure my hon. Friend hopes, outstanding issues such as he mentions will be resolved.

Mr. Worthington: As members of the party that helped to build up Chief Buthelezi during the 1980s, will the Government use their influence in South Africa to tell him that there is no sympathy whatever for his posturing, and particularly for his role in the killings on Monday in Johannesburg? Will he say that there is no sympathy whatever for the posturing of King Goodwill in delaying the meeting that is crucial to agreement between the major parties in South Africa, and urge on them both that there have to be free and fair elections? Then we can see the true extent of Chief Buthelezi's support.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. The British Government's position has been clear for some time and it has been repeated several times in the House this afternoon.

Baltic States

14. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Baltic states.

Mr. Hurd: We are rebuilding a close friendship with the Baltic states. Trade is increasing quite fast. I visited Latvia in February and had warm and positive talks with the Foreign Ministers of the three Baltic states. Our strong support for Baltic sovereignty and independence and gradual Baltic integration into European structures will be maintained.

Mr. Colvin: I am sure that the whole House will applaud the signing up of all three Baltic states to NATO's partnership for peace. Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what will be done to evaluate their military capability? What are Her Majesty's Government doing to assist the Baltic states in setting up the so-called Baltic battalion?

Mr. Hurd: We are helping to train the battalion composed of units from the three Baltic states as part of a multinational programme of help. Royal Marines will provide individual and company-level training. We are working on the programme with Scandinavian countries. It is very much welcomed by the three countries involved and it is a clear proof, I hope, of our support for Baltic sovereignty and independence.

Mrs. Ewing: Given the importance of trade for the three Baltic states, will the Foreign Secretary consider the possibility of enabling those countries, perhaps through the know-how fund or the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, to mount stands at international exhibitions, particularly in Britain, at which they could learn and could also sell to this country much of the expertise they have —for example, in agriculture and forestry.

Mr. Hurd: I will look at the hon. Lady's suggestion. The know-how fund is already active in the three countries and, as I have said, our trade and investment is increasing rapidly. We are the largest overseas investor in Lithuania, and Cable and Wireless has just won a very large telecommunications contract in Latvia. Let me look at the hon. Lady's suggestion.

Sir Richard Body: Can my right hon. Friend assure the Baltic states that their favourable trading arrangements with Finland will continue if Finland becomes a member of the European Union?

Mr. Hurd: That is a very important point; I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I am not exactly sure how the discussion stands, but we have certainly been strongly urging the point which my hon. Friend makes.

Malaysia

15. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he has had with representatives of the Malaysian Government to discuss trading relations with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) earlier.

Ms Eagle: Would the Minister care to comment on reports that Ameristar, a company taken over by Mark Thatcher, has just landed a lucrative contract with the state-owned Malaysian Oil Corporation? Does he think that this is due to merit, or to services rendered by Lady Thatcher when she gave the initial go-ahead to the Pergau dam project? Does he think that British taxpayers' money should be used as a sweetener to enrich the fortunes of the son of a former Prime Minister?

Mr. Goodlad: I have no knowledge of the matter that the hon. Lady mentions. If it involves any point of ministerial responsibility, I will write to her.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend make a point of congratulating the Malaysian Government and their defence forces on the admirable work that they have done in recent days in seeking to rescue the climbers of the British Army? Will he pay tribute to the courage of one pilot in particular, who certainly risked his life to extricate our climbers, and will he do all he can to make sure that relations between the defence forces of our country and Malaysia remain warm and cordial?

Mr. Goodlad: I agree whole-heartedly with my hon. Friend. The contribution of the Malaysian armed forces was absolutely crucial—particularly that of the pilot mentioned by my hon. Friend. Their professionalism was absolutely exemplary; without it, the outcome could have been very different indeed.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has sent a message of thanks to Dr Mahathir, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has written to his opposite number in Malaysia. The co-operation to which my hon. Friend rightly draws our attention shows the real

strength of the relations between the United Kingdom and Malaysia. I am pleased that the press, too, have recognised that.

European Union

16. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the European Union's enlargement negotiations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made full written statements to the House following the negotiations at the Foreign Affairs Councils on 7 March, 8 March, 15 March and 22 March. I made a written statement on 25 March. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made an oral statement to the House yesterday on the outcome of the negotiations on the institutional implications.

Mr. Hoon: Does the Minister accept that the so-called concessions claimed by the Prime Minister yesterday as a significant success on social policy questions were, in fact, no more than a reminder of well-established, well-known European Commission policy for 1994?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No, I do not accept that at all. It was very important to get this matter clarified. The House has heard already from my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary that the Commission has confirmed that health and safety measures will be brought forward on the right treaty base and that Britain's opt-out from the social chapter will be respected in full. This is a side issue to the main issue of majority voting, but the fact that the Opposition regard it as unimportant shows their true attitude about the social chapter.

Mr. Dykes: Is it not interesting and encouraging that the four countries joining the European Union, subject to final ratification, are intensely patriotic countries, proud of their ancient sovereignty and their ancient culture, yet all accept fully the acquis communautaire and all the provisions of the Maastricht treaty and future developments? Can we follow their good example, bearing in mind the fact that they have no significant opt-outs in any major constitutional areas?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend is right. We know that those four states, which I hope will all accede on time on 1 January next year, will not agree with us about everything, but that, in the main, they will be our allies in ensuring budgetary discipline and keeping the Community diverse and outward-looking. They believe, as we do, that the nation state is the foundation and the building block for European Union.

Ms Quin: Given the confusion in the press today, does the Minister think that a reasonable delay is two months, as has been claimed by other countries in the European Union, or indefinitely, which is what the Prime Minister seemed to imply?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The only confusion is in the mind of the hon. Lady. No time limit is specified in the binding decision taken by the Council.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that, since the United Kingdom liberated France during the war and the French voted no against us for 10 years because of their interests, it would not have been the end of the world if we had asked our friends in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Austria to wait two years until we had served our interests?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, but we have been able to do both. We have protected British interests and secured the accession of the four states on time next year, if that is agreed in their referendums.

Trunk Roads (Review)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the trunk road programme review.

I announced in August 1993 that we intended to review the road programme. Today, I want to set out our proposals for a revised and prioritised programme that will ensure a more efficient, better managed and speedier delivery of the improvements that we need and which is compatible with the principles of sustainable development.

My target was to complete the review in time for it to provide the basis for the new Highways Agency, which is being launched today. The review is now complete and copies of the report have been placed in the Vote Office and the Library.

The Government have an excellent record of investment in delivering increased motorway and trunk road capacity, which is so vital to the economic well-being of the country, and in providing bypasses, which remove heavy traffic from the centres of towns and villages, with immense benefits for the residents and their environment.

We plan to spend about £2 billion a year on trunk roads over the next three years, which is almost double the level, in real terms, in 1979. Fifty-seven major contracts are under construction and last month I announced our intention to start work on a further 22 major contracts during 1994-95, which are worth more than £1 billion in total.

However, it is worth reminding the House that, altogether, my Department is spending 50 per cent. of its budget on roads, which account for 90 per cent. of all inland journeys in the United Kingdom, and 40 per cent. on public transport, which accounts for 10 per cent. of journeys. That demonstrates the importance that we attach to rail and urban transport systems and it clearly shows how we skew expenditure that way.

The review does not affect the three-year national roads expenditure plan which was announced at the time of the autumn statement; nor does it cover local authorities' road programmes. It has its origins in the package of measures that I announced to deliver road schemes faster.

In the past, it has taken an average of 13.5 years to get from the entry of a scheme into the programme to its opening. I aim to cut that time by up to a third. We are already making good progress. I recently announced consultation on much-needed changes to road scheme public inquiry rules. The new Highways Agency is now launched. The most important measure in the package, however, was a review of the national trunk road construction programme, with the aim of speeding up the delivery of projects with the highest priority.

The review has been the most wide ranging and in-depth for many years. There was a clear managerial need for establishing priorities. Until now, all the schemes in the road programme have been taken forward with the same effort and many of them at the same speed. That does not make the best use of resources. It wastes money and time, and creates uncertainty.

However, the opportunity has also been taken to go much wider. It is no part of the Government's policies to tell people when and how to travel. On the other hand, we must be aware of the consequences if people continue to exercise their choices as they do at present. In certain parts of the country, the resulting growth will have unacceptable consequences for both the environment and the economy. Of course, there is no realistic possibility of simply halting traffic growth. What we can seek is to bring home its full cost. We must enable people to enjoy access to goods and services and to visit other people, while reducing the amount of movement needed to achieve that aim.

Increases in fuel duty, and motorway tolling, will help people to make more informed choices about the cost of using their cars. Planning guidance just published will also help to reduce the requirement to travel to reach goods and services. However, even a reduced rate of traffic growth will not remove the urgent need that we face already for new bypasses, wider motorways and safer junctions.

The review, therefore, provided the opportunity to check that each scheme was still essential, was on the proper scale, and accorded with the high standards now expected of our road improvements in a way that reconciled the needs of industry and the economy with the needs of the environment. Each scheme in the existing programme has been examined carefully to confirm, among other things, that it produces a high rate of economic benefit in comparison with its cost, and that it has the minimum effect on the natural environment.

The review has concluded that most resources should go on the two priorities of improving key routes, primarily motorways, likely to experience stop-start driving conditions in the foreseeable future, and on bypasses. The number of new trunk routes proposed in the publicly funded programme, especially those through open countryside, will be reduced still further to a total of six. Major urban road improvements should be very limited in number, in the light of the continuing substantial Government investment in urban transport initiatives and the priority attached thereto.

Schemes for which there was no acceptable environmental treatment, and those whose priority meant that they were not likely to be built in the foreseeable future—49 in all—are being withdrawn to reduce blight and uncertainty. Work on them will cease immediately.

The new prioritised borrowing represents a substantial agenda to take us into the next century. It has been drawn up as a rolling programme, which allows schemes to be added to the higher priorities as and when needs become pressing and funding is available. The highest priority schemes will receive the most urgent attention; the longer-term schemes will be taken to the next suitable stage in their preparation, and work on them will be resumed only as the programme rolls forward.

The new Highways Agency is being given specific responsibilities for environmental treatment of road schemes. We now employ a large number of landscape architects and environmental specialists to assess and advise on the best design and environmental treatment of national road schemes. I therefore concluded that the Landscape Advisory Committee, which has done such valuable work, has been superseded by the skills now available to us. I wish to express my thanks to the chairman and members of the Landscape Advisory Committee for all the work that they have done.

I turn now to some specific proposals that will be of special interest to the House.

The proposed east-west route from the M40 to the Haven ports has received a special scrutiny. As has already been announced, work on the A418 Wing bypass and the A418 west of Aylesbury bypass has been suspended. Both

those schemes have been suspended pending the outcome of a new strategic study from the A5 to the M40 in the Oxford area. The central section of the route—A5 to Stansted—has now been withdrawn from the construction programme because it was unlikely that an environmentally acceptable route would be found. The eastern section of the route, from the Haven ports to the M11 and Stansted, will still be taken forward.

We have also re-examined our proposals for improving the M25. I have concluded that plans to widen 80 per cent. of the M25 in the next four to five years to dual four lanes and provide capacity beyond that in the south-west sector, are still the only appropriate response to growing congestion. We will, therefore, publish draft highway orders and an environmental statement on the proposed link roads between junction 12 and junction 15 of the M25 on 7 April. The public will be invited to comment on the proposals. All views will be put before an independent inspector and considered at a public inquiry, probably later this year. Work will also progress towards publication of draft orders and an environmental statement on link roads between junction 15 and junction 16. A public inquiry will follow, probably in 1996. I consider that there will also be a need for capacity beyond dual four lanes between junction 10 and junction 12 in the next decade, but work on that project is still at an early stage and no decisions have been taken on the design. As a result of the review, however, work on increasing capacity beyond dual four lanes between junctions 16 and 21A will be deferred.

I have also decided that two proposed strategic studies in the south-east—the Kent-Hampshire study and the M3-M40 study—will not go ahead. That decision underlines my commitment to minimising the number of new routes.

Around Oxford, the two schemes on the A40—the Headington bypass and the north of Oxford scheme—will also be withdrawn from the programme, as will the proposed M12 new route from the M25 to Chelmsford.

The review gives the new Highways Agency an up-to-date agenda to deliver the road improvements that we need most, with maximum speed and efficiency. Our motorway and trunk road network needs to be maintained and improved to secure our economic well-being and environmental benefits—in particular, by keeping through traffic away from local roads—and to continue improving our already good safety record. The review has had to balance the motoring aspirations of the 1990s family with the consequences; and the needs of industry and the economy with the needs of the environment. It has achieved that and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): What the Secretary of State has announced is not, as he would have us believe, an environmentally friendly road-building programme. Most of the Government's bloated roads programme stays in place; only a small percentage has been withdrawn. Will the Secretary of State tell us how many schemes have been finally and irrevocably abandoned? Some of the programme has been stretched over a longer period, sentencing thousands of households to even more uncertainty and blight than before.

The Secretary of State referred to the trunk routes in the publicly funded roads programme. Will he tell the House how many privately funded schemes are to go ahead and whether deferred public schemes could be reintroduced into the programme by the private sector?

The Secretary of State's announcement is not the outcome of a thoroughgoing review. It is not the product of a careful assessment of the future transport and environmental needs of our country. It has not considered the non-motoring alternatives to meeting those needs. Far from it; the new roads programme has been decided, in racing terms, by the Treasury out of Political Embarrassment. The Secretary of State has responded to Treasury pressure for a reduction in his roads budget and to the electoral pressure from local campaigners up and down the country.

For years, the Government have rejected the idea of an overall transport policy. Their only policy has been to build more roads. They produce traffic forecasts and then turn those forecasts into targets to be met. We all know that after each new motorway is built, it is quickly filled with traffic and the resulting congestion is followed by proposals for yet more road building.

Some road building is necessary. The last five miles of the A2 to Dover docks and the A1 in Northumberland need to be made dual carriageways, but they are still not a top priority. The M65 in Lancashire needs to be joined up to the M6. At a quick glance, it does not appear in the programme at all. The country wants to know why the Government are persisting with madcap schemes such as relief roads for the M25 around London and for the M62 around the north and west of Manchester.

Why have not the Government taken action to try to get passenger traffic off the roads by giving drivers the chance to choose attractive alternatives? People use their cars, particularly for the journey to work, because their cars get them where they want, when they want. Surely the answer is to ensure that public transport gets more people where they want, when they want. That means more investment in better bus, train and underground services, more investment in modern projects such as the Manchester metro, the Sheffield supertram and the midlands metro.

Why has not the Secretary of State announced a shift of funds from the road programme to public transport? Why have the Government not taken action to get more freight off the roads? Why have they not got on with building the channel tunnel link, the channel tunnel freight terminals and uprating the west coast main line? Why are they persisting in going ahead with a relief road for the M62, the main trans-Pennine motorway, at a cost of £270 million for 11 miles of road? They could attract passenger and freight traffic off the self-same M62 by electrifying the trans-Pennine rail link at a cost of about £170 million. Why do not the Government accept that deregulating the bus services has forced people in many areas to use cars because bus services are no longer available?

What is needed is a genuine review of transport policy, looking at how best to help people and freight get around our country quickly, cheaply, efficiently, safely and with the least damage to local communities and the environment. They will never get that from a Tory Government.

Mr. MacGregor: I should be happy to answer all those points, but I think that I would be out of order if I dealt with every one. I know that the hon. Gentleman was late coming into the Chamber, but he has clearly not read the statement, did not listen to it and does not know what it is all about.

The number of schemes withdrawn is 49, as I said in my statement. That is a significant number of schemes that we do not believe can be delivered within the foreseeable

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future. We have concluded that a number of schemes, some of which are substantial, are not attractive environmentally and their benefits do not outweigh the environmental disbenefits. A significant number of schemes have been withdrawn—49.

Mr. Dobson: Irrevocably?

Mr. MacGregor: They have been withdrawn from the programme.

The hon. Gentleman talked about sentencing households to blight because some projects have been put into the longer-term part of the programme. But we are reducing the blight and uncertainty by producing a more realistic timetable for all the schemes. The blight and uncertainty for many will be reduced as many of the schemes have been brought forward under the new set of priorities.

The hon. Gentleman was wrong to describe the statement as a response to the Treasury. At the beginning, I clearly gave our programme for expenditure in the next three years, and that has not been changed. I made it clear that we are drawing up a rolling programme over a considerable period with the right order of priorities. The hon. Gentleman completely missed that point.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether some of the schemes that have been withdrawn would be privately financed rather than publicly financed. The answer is no. As he will know, there is one privately financed scheme at present: the Birmingham northern relief road. A proposition for the Birmingham western orbital road may well be taken forward as a design, build, finance and operate scheme. The schemes that have been withdrawn are not part of the programme.

The hon. Gentleman commented at length on non-motoring alternatives. He has again failed to take into account the fact that we are spending 40 per cent. of the total of a substantially increased budget on public transport for 10 per cent. of the journeys. In London, the ratio is 3:1 in favour of public transport—in the railways, channel tunnel infrastructure—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] The hon. Gentleman totally ignores the £1.4 billion investment that has already gone into infrastructure in the channel tunnel. He thinks that £1.4 billion is not a great deal of money and would happily spend much more, in contrast to his colleagues on the Labour Front Bench who say that they will restrain public spending. The hon. Gentleman was simply talking about spending more.

The expenditure currently being devoted to London Underground is six times more in real terms than it was under the Greater London council in the late 1970s—*[Interruption.]* In the late 1970s, I said—under a Labour Government. Clearly, a great deal of investment is going into the underground.

The hon. Gentleman implied that, with the exception of a few road schemes, he wants to see road-building schemes halted.

Mr. Dobson: I did not say that.

Mr. MacGregor: That was very much the impression that he gave. If he is saying that he is happy with our road-building programme—

Mr. Dobson: I did not say that either.

Mr. MacGregor: Well, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will make up his mind what he is saying. Either he is saying that he wants to spend much more money everywhere, in contrast to his shadow Treasury colleagues, which belies their position absolutely, or he is saying that he will cut massively the road-building programme in order to devote more resources to other areas of public expenditure. Massive cuts in the road-building programme would have a devastating effect on the economic competitiveness of businesses in this country.

We are devoting resources and effort to transferring more freight from road to rail, but it will not be possible on the scale envisaged by the hon. Gentleman and our businesses would be devastated if he substantially cut the roads programme.

The hon. Gentleman also says that he wishes to reduce choice for families who, with their increased standard of living, want to use their motor cars.

The hon. Gentleman has neither read the policy document nor taken on board why we are taking this action. Above all, his approach to roads, freight and cars is misguided. I hope, therefore, that whenever we embark on a road project, he will come out and say that he is against it. He can then see what the public says.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Those first two exchanges have taken precisely 21 minutes. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] There is no point in saying "Hear, hear" unless I get the co-operation of the House, with brisk questions and equally brisk answers.

Sir Peter Fry (Wellingborough): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on conducting a realistic reappraisal of the roads programme, while resisting the cries of those who want to bring the road-building programme to a stop? Does he agree that, over the past 20 years, we have heard the same old story from the Opposition, who have totally ignored the fact that more and more—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have appealed to the House not to make statements. A supplementary question means one question, not a catalogue of questions. That is what I am now looking for from all hon. Members.

Sir Peter Fry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his statement strikes the right balance between the needs of people who want to drive their own cars, the country's economic needs, and environmental matters, which we all hold dear?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have striven, throughout my re-examination of the roads programme, to achieve that, and have put heavy emphasis on environmental aspects. I believe strongly in ensuring that everything that we do is as environmentally friendly as we can make it. That is why the number of schemes has been reduced and we have put heavy emphasis on the environmental aspects of the schemes that we carry forward.

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): May I welcome the announcement, as far as it goes, particularly the removal of the 49 schemes that have gone altogether? Does the Minister agree that he has given the game away by boasting that roads expenditure is, in real terms, twice the level that it was in 1979? Will he now issue a comprehensive transport Green Paper to consider the

alternatives, and try to do something about the 10 per cent. figure for the number of journeys made on public transport and avoid the doubling in car numbers which we are set to see?

Mr. MacGregor: That, of course, is why we are spending 40 per cent. of our budget on public transport. The annual report of my Department as part of the expenditure programme sets out the transport strategy in all its details. I hope that the hon. Member will acknowledge that, for reasons of economic competitiveness and because so many families find it attractive to travel by car and wish to use their cars more, we also have to have a substantial road programme of investment.

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): Has my right hon. Friend's statement any implications for the timing of any development of the A27 in the Worthing area? In view of the emphasis that he rightly places on bypasses, why is his Department persisting in what is not a bypass but a through-pass? Will he ensure that Worthing has a bypass, like virtually everywhere else on the south coast?

Mr. MacGregor: I know exactly the scheme to which my right hon. Friend refers; it is in the priority 2 category. It is necessary to go ahead with the assessment of alternative routes before public consultation and public inquiries. It is essential do all that work on priority 2 categories now, because it takes some time to get them to the point of construction. The issue that my right hon. Friend is raising is currently being considered in the public inquiry. We shall have to wait for the outcome of that inquiry and take decisions after it.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The Secretary of State will be aware that one scheme that ought to have been dropped but was not is his proposal to build a bypass to the A1 western bypass in Gateshead. Is he aware that that scheme will demolish many homes? It will not deal with the problem; it will cut a huge swathe through the most attractive green belt in Gateshead and leave thousands of my constituents living on a road island. Will he look again at the local authority's alternative scheme which deals with the whole problem, not just the one of through traffic? It demolishes no homes, it protects the green belt, it can be completed in phases and his the Department acknowledges that it is cheaper than his own scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware that there are many divided views about the scheme to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I have had deputations about it and have been there. The appropriate next stage is the public inquiry, where all the issues can be fully aired. That is what the public inquiry is for.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Very briefly, may I, on behalf of myself, my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), the Leader of the House, our constituents and all local campaigners thank my right hon. Friend for killing off the unloved, hare-brained scheme of the M12 to Chelmsford? May I congratulate him and his colleague the Minister for Roads and Traffic on the sensitive way in which they have paid regard to the environment in mid and south Essex. Thank you very much.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am grateful, too, for his tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic who has played a notable and powerful part in the review, and I am grateful to him. The M12 proposition seemed to fall absolutely into the category that we are now anxious to avoid whenever possible—new routes through attractive and open countryside. On the other hand, where there is a transport need, we have concentrated on developing along existing road corridors. Where an improvement is needed in that area, the right way is to improve the A12 and not to have a new motorway.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): As most of the statement was about the south, will the Secretary of State give some detail about the midlands, particularly around Birmingham? The M6, which runs through my constituency, cannot be widened because most of it is 100 ft in the air. What relief will my constituents get in respect of the urgent need for some genuine bypass arrangement?

Mr. MacGregor: I mentioned some of the schemes because they have been particularly of comment and there are also schemes such as the M12, where we are making a real change. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will look at the full review, where he will see the proposals for the west midlands. One way of helping his particular issue would be noise barriers and sound barriers, but I would wish to engage in correspondence with the hon. Gentleman about the precise details of the scheme.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): The Selby bypass has been placed in the priority 2 designation. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the emphasis will be on priority, rather than on a second-class designation? Will he also confirm that nothing in a priority 2 designation implies an inhibition of the statutory processes, or a delay in the introduction of bulldozers when those processes have been completed?

Mr. MacGregor: Indeed, I can confirm both points. First, priority 2 designation is not about secondary or second-level schemes; it is about the priority given to the tackling of schemes. Secondly, the work will continue to go ahead in such cases.

The point is that we wish to devote resources most urgently to getting the priority schemes through, while carrying forward the earlier stages of public consultation and public inquiry in regard to priority 2 schemes. In some cases, it may be possible to put priority 2 schemes ahead of priority 1 schemes when, for one reason or another, priority 1 schemes are held up. I can confirm to my right hon. Friend that there will be no delay.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Does the Secretary of State accept that the failure to take out the M62 relief road will cause widespread dismay in my constituency and in neighbouring areas? This is probably the most insensitive scheme in the entire roads programme, and placing it in category 2 will worsen the position of people whose homes are already threatened by the insensitive way in which the Department has dealt with the whole business ever since the publication of the White Paper four years ago. It is time that the Secretary of State lived up to his green claims, and did something about such roads. He should remove this monstrous concept from the roads programme now.

Mr. MacGregor: In some parts of the country, the motorway network is already extremely congested—or it is clear that, because of economic growth and development, it will become so. It is very desirable for us to find

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solutions to that problem, other than simply causing traffic to go off existing motorways and back on to local roads. We are sometimes faced with difficult choices. The scheme to which the hon. Gentleman refers will enable a public inquiry to take place, at which all the issues can be considered.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): May I thank my right hon. Friend for responding to representations from my constituents who asked for the abandoning of proposals to widen three junctions on the A45 in my constituency? If my right hon. Friend visited Coventry, he would be cheered to the echo by my constituents who have had blight removed from their homes.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he will know, our review concluded that three projects in his constituency should be withdrawn.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Have not business leaders said that London faces ruin as a business centre because of traffic congestion? Yet the Secretary of State is continuing with the M11 link road, which will bring more traffic into London. Many people in my area will be disappointed—but not surprised, because the Secretary of State is still seen very much as a road junkie.

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman will see when he reads the report, we are concentrating on ensuring that the bypasses around London—the M25 and inner circular routes such as the north circular—continue to be developed to meet the growth in traffic, to avoid through traffic going through London. We are also focusing on road schemes that improve the prospects for employment and economic regeneration in docklands and the east end of London. That is the purpose of those road schemes.

Beyond that, we have suspended most of the other schemes because we wish to review the radial roads. We want to cut improvements to roads that encourage commuters to come into central London by car. That parallels much of the other work that we are doing in London, which places heavy emphasis on public transport —improvements to the Jubilee line and many others, red routes and a number of other policies that we are pursuing. I think that the road policy is consistent.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it makes great sense to concentrate resources on a smaller number of schemes, so that it takes a shorter time to design and build the roads themselves —and, more important, so that blight is removed in the shorter time scale? That is very welcome.

As my right hon. Friend knows, the A46 between Newark and Lincoln is hugely important to the Lincoln area. Can he give me any news about that scheme?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am grateful for all the work that he did as a Minister in my Department prior to the review and which contributed to it greatly. The A46 scheme to which he referred is a priority 2 scheme, so that means that it remains firmly in the programme.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): In his statement, the Secretary of State talked about bringing home to people the full costs of their choice of road transport. Are the Government proposing to introduce ways of measuring the full costs? Will they include, for example, the cost of losing thousands of lives on the roads every year as well as the terrible environmental costs? Will the Government recognise that those costs are incalculable? Is there some significance in the fact that the Secretary of State omitted to mention the trans-European road network in his spoken statement whereas it is in the typed version?

Mr. MacGregor: If the costs are incalculable, it is difficult to calculate them. We have been doing a great deal of work to try to establish the accurate costing of all these matters. There is an annex in the consultation document that we produced last year which deals with paying for better motorways. It provides an analysis of how we are approaching that.

I simply deleted the part about the trans-European route network because I did not want my statement to be too long. I am happy to make clear the position. It stems from the decision to withdraw part of what was the trans-European route network from Stansted to Oxford. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we will continue to have a trans-European route network up to Holyhead and beyond. That will be the route from the Haven ports via Stansted and I have made it clear that that will continue. It will in future follow the existing M11, A604, A14, M6 and M54 routes.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Bedford we have been waiting for 30 years for a bypass? Will my right hon. Friend do his utmost to accelerate the development?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend illustrates that there are many demands for bypasses now. I know that only too well, as I travel regularly round the country. That is why it has been necessary to prioritise the programme. It is not possible with all the statutory procedures and in terms of the funds available, to have all the bypasses now. We cannot do everything at once. My hon. Friend will be reassured to know that all his schemes remain clearly in the programme and most of them are in priority 2, so that work will continue.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the Secretary of State accept that the Birmingham northern relief road referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was scheduled to open in spring 1994—that is now? It is his Department's and his predecessor's much-vaunted private sector initiative which guarantees only that there will be a further public inquiry later this year. What sort of balanced road programme proposes a reduction of 5 per cent. in what one of his predecessor's called the biggest road-building programme since the Romans, while proposing also a 24 per cent. reduction in public transport expenditure over the next three years and a 50 per cent. reduction in the railways external financing limit? Balance? What sort of balance is that?

Mr. MacGregor: The balance remains clearly that public transport is gaining in relation to the total number of journeys made on it much more than would otherwise be the case. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Birmingham northern relief road project goes to a public inquiry in the summer. That is one of the reasons why I wish to prioritise the programme. There are a number of public inquiries for some of the bigger and more controversial routes and it is

right that there should be. For that reason, we do not wish to carry forward the processes for the whole of the road programme. If there are delays in one or two of the public programmes—the one to which the hon. Gentleman referred is a privately financed programme—priority 2 schemes can come forward. It would not make sense to have schemes in the longer-term programme being taken forward at the same pace.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): Does my right hon. Friend plan to respond to the alternative package of proposals for the M25 put forward by Runnymede borough council by setting up an independent assessment of those proposals?

Mr. MacGregor: I have discussed that question with my right hon. Friend and I am very much aware of the alternative proposals. I am aware also of the strength of local feeling. On the other hand, there is no doubt that unless we do something to remove the potential congestion on that stretch of the road, the effect on local roads will be substantial.

I have been analysing Runnymede borough council's proposals. I do not think that an independent commission is the right way forward because we do not have provision for that. I think that a public inquiry at which all the proposals can be looked at thoroughly is the right way forward. It would enable a much more detailed and public investigation to take place. That is why I believe that we should have a public inquiry and I am certain that the proposals will be looked at thoroughly.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): With the local knowledge of a St. Andrews graduate, will the Secretary of State ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to think of dropping the ill-conceived idea for a second Forth road bridge, abolish tolls and make it possible for Edinburgh—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I hate interrupting, but this is not a Scottish statement. I do not think it right that he should ask the Secretary of State for Transport questions that should be put to the Secretary of State for Scotland. If he rephrases his question, I will, of course, hear him, but I am sure that he will understand that that was a question for the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Dalyell: I accept your ruling, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman very much. I am much obliged to him; he shows great parliamentary courtesy.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): In March last year, the Department's regional office in Leeds agreed to the improvement of the junction of the A57 and A618 by putting a roundabout in place. As the same office told me last month that it does not have a firm completion date and that, indeed, the availability of funds will determine when work on the junction can be started, does the Secretary of State's statement mean that such road safety projects will be given priority or am I to see further fatal accidents on the A57 trunk road before the work is done?

Mr. MacGregor: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not carry the details of every scheme in my head. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Well, there are huge numbers of them. I suspect that the scheme to which he refers is a local authority scheme and therefore comes within the transport supplementary grant. If that is correct —as it is a local safety scheme, it must be—I point out to him that we are giving substantial sums of money to local safety schemes within the TSG; my announcement today does not affect local authority roads.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): May I welcome my right hon. Friend's sensible announcement concerning the east-west trunk road, but ask him what significance should be attached to his decision to give the Aston Clinton A41 bypass priority 2 in view of the fact that intolerable pressure is being placed on my constituents there by the completion of the Berkhamsted bypass about which his Department's brochure speaks very proudly today?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his first comment. Clearly, in making our decision on the scheme, we took into account not only the environmental aspects but the views of many people from the counties involved, including my hon. Friend's. It seemed that the environmental objections overrode any economic benefits that might have come from that particular scheme.

The Aston Clinton bypass is in category 2. We had to wrestle hard with bypass schemes because so many were demanded across the country—a point which the strongly anti-road environmental lobbies completely ignore sometimes. We faced huge demands and it was necessary to prioritise, but all the statutory processes will still apply to that scheme.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): We appreciate the work that has already been done on the A1 in Northumberland, but when will there be a dual carriageway right through Northumberland up to Edinburgh? There has been carnage and loss of life on that stretch of the road.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the improvement to the A1 is a very important project. It is also expensive; the work that we started in Yorkshire proves that. It is a question of timing and establishing priorities, and I think that he will find that the priorities on the different parts of that scheme are outlined in the report.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the great welcome given to the news about the cancellation of the proposed M1-M62 link and is he also aware how much local appreciation there is in Roberttown and the surrounding areas that we shall continue to have green fields for future generations?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Secretary of State tell us what the statement means for Greater Manchester east? When will the M66 from Denton to Middleton be completed? When will the A6(M) Stockport bypass begin and how much of the vaunted money for public transport, of which the Minister talks, will come to Greater Manchester?

Mr. MacGregor: The M66 Denton-Middleton contract is in priority 1. That means that it has been given the highest priority.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that the cancellation of the Stamford relief road is an absolute disaster for the beautiful and historic town of Stamford, which is literally being suffocated and shaken to death by an endless line of heavy

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traffic at all hours of the day? Is there any way in which the matter may be reconsidered? In the meantime, will my right hon. Friend consider the possibility of imposing a weight restriction on Stamford bridge? Will he also tell me whether there is any chance of the Deepings bypass being constructed, for which my constituents have been waiting with decreasing patience for the past 50 years?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is demonstrating that there are heavy demands all around the country for bypasses and, simply, it is not possible to accommodate them all. One of the reasons why the Stamford relief road was withdrawn was its extremely controversial nature. My hon. Friend will know that the A1(M) Stamford bypass remains very much in the programme. Perhaps I could write to my hon. Friend on his point about the bridge.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I am not sure whether to congratulate the Secretary of State on the A167 western bypass at Durham, because the decision will anger a lot and delight many.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): What does my hon. Friend think?

Mr. Steinberg: I am sitting on the fence. Was the decision as a result of the public inquiry? Is that road scheme now dead once and for all, because the situation is becoming worse and worse as more traffic begins to use the road?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has demonstrated in his own case what I frequently find—schemes delight some people and annoy others. I noticed that he did not decide on which side of the fence he was.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend is on the roundabout.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, he is going nowhere, but round and round, whereas I have to make decisions. The scheme was withdrawn not as a result of the public inquiry, but because it was extremely controversial and we did not feel that, in the end, it demonstrated that appropriate benefits and value for money could have been achieved from it. We wrestled long and hard over the decision on that bypass. That scheme is withdrawn and will not be renewed, but that does not mean that, in future, one cannot consider other schemes. I am not necessarily making a commitment in that case, but I am making a general point that one can consider other schemes to deal with the special congestion pressures that arise. Indeed, there are some new schemes in the programme, compared with that of 1989, for that very reason.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): During his most welcome statement, my right hon. Friend referred twice to public inquiries. He will know that the centre section of the A299 Thanet way, which is vital to my constituents and to development area status, has been delayed for some 15 months during the public inquiry. That is in not the fault of the Department of Transport; it is due to the unfortunate domestic circumstances of the inspector, and I know that it is as frustrating to my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic as it is to me and my constituents. Does my right hon. Friend have any plans to review the inquiry system?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sorry to hear of that situation. I know that my hon. Friend has talked to the Minister for Roads and Traffic about that issue. Our review of public inquiries is designed to deal with a number of those issues. For example, there are proposals for assistant inspectors and to bring the inquiries more in line with the planning inquiries of the Department of the Environment. I certainly hope that it would help in the sort of case to which my hon. Friend referred and I should certainly be happy to talk to him and my hon. Friend the Minister about it.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Is the Secretary of State aware that his remarks about the Birmingham northern relief road will draw hollow laughter from my constituents, who would have seen the opening of that road this year if the Government had not changed it from a public to a private scheme? Will he answer one question about that road? There is a direct contradiction between the tolling design of that road and the only tolling design that was said in the Government's recent Green Paper to be environmentally and economically acceptable. The statement has not resolved that contradiction. Will the Secretary of State resolve it now?

Mr. MacGregor: The reason we have gone for electronic tolling in the Green Paper is that it is talking about tolling on existing motorways where there are many points of access and exit. We believe that putting a tolling system of the traditional plaza sort on to an existing motorway is not feasible in most cases because it would require a huge land take on an existing motorway and would not achieve the purpose of the exercise. There is a big difference between constructing a new motorway and putting tolling on to existing systems.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Can my right hon. Friend tell me what is the status of the Disley-High Lane bypass under his proposals? That bypass, which is vital to the villages of Disley and Newtown in my constituency, has been on the stocks for many years; hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent on it. With the increasing use of the existing A6 for heavy commercial vehicles coming from the quarries in Derbyshire to provide aggregate for Manchester airport, the bypass is vital. What is its status? Will my right hon. Friend give some reassurance that it will be in a programme very soon?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend illustrates precisely some of the problems that we face and the problems that those such as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who want to see the road programme substantially cut, simply do not recognise. I am well aware of the pressures for bypasses. However, in view of the substantial number of existing bypasses, and despite our high level of spending—it is slightly down on last year, but it is a record compared with everything in the past—it is not possible to carry through all the bypasses at the speed that everyone would wish. Therefore, we had to examine the economic benefits analysis and other matters in order to set our priorities. It is partly for the reason given by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) —that a lot of money can be spent on the preparation of bypasses which, in the end, are a lower priority—that I have set about the prioritisation.

The Disley and High Lane bypass certainly remains in the programme, but it is in the long-term programme and,

therefore, will have to wait for other bypasses to get priority. There are four other schemes in my hon. Friend's constituency, two in priority 1 and two in priority 2. That shows the heavy pressures on the programme.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that at Bramley Vale school, which is a few hundred yards from the motorway near junction 29 on the M1, 25 per cent. of the schoolchildren suffer from asthma and have to use inhalers? How can it make any sense to widen that road? I see that junctions 25 to 28 are in priority 1 and junctions 28 to 31 are in priority 2. Why does not the Secretary of State think about those schoolkids and the many more who will suffer if the Government continue to widen the road, and scrap these projects altogether?

Mr. MacGregor: Because if traffic, including heavy goods traffic, moved at a snail's pace on our motorways or was congested and held up for a very long time, and was hard to move at all, or it went back on to local roads, none of those options would be attractive from the environmental pollution point of view. Improving the main routes to ensure that traffic flows through at a reasonable speed is one of the best ways of reducing environmental pollution. The other part of it is not part of the statement today but is very important—the many measures that we are taking to reduce our environmental pollution through improvements in vehicle emission standards.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) will be delighted that the Poole harbour crossing and the Poole A31 link are retained firmly in the programme? That will improve the prosperity of the port of Poole and provide a big improvement in the environment in the town of Poole.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is a good example of a scheme that we examined in great detail. There are some environmental disbenefits to the schemes, as my hon. Friend will know, and there are also big economic benefits. Therefore, we had to weigh the two before coming to the conclusion that we did, and I am glad that the conclusion accorded with my hon. Friend's view.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): If the Secretary of State is as committed to public transport as he claims to be, why did he make outside the House yesterday's albeit welcome announcement regarding the Northern line? What choice will there be for the 56 per cent. of people living in my borough who have no access to private transport?

Mr. MacGregor: I should be very happy to answer questions about the Northern line, but I do not think that it comes within the scope of the statement on which I am answering questions. However, there will be plenty of opportunities in the future. It is certainly my intention—

Ms Glenda Jackson: Now?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that I should be out of order if I were to answer such questions now.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State would be totally out of order. It was very remiss of me not to be aware, until it was a little late, of what the hon. Lady was saying. Otherwise, I should have taken care of it.

Mr. MacGregor: Perhaps we shall have another opportunity. I hope so.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I should like, first, to thank my right hon. Friend and his sensitive roads Minister for what has been done on the A418. Will my right hon. Friend now pursue his policy of prioritisation? Will he persuade the Cabinet to prioritise public spending on public transport and tell the public that they cannot have it both ways—that they cannot continue to have large public expenditure on universal benefits and, at the same time, expect investment in the subsidisation of public transport? Can my right hon. Friend also explain something that I have never understood—why the Government are against a unified transport policy?

Mr. MacGregor: I thank my hon. Friend for his response to our decisions. He is right to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, who is not only sensitive but robust in the way he approaches these matters. I cannot go into my hon. Friend's points concerning the wider public expenditure priorities outside my Department. However, I can assure him that particular priorities are considered thoroughly and very carefully all the time, in the context of not only global sums but individual schemes and their inter-relationship.

I sometimes wonder what people mean when they refer to an integrated or unified transport policy. I know what the Labour party means—centralised control, dictation from the centre. My view is that it is very important to let the market work on an infrastructure that is provided in a co-ordinated way by the Government. If my hon. Friend looks at the annual report of the Department of Transport he will see that we set out there the strategic objectives. Running clearly through the report is evidence of coherence and co-ordination in the whole of our transport policy—aviation, shipping and ports, as well as the road and rail infrastructures. These all fit together.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): As the unloved and hare-brained east London river crossing is not likely to proceed in the foreseeable future, and as it shares with the A5 to Stansted the fact that it is unlikely that an environmentally acceptable route will be found, will the Minister now make it a round 50 and withdraw the proposal, thereby ending the appalling blight in the Plumstead and Abbey Wood area, and introduce instead the Woolwich rail tunnel and the Woolwich metro, which would be environmentally friendly and would cost much less?.

Mr. MacGregor: We expect to announce by the summer how the whole question of the east London river crossing should be taken forward. There remains a strong commitment to the provision of cross-river links, which are needed for the east Thames corridor. The east London river crossing and the Blackwall schemes are complementary. Work is continuing, and I ask the hon. Gentleman to be patient before starting to make his points again.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Unlike most of my hon. Friends, I shall not ask my right hon. Friend for any public expenditure whatsoever. Will he look very carefully at the Runnymede proposals, to which he referred in reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir. G. Pattie)? Would not it make more sense to study these before a public inquiry, which would be hugely expensive for everyone involved? If they proved to

[Sir Michael Grylls]

be better, there would be a saving of £400 million—the amount that my right hon. Friend proposes to spend on these very unpopular link roads.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand my hon. Friend's point entirely. I have looked very carefully at the Runnymede report. Let me explain the difficulty. Our assessment of all the various proposals in the report, many of which, as my hon. Friend knows, we are taking forward anyway, is that they would not make sufficient provision for likely traffic growth on that stretch of the M25, which is between the M3 and the M4 and is one of the busiest parts of the entire United Kingdom transport network. If our assessment is that it does not fully meet the requirements, the important thing will be for all this to be tested at a public inquiry. I believe that it is necessary to have the matter fully investigated in public. I will certainly ensure that all the schemes in the Runnymede report are investigated thoroughly in a public inquiry.

However, there are issues that go way beyond that, and that is why it makes sense to have the public inquiry. The public inquiry is only one part of the process, but it is extremely important. We will have to wait for the recommendations of the inspector which arise from that before we decide what to do next. A public inquiry is the right place for all that to be fully aired.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the A1 link between the east of England and Scotland must be regarded as a key route in any analysis? Is it his intention to stand by the undertaking given by his predecessor before the election to complete the dual carriageway link between Newcastle and Edinburgh and, if so, when?

Mr. MacGregor: I recognise the importance of the A1, and I travel on it frequently. I understand its importance to Edinburgh, but all parts of the road programme and the road network have different amounts of traffic on them. In the assessment we make of how we establish priorities, we must look at such things.

We have indicated the prioritisation of the A1 in the review. The hon. Gentleman will know that, of course, there is already substantial work taking place on part of the A1. Everyone who travels through that road improvement will benefit from it even if other parts are not taken forward at the same pace.

Mr. Home Robertson: Where?

Mr. MacGregor: In Yorkshire. Improvements are taking place there already. All those who talk about the importance of the A1 to people in Newcastle and in Scotland and who travel to London will recognise that all the improvements that take place will benefit them. We must set a timetable of priorities for the whole route, but the commitment remains.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of people in East and West Sussex and further points to the east and west of Sussex welcome the go-ahead for the A27 for safety, commercial and personal travel reasons, and, not least, for tourism? Equally, the majority of people are concerned about the delay on the A26 link to Sussex's one senior port of Newhaven. It is crucial to the development of that port, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will review the decision and move it up to priority 2.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about the A27 Lewes to Polegate improvement. He knows that I know that road fairly well. It is interesting to note that some of the objections to any road-building programmes, which have been voiced in the national media, have been related to that scheme. I have been on programmes where that scheme has been sharply criticised. My hon. Friend accurately represents the local view and the view of those who will benefit from the improvement. That is why I am glad that it is priority 2.

As for the other scheme to which my hon. Friend referred, I must repeat that it is not possible to take all improvements forward at the same pace. As we complete other schemes in priority 1 and the existing construction programme, it will be possible to roll forward schemes in the longer-term programme. I have noted what my hon. Friend says.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I knew that I had a 50:50 chance of being called.

Will the Secretary of State comment on the second page of his statement where he mentions the future of the public inquiry system? Is he aware that many people view that as an ominous proposal which seeks to curtail the right of people to attend public inquiries, to put forward points of view that are at variance with the central thrust of Government policy and to bring into account matters of health, environment, total expenditure and alternatives such as public transport, rather than roadbuilding? Many are concerned about that. Could he set those fears at rest and tell us when there will be a statement on the future of the public inquiry system?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that the hon. Gentleman has looked at the proposals that we put out for public consultation. Those are freely available, and I will happily send them to him. He will see that his fears that the public inquiry system is in any way being curtailed are wrong. We are seeking to bring it up to date, to make it more efficient and effective and to enable it to do its work. We want to bring it more into line with the Department of Environment's public inquiries. I will happily wait to hear the hon. Gentleman's response to the public consultation document that we sent out.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that dualling of the A2 between Lydden and the port of Dover now has a priority rating which it never had before and that, as a result, he will undertake personally to investigate why there have been delays in the consultation process getting started? Will he do all in his power to ensure that the Highways Agency gets the work under way and that the public consultation will be put into operation this year?

Mr. MacGregor: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that the scheme is in priority 2. I will look into the points that he raised.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I welcome the confirmation that work is to proceed on the M6-M65 link. Does the Minister appreciate that when that motorway link

is completed, 11,000 cars a day will spill into Colne at the end of the eastward section of the M65? Will he give further consideration, perhaps along with Lancashire county council, to building the bypasses at Colne and Earby that local people are crying out for?

Mr. MacGregor: I have noted the hon. Gentleman's comments. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic will look into them.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend consider assisting Madam Speaker by taking up the recommendation of the Procedure Committee that he should publish his document perhaps 15 or 30 minutes before he makes his statement so that Members can see what it says and might well not have to ask the question that I now have to ask? Will he confirm that full dualling of the major roads to the west country, between the end of the M3 and Exeter—the A303 and the A30—has not been delayed in any way?

Mr. MacGregor: On the first part of my right hon. Friend's question, he will know that that is not a question for me now. I am going by the existing rules. On his second question, he will know that the A30 Honiton to Exeter improvement will start in the year about to begin. Certainly some of the other schemes of concern and interest to him are in priority 2.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's announcement on the M12, plans for which have blighted a considerable part of my constituency. He mentioned the upgrading of the A12. Will he confirm that it will not be made up to motorway specifications and that my constituency will not be blighted by the son of M12?

Mr. MacGregor: I can confirm that the road will not be upgraded to motorway status. The point that I hope my hon. Friend recognises—I think that he does, because he welcomed the M12 decision—is that it makes sense to concentrate the improvements required because of increased traffic to existing road corridors such as the A12. That does not mean that they have to be a motorway.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): If my right hon. Friend is against driving new roads through beautiful countryside, why does not he score a half century, make the 49 up to 50 and drop the wretched western orbital route?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of my hon. Friend's objection to that route. At present, the proposal is suspended while we consider the design, build, finance and operate initiative that we are undertaking. In due course, perhaps I can come back to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I welcome the retention of the two A38 trunk road schemes in my constituency as priority categories. Can my right hon. Friend give a categorical assurance to the House that the project for a second Tamar crossing has been dropped?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments about the two schemes to which he referred. It is interesting to note that this afternoon there have been many welcomes of the schemes that are in the programme and the objections have mainly come from those who have had to face the fact that some of their schemes will be delayed a little because of the priorities. The welcomes and objections have come from hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) recognises the priority that so many people in the House and outside give to the roads programme. The hon. Gentleman mentioned a few examples himself. He went out of his way to say that we should abandon large sections of the programme that we are carrying through. I do not think that that reflects what the House feels or what the people in the country feel. We are still considering the Tamar crossing and we hope to come to a decision about it fairly soon.

Points of Order

4.40 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I raise a matter relating to the rights of Back Benchers. Fifteen weeks ago, on 16 December, I tabled a question to the Prime Minister about the third of a million pounds that was spent on cars for officials—not Ministers—at No. 10 Downing street, which is three times the amount spent on the Prime Minister's car. Fifteen weeks later, I have received no reply.

On 13 January—11 weeks ago—I tabled another question on a different aspect of the issue. Eleven weeks later, I have still not received a reply. Three weeks ago, on 7 March, I tabled a question asking when I was to receive an answer to the previous two questions. I have still not received an answer to that question, or to the previous two questions.

Last night, I telephoned No. 10 and I was told that various draft answers had been put to the Prime Minister, but these had been rejected and they said that they would come back to me today. They came back to me at about 11 o'clock this morning and said that they hope to put yet another draft in the Prime Minister's box tonight and, if he clears it tonight, I will get an answer tomorrow—which is not the most convenient of days, as hon. Members will appreciate—but if he does not clear it, I will not get an answer until after the recess.

The one good note in this episode came as a result of my impatience which prompted me to mention your name, Madam Speaker, and say that I intended to raise the matter with you this afternoon. In the last hour, I have received a telephone call from No. 10 saying that they have managed to catch hold of the Prime Minister who has now cleared a draft and an answer will be on the message board this afternoon.

You, Madam Speaker, are aware of the situation and I know how much you value the rights of Back Benchers. Is there anything that you can do to stop this abuse of our rights?

Madam Speaker: I understand that the right hon. Gentleman has received an answer today to his questions. That has been reported to me. I appreciate that an inordinate length of time has elapsed since the right hon. Gentleman tabled his original questions. I notice that he, rightly, reminded the Department of the delay in a further question which he tabled earlier this month.

I believe that hon. Members have a right to receive written answers to questions within a reasonable period or to be informed of the reasons for the delay. I hope that, in general, all Government Departments will take note of the points I have made about this matter today.

Sir David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your help and guidance. As you know, a number of hon. Members were trying to catch your eye in the statement on trunk roads, but did not do so—that, of course, is not always possible. But sometimes we have Government statements at 10 o'clock at night. I wonder, therefore, whether after 10 o'clock tonight we could resume questioning on the statement on roads which we have just heard and which is so important to our constituencies.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does it relate to the previous point of order? I imagine that it does.

Mr. Sumberg: It is slightly different, Madam Speaker. You rightly ask in the House that Back Benchers make their questions extremely short—we all support that. Is there any way that you can invite Front Benchers on both sides of the House to make their questions and answers equally short? That would have given me the chance to tell the Front Bench the disastrous news that the M62 relief road is still to go ahead and how that is resented by all *[Interruption.]*—

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that some hon. Members are not listening when I ask all Members to make their questions and answers brisk. I am equally concerned about Government Departments. I have made it known —I will put it like that—to each Government Department that I want brisk answers.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): That is news.

Madam Speaker: No, it is not news. The hon. Gentleman must not have been in the Chamber when I have constantly made it known to Back Benchers and Front Benchers alike that I want brisk questions and brisk answers. I am glad that that point has been reinforced by Back-Bench Members today.

As for returning to this matter at 10 o'clock tonight, that is a matter for the usual channels. The hon. Gentleman might use the usual channels to try his luck at getting a debate on transport at some time. He might then catch my eye during the debate and raise the points that he wishes to raise.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have to draw your attention to the fact that, upon emerging from the Chamber just now, I found a most interesting letter in my slot which was not there when I came into the Chamber. It is headed "MacGregor announces radical new roads prioritisation". I should have liked to read this letter before I listened to the statement. I do not know how many of my colleagues are in the same position, but it suggests that there may be reason to review our curious and archaic procedures so that all Members are well informed beforehand.

Madam Speaker: I was informed this morning that the Secretary of State and his Department were doing their level best to see that something like 400 Members received the letter. As soon as it was known that a statement was to be made today, the Secretary of State and his Department and the authorities of the House went to great lengths to distribute the letter in order to ensure that hon. Members received it as far in advance of the statement today as possible.

Picture Manipulation

4.44 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require news media to prepare a code of practice to cover the principles by which pictures may be edited, altered or changed using computer techniques and to record clearly when old film is being used and when the person presenting the film was not present during its filming.

In a democracy, it is essential that accurate information be available to everyone. Rightly, at present, there are many worries about our mass media. In the Bill, I want to draw attention to an important matter, more in the hope of stimulating debate about it than, at this time in the Session, hoping that it can become an Act of Parliament.

Most people are aware of the old adage "the camera never lies". It seems to me that many people still believe it, in spite of the fact that many of them are aware that over the ages pictures have been faked—for example, the photographs of the Cottingley Fairies which were authenticated by no less than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Many pictures of the Loch Ness monster have clearly been faked and there is a very interesting series of pictures that show the way in which photographs of the Russian revolution changed as political correctness within the Soviet Union changed.Most of us have had similar experiences with family photographs. Perhaps there sits on the mantlepiece a photograph of Uncle Albert with a broad grin on his face, yet we know that, except for one picture, he almost never grinned in his whole life.

Most people also know about photo opportunities. My constituents are well aware that Members of Parliament, in particular, and royalty try to contrive to be photographed in the most desirable, but not always the most accurate, circumstances. We remember the photograph of the Princess of Wales at the Taj Mahal. She was supposed to be "all alone", except anyone who thought about it for a second or two realised that several hundred photographers were present also.

In spite of the evidence, most people believe pictures, particularly those accompanied by a well-respected voice on television, far more than they believe the written word. Sadly, few people realise just how easy it is to alter pictures or make them actually misleading. As I have said, it has always been possible to fake photographs and film. However, with the aid of computers and electronic images, what was often a slow, laborious business can now be accomplished in a few minutes. There are programmes such as Photoshop for still pictures and anyone who watches commercial television can see how computers are being used to adapt pieces of film for television adverts. Certainly within the next three or four years, it will be fairly easy to run a piece of video film through a computer programme and change the nature of it entirely.

Certainly in the last 12 months, I have seen a considerable number of examples of the way in which newspapers, in particular, have adapted and distorted pictures. In preparing for this debate, I took the trouble to write to a series of national newspaper editors and television companies. Almost all of them acknowledge that there is a problem. Of course, most of them claim that they would not dream of adapting or distorting a picture in their publications or on their programmes, but they were then very keen to point out how some of their rivals were doing this.

I make it clear that I do not have any objection to a newspaper morphing the face of a politician or a football manager with a turnip to produce a cross between a human face and a turnip. I do not mind if a picture editor decides to slip a photograph of someone from the past, such as W.G. Grace, into a picture of the present English cricket team. I would not have minded if I had looked at the morning newspapers today and seen the Prime Minister's image taken out of political pictures and put into cricketing pictures or seen the English cricket captain put into political pictures. That is all fair and reasonable fun. I have no objections to photomontages or when people say that they are using library film on television.

The reason for my Bill is that I object to the fact that pictures are altered—although the readers are not aware of that fact—and may thus have a major impact on the way in which readers respond to the pictures. As a hypothetical example—I am not claiming that it has happened, but everyone will understand the problems involved—let us assume that a prominent person has acquired a black eye and is photographed with it. How colourful, painful and bloody it looks in a newspaper picture may well decide how much sympathy or disgust the public feel. Substantial problems can arise when the photograph is taken, depending on the film used by the photographer and the camera angle, but once the picture ends up on the picture editor's desk, he or she can still change its appearance to make the wound look more gory and much worse, using a few movements of a programme such as Photoshop. That can make the picture far more dramatic and can change people's perception of the black eye, which might have been caused legitimately by a bang against a door, but, when processed, looked as if it had been caused by something more significant.

The same applies in child abuse cases, as we have seen several times lately. After the case and someone's conviction, a picture appears in the newspaper. It is extremely easy to make the bruises or other injuries shown in the picture that bit more graphic, with a little work using something like Photoshop.

As I only have 10 minutes, I must move quickly to the problems of moving pictures, which are often also distorted. During the summer recess, I rang one of my colleagues in the shadow Cabinet as I wanted a word with him, only to be told that he was away on holiday. I had no objections to that, but when I turned on the television news at six o'clock and saw him at a meeting of the shadow Cabinet my first reaction was, "I'm not going to vote for him again." When I checked the picture very carefully, I realised that the television company was using a piece of film showing a shadow Cabinet meeting several months before. Had I been one of my hon. Friend's constituents, I would have been annoyed to have seen him on television after being fobbed off by someone who said that he was not available.

I understand the problems for television companies and for politicians. The companies are reluctant to show people at what they call business, such as walking through doors or along the road, or clearing their desks. However, if they continue to use film from the past, without saying that it is library film, they are in danger of producing a false impression and there are many examples of that.

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

I have considered the regulatory processes—the Press Complaints Commission and organisations set up under the Broadcasting Act 1988 do not really regulate such matters. That is the point of my Bill—to deal with that problem.

If newspapers change the slogan on a T-shirt, for example, to that proclaiming one newspaper to another, when it was not changed, or if they take out the background in a picture of Nelson Mandela because it suits their presentation and if library film is continually presented on television as if it were current film, it will discredit the media and a lot of problems may result.

People in this country have a right to know that pictures used in the mass media are what they are represented as being—accurate pictures of what is happening. I also argue that if material used on television does not show something that the person doing the voice-over saw taking place, that should be made clear. If old films are used, that should also be indicated.

If we do not observe those standards, we are on a slippery slope towards unsatisfactory mass media. I hope that the House will give me leave to introduce the Bill and that it can further the discussion of what is and is not reasonable when pictures are changed in print and on television.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Tom Cox, Mr. Tony Lloyd, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Martin Redmond and Mr. Don Dixon.

PICTURE MANIPULATION

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett accordingly presented a Bill to require news media to prepare a code of practice to cover the principles by which pictures may be edited, altered or changed using computer techniques and to record clearly when old film is being used and when the person presenting the film was not present during its filming: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 July, and to be printed. [Bill 84.]

Orders of the Day

OPPOSITION DAY

[8TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Private Pensions

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I have to announce to the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.55 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the widespread abuse and unscrupulous techniques used to sell private pensions, which have prejudiced individual clients and induced them to leave occupational pension schemes and the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme to invest in pension provision which offers no real prospect of security; notes the evident failure of self-regulation; and, recognising the need for transparency and full disclosure of terms and conditions governing policies, condemns the failure of Her Majesty's Government to act and calls for effective direct regulation of the pensions and financial services industry.

For the avoidance of doubt, I must make it clear that the Opposition see an important place for private pension provision in the legitimate range of choice that is open to people who are preparing for retirement. The state is in that business, as are occupational pension schemes and private schemes. The mix will vary from person to person. All the possibilities should complement each other as people strive to construct the package that suits their needs. We are certainly ready to recognise the place of private pensions, but we are not starry-eyed about the way in which they are operated or about the problems that we face. We are certainly not prepared to ignore their shortcomings and the difficulties that were predicted and which have recently come to haunt us.

Our charge is that the Government have suspended their disbelief and critical faculties for political purposes. A blockage has inhibited their right and duty to act, with the result that a large number of people's interests have been prejudiced. Government policy has been marked by inaction and has allowed unacceptable practices to develop, as is widely recognised. Many people's pensions have been severely prejudiced. The Government have been something of a passive spectator as the confusion has grown. There has been muddle and the self-evident inadequacy of self-regulation, and to some extent Ministers have been bound by their own dogma—

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): For the sake of accuracy, it is wise to define self-regulation. We are talking not exactly about self-regulation but about regulation by professional organisations; that distinction is sometimes lost on members of the public. We are not talking about self-regulation in the other sense of the word.

Mr. Dewar: I shall come to that when I mention the debate about the Personal Investment Authority and its future and the widespread reservations that have been expressed about the composition of its board. In the public's mind, doubts about self-regulation rightly arise when a regulatory organisation is dominated by the industry that it purports to regulate. The industry has

significant reservations about the proposals in that respect. I give the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) an undertaking that I shall return to that subject later and that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) will deal extensively with the regulatory machinery when he closes the debate.

I want to set out the charges on the indictment because it is only fair that the Minister should be aware of the nature of our complaints. The first complaint relates to the active encouragement that the Government gave people to contract out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. Since 1988—the figures vary a little—I gather that about 6.5 million people have moved into approved pensions policies, which has been paraded as a triumph for freedom of choice and as a flagship of success—

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Quite right.

Mr. Dewar: I was going to say paraded as a flagship of success for the hard right, but I thought that that description might be a little unfair on the Minister. The hon. Gentleman's cries encourage me to use the phrase with total justification and I adopt it accordingly. Indeed, if one looks back—

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East) *rose*—

Mr. Dewar: Will the hon. Gentleman let me proceed?

If you look back to 1988, you will find, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that most of the usual suspects were on the scene of the crime and very much involved. The present Chief Secretary, the present Secretary of State for Social Security and the Prime Minister himself were all, to varying extents, involved at about that period.

As I understand it, about 5 million people are in approved pension schemes at the moment, and that is a matter for concern rather than congratulation. My complaint is that neither the industry nor the Government made any attempt to explain the pros and cons. The Minister will remember that in January 1988 his Department embarked on an advertising campaign on which it spent £1.2 million, in effect, to advertise a product —the approved private pension that people would take if they contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. That advertising campaign is now widely recognised as uncritical and unbalanced. SERPS was—literally—visually portrayed as a straitjacket from which the individual was invited to break out to the promised land. Many people uncritically took that advice and find themselves disadvantaged as a result.

There was no discussion about, for example, the variation in the performance of funds, the influence of the condition of the stock market and the level of interest rates at the time of retirement, or the advantages of index linking in SERPS where there was a revaluation in line with national average earnings. There was no discussion of commission and charges in the private sector—which I am told can often amount to 20 per cent. of total contributions even in the case of those policies. People were invited, without reservation, simply to move on a promise; none of the shades of black and white were sketched in or referred to in the Government's or the industry's advertising. It is now obvious that great damage was done simply because there was no wish to let the arguments get in the way of the selling line.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking to imply that all those who opted out of SERPS will have been disadvantaged, because that is his how his remarks might be interpreted. Obviously, some will have been, but many will have had advantages.

Mr. Dewar: I totally accept that that would be the height of irresponsibility and I would not for a moment try to do that. I shall discuss the numbers in a minute or two. They are difficult to define, as the hon. Gentleman, who I expect has expertise in that matter, will appreciate.

Some ground rules for judgment are emerging, which are broadly accepted by the industry and by outside commentators. The real test—

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North) *rose*—

Mr. Dewar: I will give way briefly, but I must not take too many interventions.

Mr. Heald: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the problem that was outlined in 1986 was that the number of people with occupational pensions had remained static for 20 years, and that the Government were trying to persuade a large number of people to take on the benefits of enhanced pension provision? The 5 million people who have done that since then have acquired real benefits, have they not?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Dewar: Some of them, but not all. I know that the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) takes a great interest in these matters and is an advocate. I am sorry, he is a barrister. I must remember the English language as distinct from the Scottish terminology; it is the same profession, as the hon. Gentleman recognises. He will remember—if he does not, I remind him—that when the National Association of Pension Funds Ltd. responded to the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" in September 1985, it expressed specific anxiety about the Government's claim that the introduction of SERPS had stagnated the growth of private pension provision in the form of new occupational schemes.

The national association also argued:

"It is our firmly held view that a collection of money purchase personal pensions can be no substitute for the security of a defined benefit final salary scheme".

It argued in favour of occupational pensions, but was worried that many people who were not entering occupational schemes were opting out of SERPS in order to go into APPs where there were real and substantial difficulties in terms of their age profile and salary level. I will now discuss those subjects.

Mr. Heald *rose*—

Mr. Dewar: I will let the hon. Gentleman in for the last time.

Mr. Heald: Do not the hon. Gentleman's reservations relate to an entirely different issue—the reform of occupational pensions in the Social Security Act 1986? The new personal pensions have enabled 5 million more people to enjoy enhanced pension provision. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that no one can argue that that is anything other than good?

Mr. Dewar: I hear a mutter of applause run round the ranks of the faithful. If every one of those people had ended up with enhanced pension provision and had been

[Mr. Dewar]

advantaged by the switch, it is unlikely that I would be complaining, or that I would be backed by a wide range of professional opinion inside the industry.

I am arguing, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North is familiar with my arguments, that a very large number of people—62 per cent., according to the Government's figures—have earnings of less than £10,000 a year and many are too old and ought either to have remained in SERPS or ought by now to have returned to SERPS to maximise their advantage. It is untrue to suggest, therefore, that the rush to contract out, which the Government promoted and encouraged, is an unqualified blessing or that it has not left many people disadvantaged.

No doubt people will argue about the pivotal age above which it is a disadvantage to remain contracted out. Let us take a comparatively conservative figure, and assume that the age is 40 for men and 35 for women. If one adds to that the people who have earnings of less than £7,500 a year, one finds that 53 per cent. of men and no less than 71 per cent. of women should now contract back into SERPS. That is what I am assured by actuaries—I do not pretend that I have done those calculations myself. Many of those people should never have left SERPS. Suppose that one wants to be ultra-cautious. If one takes the pivotal age as 45 for men and 40 for women and an income of £6,000 a year or less, one finds that 39 per cent. of men and 54 per cent. of women are in that situation.

I am prepared to listen to arguments. I know that the Prudential, for example, takes ages of 49 and 42 as the pivotal ages whereas the Norwich Union takes 45 and 37. There is a range of professional opinion, but there is no doubt that all those companies and experts accept that there are very large numbers of people—perhaps as many as 2.5 million—who are contracted out and in whose interests it would be to return to SERPS, many of whom never should have left SERPS.

I know that that is rather brutal language, but it is a scandal—a scandal which is no less serious because it was so long unrecognised and no less cruel because many of the victims were, and probably still are, unaware of their plight. We are talking about something that is a result of the Government's impetuous love affair with the private sector. I do not for a moment decry the contribution that the industry makes, but we cannot have that type of uncritical policy, which has done so much damage.

I noted that in the *Observer* last Sunday—the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) will have read the article—a partner in a well-known law firm specialising in pension matters described the consequences of the Government's policy as "mind-blowing." I think that that is not unfair.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): The hon. Gentleman is arguing that it was disadvantageous for millions of people to leave SERPS. Why, then, in previous speeches, has he criticised what he regarded as the generosity of the rebates for people who were leaving SERPS and taking out personal pensions? Surely those two arguments are inconsistent.

Mr. Dewar: No. I do not think so at all. If I want to prejudice the hon. Gentleman—if I want to persuade him to do something against his interests and I offer him an inducement to go down a road that is greatly to his disadvantage—it seems to me that I am insulting him twice. All I am doing is ensuring that he takes the wrong decision, against his own best interests. That is what happened. A very large number of people were impressed by the contracting-out terms, especially the 2 per cent. premium. They therefore moved over without considering the real arguments and ended up in a very unfortunate situation. That is not true of everyone, as I said, but it applies to as many as 2.5 million people; that is an awful lot of people and something about which the House should be concerned.

I seem to remember that the hon. Member for Havant and I have discussed the matter before. He will remember the National Audit Office report that calculated that the Treasury was taking on a burden of about £9.3 billion, if I remember rightly, in the expectation of great savings later, which turned out to be only £3.4 billion. Even if we take a Micawber approach to the good housekeeping of Government, it is clear that we were invited to endorse an extraordinary piece of arithmetic and a bad buy for the taxpayer. Tragically, it also ended up being a bad buy for many of the people who took the inducement—I use the neutral term—that was offered.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we are talking with the benefit of hindsight? One of the reasons for the relative imbalance is that we have had a world recession. Stock markets and property markets have failed to perform in the way in which we had hoped, which has affected with-profits life insurance policies and pension policies. Had the expectation that markets would continue to improve been met, the hon. Gentleman would not be making the analysis that he is making today.

Mr. Dewar: I accept that there has been a substantial movement that has complicated the calculation, but, in fairness, it was said by many people at the time that dangers existed and problems might well materialise. The trouble was that no one referred to it directly—it was not included in Government guidance and I fear that within the industry no one pointed out those dangers to the people who were going to put themselves in that risky position.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does my hon. Friend share the view of other Opposition Members, who are astonished that Conservative Members should seek to defend the indefensible? Does he agree that the fact that people lost out had nothing to do with the world recession? People on low pay lost out because the onerous charges that were levied by insurance companies far outweighed any benefits that they received from their new pensions.

Mr. Dewar: I shall come later to onerous charges. I have long since lost my ability to be astonished at Conservative Members' defence of the indefensible; I do not confine that remark to the narrow technical subject of pensions.

I refer the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) to the comments of National Association of Pension Funds, with which he will be familiar. Its memorandum in response to the Green Paper states:

> "The Government must be prepared to explain to the public just what a personal pension means, especially in terms of the mechanism for buying one (including full disclosure of administration and commission costs), the uncertainty of performance (as their value must perforce be variable with market conditions), and the lack of any guarantees or discretionary protection."

If those things had been pointed out by the industry, by those selling and by the Government when they advertised the option, some of the sadness and disadvantage to which I have referred might have been avoided.

The association's memorandum continues:

"Stringent investor protection is essential if the proposals for personal pensions are to gain any semblance of public acceptability. We do not believe that sufficient protection to investors in personal pensions can be provided through the self-regulatory framework being devised".

I agree with all but one part of that quote. The association said that the proposals would not have a semblance of public acceptability. Sadly, the public were not that wise and they took the proposals at face value. That is one reason for our present difficulties.

The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West challenged me about what was being said when the proposals were introduced. Slightly later, in March 1990, the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, in its enforcement bulletin No. 7, was extremely critical of the industry's—not the Government's—advertisements, It stated, somewhat optimistically:

"few advertisements indicate, with any degree of precision, for whom opting out may not be suitable and accordingly an inappropriate contract might be sold which would not be in accordance with the high standard of conduct expected by Lautro of its Members."

It urged:

"Members must ensure that they do not accept applications in respect of opting out unless they are certain that the applicants, who respond to such advertisements, have been given details of all the information pertinent to their situation prior to making any decision to opt out of SERPS."

That warning from a self-regulatory organisation was largely unheeded. It might well have been a warning and a condemnation of the Government's advertising programme as well as that of the industry.

The Government's approach has been thoroughly unsound. No doubt they will now argue that a change is coming: that we no longer have the 2 per cent. premium to which the hon. Member for Havant referred; that there is now a 1 per cent. premium for people who are over 30; and that we shall soon move to age-related rebates. I accept that there is an argument for that, but the changes are an implied plea of guilty. It is interesting that the new advertising campaign, which states that people should read the small print of private pension policies, has not been funded to the extent of £1.2 million but in the rather more modest sum of £100,000. There is a little less energy and enthusiasm behind that campaign. I warn hon. Members that the damage will continue unless information and advice are genuinely and impartially given.

There are advantages to SERPS, which has been undersold. If that continues, the spin that is put on the sales pitch by representatives of the private pensions industry will still continue to tempt the unwary.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) is not in the Chamber at the moment, but I wonder whether the spokesman for the Opposition, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), will comment on how the Opposition view his pamphlet entitled "Private Pensions for All". Will the Opposition take that pamphlet on board or are they still waiting for the social commission for justice to determine their policy?

Mr. Dewar: The Commission on Social Justice is a very social commission, but the hon. Gentleman is as confused about its title as he is in his attempts to divert me. If he is interested, I shall send him an interesting speech that I made the other day on that and related subjects. I shall not go into a general tour d'horizon as he has invited me to. I am talking about what happened to those who contracted out of SERPS and also occupational pension transfers. I know that that subject will interest the hon. Gentleman.

All I am saying to Ministers is that they have a problem with what has happened with SERPS and they bear a measure of responsibility for it. The Secretary of State and his colleagues have evinced malice towards SERPS in the past. The 1988 raid, which we all remember, was masterminded, if that is the right word, by the present chairman of the Conservative party. Hostile forces are still gathering round, including the deregulation task force proposals for reform. I hastily concede that the proposals have not yet been adopted by the Government, but they chime in with a lot of other things that are happening. Take paragraph 357 of a Department of Social Security paper:

"Consider replacing SERPS entirely with occupational and personal pension schemes."

There has been a lack of enthusiasm and an underselling of SERPS, which has made a significant contribution to present problems.

We understand that the Securities and Investments Board will move on to consider the problems of those who have contracted out of SERPS once it has completed its complicated and important inquiries into transfers from occupational pensions. It would be helpful if the Minister could confirm that and comment on how he imagines compensation can be given to those who have clearly lost out and been disadvantaged. It may be that the industry will have to foot that bill, but the Government have more than a moral responsibility to ensure that that happens. I am interested to learn whether the Minister is now prepared to accept that mistakes were made—that there was error and a failure to give proper warning—and what are his proposals for making redress.

I shall deal now with occupational pensions and the way in which bad advice and sharp-selling techniques have resulted in people transferring from occupational to personal pension schemes. Some 11 million people are in occupational schemes. It will be no surprise to hon. Members to know that we regard their strength as vital. It is important that those who have been involved in occupational pensions and have contributed to them can look forward with confidence to retirement. There is no doubt that public confidence was shaken tragically by the wicked fraud carried out by the late Robert Maxwell, but there is another scandal of which we are becoming aware and which may be of greater proportions. It may be cumulatively more damaging. It is less dramatic because it does not involve the death of an individual at sea and the same smell of scandal. There is not one person on whom the spotlight can concentrate, but the system has allowed many people to be tempted. It has allowed many people in the industry to abuse trust and make a mockery of professional ethics. Many people have left occupational pension schemes and are prejudiced in their retirement prospects as a result.

This is not a matter for fine judgment. We all know that LAUTRO has said that it is hard to conceive of circumstances in which it is right for someone to leave an occupational pension scheme in which he or she could have a continuing interest in order to transfer to a private pension policy.

[Mr. Dewar]

There are problems of charges, commissions and instability of outcome, but the essence of the problem is that people have surrendered the employer's contribution. That makes no sense, yet it has happened on a wide scale. Even where a person has left the industry and is in an occupational pension scheme in terms of preserved rights, he or she must still be extremely careful before attempting to move. In the mining industry, for example, some people have been taken to the cleaners in a deplorable way by moving to a personal pension scheme that looks attractive on the surface but provides no widow's benefit, life assurance cover or any of the other factors that would be highly relevant to the individual concerned.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): As the hon. Gentleman will discover if I am lucky enough to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have sympathy with much of what he is saying. But does he accept that many miners, for example, left occupational pension schemes because they were disgusted with the treatment that they had received and wanted nothing whatever to do with the mining industry in future?

Mr. Dewar: I shall wait with interest to hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say. But to try and shift the blame and suggest that people cut off their noses to spite their faces in a fit of pique is extraordinary. If people were in that turn of mind, those selling policies had a duty of care to advise them that they should do nothing in haste or anger. I am afraid that that duty of care was not exercised.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I was a member of the trustees of the miners' pension fund. We had to counteract the propaganda that was put out to those individuals by giving them the facts. I admit that the situation had been going on for some time and we did not spend a lot of money on advertising, as those people did. But I assure my hon. Friend that we gave the facts and tried to counteract the propaganda. There is no way that people just opted out. When redundancies set in, the salesmen came in.

Mr. Dewar: I accept entirely what my hon. Friend says. I know, from my personal contacts, of the efforts that were made by trustees of the miners' pension fund and many individuals in the industry to try to make good the evident lack of impartial advice available to those contemplating a transfer.

It is important to estimate how many people are involved in transfers. I accept that the figure that is often bandied around, of up to 500,000 people, may be an exaggeration. That number of people is potentially at risk, but I am quick to concede that we do not know how many are actually at risk and have suffered loss. Everyone who has had the staying power to remain in his or her seat for a debate of this kind will be familiar with the KPMG report commissioned by the SIB. Of 735 files, which were not taken from the down side of the industry—press reports say that both Standard Life and TSB were among the companies sampled—astonishingly, only 9 per cent. showed evidence of substantial compliance with the guidance and acceptable standards. In 77 per cent. of cases, no real financial analysis was made of the potential customer's situation; in 95 per cent. of cases, agents of insurance companies failed to comply with good practice; and in 89 per cent. of cases, independent financial advisers failed to comply with good practice.

Those are frightening statistics and a frightening profile of how the private sector carries out its duty of care to potential customers. As I said, it is not fringe companies but established blue chip firms that are involved. For example, a preliminary investigation by the Select Committee has revealed that Standard Life has 75,000 transfers, 15,000 of which are through direct sales and 60,000 of which are through independent financial advisers. I notice from its returns that Legal and General is having to make provision against compensation. The Refuge group is also making provision of £11.6 million in its accounts for 1993. That is an enormous sum given that its declared profits for that year are only £24.3 million. Many other companies, including National and Provincial, are also having to make provision in their accounts.

Yesterday, we had the extraordinary spectacle of Norwich Union—a household name of, I hasten to say, high standing—taking 800 of its staff off the road for a month for intensive training in selling techniques. That could be said to be good news, but it is also an indictment of what has happened that a company of that stature must take such extraordinary action.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Economic Secretary, who is on the Government Front Bench today, was a member of Standing Committee E in 1986 and will remember the assurances given by the now Home Secretary that such a thing would never happen. The Opposition withdrew amendments because we were prepared to accept those assurances, despite the fact that the now Economic Secretary was busy lobbying Labour Members outside the door of the Committee Room to support amendments being moved against his own Minister. And he is now a member of the Government.

Mr. Dewar: I must simply accept from my hon. Friend what happened on that occasion, as I was not there to see it. Perhaps the Economic Secretary, who will close this debate, will deal with that interesting insight into how matters worked in those days. I will certainly be in my place to hear him and I am sure that my hon. Friend will be in his place, too.

I do not wish to spend much more time discussing examples, as they have been in the press and we have all seen them. They include teachers, policemen, miners and firemen. Some are now receiving compensation payments of £20,000 and more—I saw one of £50,000—to replace gaps in their occupational pension contributions, which may have run for only four or five years. The case histories are frightening; they are also frighteningly familiar—sweet-talking, diagram-drawing, word-juggling salesmen persuading people to take action because they were interested only in the kill and the commission that it brings. That is the only conclusion that can be drawn from what has happened. It is a cruel deception.

Sometimes, an ex-employee would be brought in to persuade his former workmates to move to private pension policies. I remember a case of a senior shop steward who, sadly, had been made redundant but saw a way out of his financial difficulties by taking a job with an insurance company and flogging policies to his former colleagues. The fact that he did not last long with the insurance company adds to the despair and dishonour of the story.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): May I confirm what the hon. Gentleman has said? The insurance companies were taking on redundant miners simply to get from them the names of other redundant miners so that they could approach them and sell policies to them.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that the Secretary of State will condemn that when he has the opportunity.

Such problems are built in when an industry's sales force lives by commission. It then becomes extremely difficult to create a system that holds the interests of the customer in high regard. Until we can move away from that heavy dependence on commission, I fear that even the most respectable firms will have great difficulty in performing as they should.

There is even something about the language. It seems an odd point to make, but I noticed that Hill Samuel, which is part of the TSB group, is selling its financial services arms and handing over its direct sales force to Allied Dunbar, a subsidiary of BAT. The chief executive of Hill Samuel, Mr. Hugh Freedberg, explained why he was selling to Allied Dunbar by saying that a life company needed

"a warm, captive customer base".

He explained that he did not feel that he had a warm captive customer base.

Perhaps I am being over-sensitive, but that seems an interesting insight into the attitude of very senior management. At the end of the day, it is they who must take responsibility for what happens on the ground. They cannot shrug it off by saying that a salesman went out of control or went native. It is an insight into how senior management view the industry.

I welcome some of the changes which no doubt the Minister will mention: the SIB report, a cooling-off period of 14 days, a duty to check on the lump sum that would result from the occupational pension scheme and a reasons-why letter. All that may be helpful, but it is also necessary to look at commissions and charges.

I have made some inquiries, as best I can, with people within the industry. I understand that when buying a policy on an annual basis, it is common to pay 50 per cent. of the first year's premium in commission. There may be another 20 per cent. for supervisory commission and another 20 per cent. for administrative costs, advertising costs and so on.

The Minister may be interested to hear about an odd happening a few years ago, when the Office of Fair Trading decided to inject competition into the industry. It therefore removed the need to stick by LAUTRO and agreed rates. Commission rates then went up. They went up because there is no competition if customers do not know what they being charged; they are there to be plucked.

Paying lip service to competition was damaging the interests of the buying public. I believe that we must have transparency and disclosure. I welcome the fact that new rules will apply from 1 January 1995, but it is not enough. We must work harder to give people the right advice, to make sure that they know the facts instead of having to look at the complicated tables they might find in *Money Management*.

People need more accessible league tables. The Minister and his colleagues are fond of league tables. More accessible league tables, on performance for example, might be a useful tool.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that sales on commission only were one of the root causes of the problems surrounding homes equity schemes, which we have debated at length in the House? Salesmen in receipt of commission only, flourishing respectable cards from distinguished insurance companies, were able to hoodwink innocent people into parting with large sums of money. That led to the collapse of those schemes and all the problems and resulting heartache.

Mr. Dewar: I agree entirely. There was downright cruel abuse. The trouble was that the self-regulatory organisations in the industry could not get to grips with it and stop it. That is one of the worries; it is a good example of treating too easily all the talk about a new start with a new SRO.

Finally, I turn to effective regulation and the need to examine commission charges. I understand—and I underline that word—that there are statutory powers to set charges that have been used only in a limited way. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that those powers exist and say a word or two about his intentions in that respect. There is no doubt that the abuse of commission and the lack of transparency are a real problem.

My contention is that the present system of regulation has failed. The Minister may be tempted to argue, as others have told me privately, that massive evidence of abuse is an advertisement for self-regulation. I have been told that, without the success of self-regulation, we would never know that people were being done and diddled left, right and centre. I hope that the Minister will not use that argument and will recognise that it does not wash.

There have been departures from acceptable standards on such a widespread scale that the problem is now endemic. As the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) made clear, the SROs in profusion, lined up in column of route, have been unable to do anything about it.

The latest one is the Personal Investment Authority, the PIA, which perhaps is just about to reach the starting line. I do not disagree that taking FIMBRA, LAUTRO and parts of IMRO and simplifying the system may be better than what went before. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central will say more about this, but the history of the PIA so far has not been encouraging. We have lost one chairman, Sir Gordon Downey, and acquired Joe Palmer of Legal and General. I am not sure where the balance lies, but it has also spent about £6 million on starting-up costs and all we have is a first-class row between various people about whether they want to have anything to do with it. The Prudential, for example, was a big player in the market and takes the view that direct regulation without self-regulation is the right answer.

We also know that Standard Life has withdrawn its support from the PIA. I have seen the memo that Jim Stretton on behalf of Standard Life gave the Treasury and Civil Service Committee. Talking about the present system, he said:

"The resulting structure is unnecessarily cumbersome, inadequately accountable and will, because it is still called self regulation, be less trusted by the public. In addition the multi-tiered approach to regulation is unlikely to give rise to the firmness of purpose which I believe to be essential. I don't think we can go back to true self-regulation, since it would appear to the public, albeit unfairly, that the industry has acted to minimise its own regulation . . . Regulation should be carried out by a single tier body which, if it is not part of a Department of Government, should report directly to a Department of Government".

It is clear that the PIA will have a large job on its hands convincing not only the public but part of its own industry.

[Mr. Dewar]

I see no advantage in having an SRO. I have every sympathy with people who say that there has to be a substantial public interest representation on the board. I also understand the interests of those who say that what is happening is no longer self-regulation. In any event, it is quite clear that there is little point in having the SIB if it has endlessly to negotiate and compromise with an SRO beneath it before it can make any progress. Whatever happens to the PIA, direct regulation is inevitable.

The Secretary of State was probably not in the House —I was in the House only by chance—on 12 January when the Economic Secretary was speaking. I heard a remarkable series of exchanges about Lloyd's. I shall not go into that. The people who spoke made it clear that they had had bruising personal experience and in that sense they were *parti pris*. The hon. Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), a senior ex-Minister in a Conservative Government said:

"It is totally unreasonable to expect the self-interested to be self-regulating."—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1994; Vol. 235, c. 288.]

That in some ways encapsulates the difficulty and is a view with which I have a good deal of sympathy.

Pensions are of course enormously important. It is a cliche to say that they are arguably the most important purchase an individual makes in his or her life. Even a modest money purchase policy will build up a fund of £100,000 or more in its lifetime, but there is no area where ignorance is a greater enemy and in which it is more common.

People can contract back into SERPS if they know about DSS form APP2, if they are aware of the arguments and the reasons and if they know about the actuarial projections, but few in fact do. Many people—certainly it was true of me and arguably it is still—are not aware of the complexities, at least in full. They tend to buy a pig in a poke. They need protection and they have not had it. I do not object to the state promoting investment and saving for retirement; in fact, I welcome it. I recognise that, in 1992-93, tax relief on employees' contributions was worth £2.3 billion, and that tax relief on employers' contributions was worth £2.7 billion. The concession that makes investment income in a pension fund tax free cost £5.7 billion. That amounts to about £10 billion altogether—a lot of money, given in a very important cause.

We must do more than that, however. We must offer the right framework and guidance, and try to avoid a repetition of the deplorable confusion that was predicted and has come to pass. We also have a duty to try to ensure that proper compensation is offered to those who have suffered.

The Minister is bound to have read an article by Norma Cohen that appeared in the *Financial Times* on Monday 28 February. I read it with interest, because it gave an account of a gathering that I remember very well—at Chevening in, I think, July 1992.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): Was the hon Gentleman there?

Mr. Dewar: Indeed I was not: that is why I am so curious about what happened. I do not even know who was present, but many civil servants and Ministers were. Oddly enough, I was told that Dr. Madsen Pirie of the Adam Smith Institute was present; I wonder whether he has had some say in the approach to these matters.

I say that because I must warn against over-enthusiastic blanket endorsement of every action taken by the private sector in regard to pensions. Let me draw the Minister's attention to a "radical agenda", edited by Dr. Pirie, which was published last year. According to that agenda,

"For fully funded private schemes much higher figures would be achieved"—

in return per annum, that is.

"Indeed, calculations show that if contributors paid half as much into a private scheme as they pay to the state plan, they could be ten times better off in retirement as a result."

I suppose that the phrase "could be" is quite important, but if that is an example of the kind of advice that the Minister has been listening to, I am not surprised that we have got ourselves into considerable difficulties.

We are told by the FT that

"On the opening day of a strategy session called by Mr. Peter Lilley, the social security secretary"—

whom I see sitting before me—

"a group of ministers and civil servants was alerted to the potential cost of persuading people to opt out of occupational and state pension schemes into personal pension plans.

The warning came from Mr. David Clark, then deputy secretary for pensions, in a paper to the assembled group . . . A minister recalled: 'The paper said that, in some sense, personal pensions have been a tremendous success'"—

that is fair enough—

"'but there are a few time bombs ticking away there.' The time bombs had been set ticking just eight years earlier when, as a former official put it, the government became 'mesmerised' by the allure of personal pensions".

If such a time bomb was indeed identified at that Chevening meeting, it is interesting to contemplate what Ministers have been doing to defuse it and to help those who have already been damaged. The metaphor has problems, because presumably the time bomb has not gone off—or perhaps it has, with a series of explosions: there have certainly been casualties.

There is a clear duty to guide and protect, and the Government are culpable because they have failed to discharge that duty of care. The House—and, more important, the country—will want to know what they intend to do about it.

5.43 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the extension of individual choice of pension provision brought about by the Government's pension reforms, which has resulted in substantial increases in funded pension provision through both occupational and appropriate private pension schemes; welcomes the Government's steps to ensure the effective regulation of occupational pensions and to ensure that individuals have adequate information to make informed choices about provision for their retirement; and welcomes the measures being taken by the Securities and Investments Board, with Government support, significantly to improve investor protection.'.

I welcome the opportunity to debate this important issue. The Government's objectives are clear: to ensure a wide range of choice for people to provide pensions for their retirement, to develop a secure framework within which informed choices can be fairly made, and to encourage the growth of fully funded private pension provision on top of the basic state pension. Unfortunately —although the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made some valid points, with which I shall deal—the Opposition's motives are equally clear.

The Opposition do not like private pensions; they would prefer people to remain in or return to the state

system. They latch on to legitimate concerns about mis-selling, solely to frighten people back into the state earnings-related pension scheme. Today's debate is simply an exercise in scaremongering: the hon. Member for Garscadden did not mention any of the steps being taken by the SIB to reassure people that they will suffer no loss as a result of joining a private scheme. Hon. Members will be able to check that in *Hansard*.

By contrast, precisely because we favour private pensions, we are genuinely determined to tackle past problems of mis-selling and to prevent them from recurring. I shall explain shortly what is being done; first, however, let me remind the House of the position before the 1988 reforms. Then, many people had good reason to be unhappy about the choices—if any—that were available to them. Private pensions often just did not meet people's needs; pension rules reflected an outdated assumption that people stayed with one employer throughout their working lives, and anyone who changed jobs was particularly vulnerable.

Even if an employee moved after as long as four years in an occupational scheme, all his employer was required to do was return his contributions to him. The employer was not required to provide him with a pension when he retired. If the employee left behind his rights to a pension, he would be given a frozen handshake: the value of any pension rights that he had built up could be set in ice, to be melted away by inflation so that precious little was left by the time he retired. An employee who changed jobs did not have the option of taking the value of his pension with him.

We ended that unfairness, introducing three new rights for people who changed jobs. We gave people the right to a deferred pension after just two years in a job; we gave those who changed jobs the right to have the pension that they left behind protected against inflation; and we gave people the right to take the value of their accrued pension rights with them when they moved jobs. In 1988, we also gave people a wider range of choice in regard to pension arrangements, so that they could choose what best suited their needs.

Mr. John Greenway: Before my right hon. Friend ends his catalogue of the considerable improvements in pension legislation that the Government have made, may I ask him a question? Does he agree that far too many elderly widows have no income other than what the state provides, because the occupational pension died with their husbands?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is a great expert in the field, and I shall consider what he has said; but it will depend very much on the rights—

Mr. Greenway: The system has been changed.

Mr. Lilley: I am sorry; my hon. Friend must have meant that that used to be the position. I assumed that survivors' rights apply in such cases.

Following those changes in 1988, individuals can now join an occupational pension scheme if their employer runs one. They can invest in a personal pension— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was given a very reasonable hearing, and I intend the Secretary of State to be given one as well.

Mr. Lilley: Such people can invest in a personal pension, or they can choose to stay in SERPS. We gave people the right to top up their pensions, either by contributing extra to their employer's scheme or by making free-standing additional voluntary contributions. We also made new choices available to employers: we introduced new arrangements to allow them to set up contracted-out money purchase schemes, and we made it possible for them to contribute to their employees' personal pensions.

There should be no doubt about the overall success of our reforms. When personal pensions were introduced, critics predicted that they would grow at the expense of occupational pension provision; the opposite has happened. There are now more occupational schemes, including 16,000 new employers' contracted-out money purchase schemes; they cover just as many people as before the introduction of personal pensions. Now, the 5 million holders of personal pensions are additional to the 11 million members of occupational pension schemes.

More people are committing more of their own money to boost their retirement income. When we launched our reforms in 1988, individuals and their employers contributed just £260 million to personal pensions; last year, the annual amount invested had grown nearly tenfold, to £2.5 billion. Members of occupational schemes have also been saving more for retirement. The growth in investment in top-up pensions—free-standing additional voluntary contributions—has been dramatic.

In 1988, individuals committed just £20 million to free-standing AVCs. The amount invested last year had grown over twentyfold, to £420 million.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Is not the Secretary of State being too modest in his claim about the reason why most people have moved to alternative schemes? It is due almost entirely to the fact that the Government have undermined all faith in the basic state pension by cutting it almost every year that they have been in office.

Mr. Lilley: That is nonsense. If the hon. Gentleman is contradicting the point made by his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that people should have been opting out because it is to their advantage to do so, he should discuss that with Opposition Front-Bench Members.

The figures that I have just given reveal that there has been a massive increase in provision for pensions. Employees and employers invested £30 billion in pensions in 1992. Nothing could demonstrate more clearly the success of our reforms in building a solid foundation of funded pension provision for the future.

In the United Kingdom, we now have a healthy and diverse mix of pension provision—state and non-state, occupational and personal, salary-related and money purchase. Nearly 11 million people now belong to occupational pension schemes. Five million have personal pensions—10 times as many as originally forecast—and over half of them are under 30.

We want to make it attractive to people of all ages to make private provision, and to encourage even more people to do so. Private provision is good for the individual and for the economy. When the state finances pensions, nothing is saved or set aside for the future. This year's contributions are used to pay this year's pensions. It is pay-as-you-go. By contrast, in private schemes this year's

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contribution is saved and invested. It goes into British industry to build up the assets that will pay for the pensions in 10, 20 or 30 years' time, when people retire.

Very few of our European partners have developed funded private pensions on anything like the scale that we have. As a result, Britain is far better placed than most of our partners to face the growth in the number of retired people in the next century without imposing a huge tax burden on the economy.

Over £500,000 million is invested in pension and life insurance schemes in the United Kingdom at present. That is more than in the rest of the European Community, in similar funded schemes, put together.

Mr. David Shaw: In relation to the £500,000 million invested in life insurance and pension schemes, is not my right hon. Friend concerned, like me, that some £80 million of that went missing and was under the management of a man who was promoted recently to the Opposition Front Bench for his connections in taking £80 million away from the Maxwell pensioners?

Mr. Lilley: I cannot comment on individuals, but I am sure that everybody will work out the wider context in which my hon. Friend is commenting.

European countries that have less-developed private funded pension schemes are now seeking to emulate our success. They are only now beginning to address the problems that we began to address a decade or more ago. In France, the state pay-as-you-go scheme is in massive deficit. Last month, the French Government published plans for funded private pension schemes not unlike those in Britain. The previous Italian Government introduced measures to reduce the burden on their state scheme, and established tax incentives for private pension funds.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to intervene, but can it be placed on record that the statement made by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is factually incorrect?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has just placed it on record.

Mr. Lilley: I will not get involved in that little dispute.

In Spain, debate is under way about the problems of pay-as-you-go schemes and the need to expand private pension provision. Across Europe, other Governments are following the lead that we have set.

There are of course concerns, and four have arisen about private pensions. First, there is the security of pension fund assets. The Maxwell affair raised serious questions about the security and regulation of occupational pension schemes. That is why I established the pension law review committee under Professor Goode. The report has been widely welcomed, and I have been consulting since then with a view to legislation which will reassure people that they can have the fullest possible confidence in the security of their pensions in the future.

Mr. Dewar: Is the Secretary of State still hoping to have that legislation in the next Session?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman will know that I cannot prejudge the parliamentary schedule. I can say, in the privacy of this exchange between the hon. Gentleman and myself—I hope that it will be overheard by the Lord President—that I hope that it will go ahead next year.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): It has been overheard.

Mr. Lilley: Subject to the Queen's Speech.

The second area of concern is the mis-selling of personal pensions to people wrongly advised to leave their occupational pension scheme. The Securities and Investments Board has established that the standard of compliance with record-keeping requirements and so on has been poor. That is deplorable, but not, in itself, evidence that clients were wrongly advised, or that they suffered financial disadvantage.

The Securities and Investments Board is now carrying out a major exercise to establish the extent of the mis-selling. Clearly, any past mis-selling must be put right. Anyone whose future pension arrangements have been jeopardised must have a remedy. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has made that clear. The chairman of the Securities and Investments Board gave a public commitment in December when he said:

"I am confident that the great majority of firms in this business will co-operate and ensure that none of their customers will suffer as a result of bad advice. In any case the regulators will use their powers, as necessary, to ensure appropriate remedies."

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will those who were unfortunately caned in the London and Bishopsgate scandal and who lost £80 million be recompensed?

Mr. Lilley: As my hon. Friend will know, we have taken steps. We set up the Maxwell pensions unit. I hope —and I believe that the trustees now foresee—that there will be sufficient recovery of assets to restore the pension rights of those who had them put at risk as a result of the Maxwell scandal.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman has just quoted a statement from Mr. Large. If he looks at the proceedings on the Financial Services Bill, Standing Committee E, November 1986, he will find almost exactly those words used by the Minister responsible for putting through that legislation. If we had an assurance then from the man who is now the Secretary of State, why should we any more believe today a statement by the chairman of the SIB?

Mr. Lilley: That could not have been the case, because, at the time to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, the situation did not exist. If he had listened carefully, he would have heard that Mr. Large was referring to mis-selling that has occurred. He said:

"the regulators will use their powers, as necessary, to ensure appropriate remedies."

Existing personal pension investors need not be alarmed; nor should they be panicked into any precipitate action by scaremongering from Opposition Members.

The regulatory bodies have already acted to prevent and deter future mis-selling. Yesterday, we heard that the Norwich Union suspended its sales force because its staff training scheme did not meet new standards. That followed a monitoring visit by the authorities. An unauthorised financial adviser was recently gaoled by the High Court for flouting an SIB ban.

Regulators have shown themselves ready to impose substantial fines—over £700,000 in one case—where companies have broken the rules. The SIB's regulatory steering group published last week its first report and recommendations on future preventive measures to ensure high marketing standards. I am glad that the hon. Member for Garscadden welcomed that. Once the board has completed its investigations, there will be a full report.

At the end of the day, no one is better placed or has greater interest in monitoring the progress of pension arrangements than the individual to whom they belong. That is why the Government are committed to giving individuals proper access to information to help them choose the right pension and monitor its performance. We have taken action in a number of ways.

Following directions from my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, the Securities and Investments Board recently published proposals to give greater transparency to charges and commissions. The proposals will begin to take effect from July this year. In future, anyone selling personal pensions must reveal to potential investors how much he stands to gain in commissions by making a sale. Illustrations of personal pension benefits must reflect the actual charges levied by a provider, so that investors can compare the cost of different products.

Mr. Flynn: On 15 March 1990, I complained during Prime Minister's Question Time about what I described as the wicked mis-selling of personal pensions. Many other hon. Members had complained before and have done so since. The Prime Minister rejected the charge at that time. Why on earth have the Government and the regulatory bodies not taken action until now?

Mr. Lilley: The regulatory bodies are taking action, and promising to remedy the situation where mis-selling has occurred.

As I said, we believe that the effective disclosure of charges and commissions is the best way to protect consumers from overpriced products and the dangers of biased advice in future. The Securities and Investments Board's proposals are a solid step towards improving the marketing of personal pensions and helping investors to make well-informed decisions.

My Department has also taken action to help potential investors to make informed choices about personal pensions. Last June, we published a new guide for people who are thinking about buying a personal pension. The guide advises people to consider all their pension options, including any employer's scheme that might be available, before making a decision.

If an individual decides that a personal pension is his best choice, the guide advises him to shop around before choosing a particular scheme. A month-long national press campaign to advertise the guide has just finished. Guides are available from citizens advice bureaux, and we have set up a special telephone line for individuals to order their copy directly. So far, more than 250,000 copies have been distributed.

We have also published a guide for people who have recently taken out a personal pension plan to help them get the best out of their scheme, and we shall shortly issue a guide to personal pensions for self-employed people.

I can also announce that we shall shortly be issuing guidance for employers who want to give advice to their employees about pensions. The Financial Services Act 1986 requires that anyone carrying on the business of giving financial advice should be authorised. Apparently, some employers mistakenly believe that the Act therefore constrains them from advising their employees on pensions. For most employers, that will not be the case as long as they adhere to simple rules.

Employers can give all the help and advice they want about their own scheme without breaching Financial Service Act rules. They can also advise employees on personal pensions in general as long as they steer clear of the merits of any particular pension scheme. Our guidance will help employers who want to help their employees make informed decisions about their pension.

Mr. Willetts: Will my right hon. Friend accept that his remarks are very significant, because many employers believe that the Financial Services Act inhibits them from giving such advice? His statement will encourage them to give the advice that many have wished but have been afraid to give.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The leaflet, which is crisp, punchy and comprehensible, will shortly be available. People will realise that they are able to give advice which they thought—mistakenly—they were not able to give.

The third concern is that people may have opted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme into a personal pension when it was not in their interest to do so. SIB's investigations so far have concentrated on the sale of personal pensions to those transferring out of occupational schemes. The chairman of the SIB has said that he has no evidence so far of systematic non-compliance with selling practice rules in cases of movement from SERPS to appropriate personal pensions, but the SIB will be examining the matter, and my officials are already discussing with SIB officials how to handle this phase of the work.

When the SIB has completed its investigations, we shall know whether any poor advice has been given to those contracting out of SERPS, whether any investors have been disadvantaged, and the extent or scale of any problems.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby) *rose—*

Mr. Lilley: I shall give way in a moment.

If the SIB discovers that investors have suffered disadvantage through being given bad advice, the SIB will expect effective remedy to be provided by the companies responsible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Why does the Secretary of State omit from his list of things that are wrong the major problem, which is that a huge number of people cannot look forward to a reasonable income in retirement? A report entitled "Better Pensions for All", written by Bryn Davies—an acknowledged expert—and published by the Institute for Public Policy Research, estimates that 9 million working people who need to make additional provision for their retirement cannot look to existing forms of provision for a practical way of doing so. A huge number of people will not benefit at all.

Mr. Lilley: That is rich, coming from a member of a party that has been critical of all our measures to extend the availability of pensions. In 1979, only 43 per cent. of retired people had an occupational pension. The figure is

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now more than 60 per cent, and for newly retiring people it is nearly 70 per cent. The figure will be higher still when joined by the figures for those with personal pensions.

Mr. Dewar: I think that it was the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) who suggested in a parliamentary answer that 60 per cent. of people who had contracted out into an APP were not paying an additional contribution, which is a matter of concern. Because of the charges and costs, will those people have any significant pension at the end of the day? Has the Minister any comment to make?

Mr. Lilley: Obviously, I want more people to make ever better provision, appropriate to their resources. I am glad that significant numbers of people go beyond the minimum, which is more or less the equivalent of what they would receive under the state scheme. They will have better provision by opting out and topping up. One company—Prudential—recently revealed that 70 per cent. of its investors with personal pensions are paying more than the minimum, which is equivalent to SERPS and financed by the rebate. We hope that others will increase their percentage, too.

Much of the discussion has been due to misunderstanding of published figures and of remarks by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte. Following recent articles, Coopers has issued a press release which aims to

"set out the background to the reports which have appeared in the press in recent days which have misrepresented our views . . . there must be a real danger that unnecessary distress could be caused to those people affected".

I agree. Much of the coverage reveals a misunderstanding of what the figures show.

It is important to remember that the figures refer to a single year. They therefore represent only a snapshot at a point in time of the profile of personal pension holders in that year; but it is the earnings over a lifetime that determine an individual's pension. Some commentators have also focused on the number of investors shown in the table as having zero earnings in the particular year, and suggested that those personal pensions must therefore have been mis-sold. That is not necessarily so.

Mr. Flynn *rose—*

Mr. Lilley: I shall continue a little before giving way.

If a person became unemployed in 1991, having started his policy in 1988 while he was working, he would appear in the tables in the zero earnings column, but that would not necessarily mean that he had been mis-sold a personal pension. As soon as the individual began working and paying national insurance again, DSS contributions to his personal pension would resume. Of course, while he was not earning, he would not in any event have been building up any pension entitlement had he not opted out of SERPS.

Mr. Flynn: While the Minister is attacking the accuracy of Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte's conclusions, would it not be fair of him to state its main conclusion, which is that 2.4 million people are worse off because they opted out of SERPS and into a personal pension? He may be right and the figures may be inaccurate—it could be 3.4 million or 4.4 million people.

Mr. Lilley: That is precisely the type of remark of which Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte's press release is trying to disabuse people.

Mr. Flynn: Could it not be 3.4 million or 4.4 million?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman should read the press release. He would then find that Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte does not agree with that analysis. It believes it to be mistaken and says that, because of the performance of the stock market and the value of the opt-out rebate that people receive, there is every likelihood that people who took out a pension during the period of the rebate—up to last year—will have a pension which is to their advantage.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Will the Secretary of State comment on the following statement from the Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte press release? It states:

"Given the impact of commission insurance charges, this means that contracting out is now only likely to be of significant benefit to higher-paid people in their 20s and 30s who are prepared to take some investment risk."

Does he accept that suggestion?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman should look at the whole press release. He will find the point that I have just made—that, in general, people in that period would have received an advantageous pension. What we all know about the point of age, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, is that we are pledged to, and will, introduce age-related rebates designed to make contracting out attractive to people across the whole age range. Also, in the interim period, we introduced the 1 per cent. additional rebate to extend the viability of the existing system until that age-related rebate structure is in place.

Mr. Dewar *rose—*

Mr. Lilley: I have given way an awful number of times. Could the hon. Gentleman ration himself and possibly intervene again if he is really desperate? [*Laughter.*] I have given way infinitely more than the hon. Gentleman ever does.

The new opportunities and flexibilities that we have brought to pension provision are of clear benefit to millions of people. If there are dangers that the availability of choice can be abused, our response is clear. It is to ensure that past errors are put right, to ensure that further safeguards are put in place for the future and to ensure that sufficient information is available for sensible choices to be made.

That is the fundamental difference in the debate between Conservative Members and Opposition Members. Our response is to make choice better informed. Their response is to assert that choice should never have been allowed in the first place. Our policy is to encourage funded provision which reduces the burden on future generations. Their policy is to keep people dependent on the state and to add to the commitments of taxpayers in the future. Our approach to alleged mis-selling—

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: In a moment.

Our approach to alleged mis-selling of personal pensions is to see that it is investigated and, if necessary, put right. The Opposition's approach is to seek political capital from it and to alarm millions of investors unnecessarily. I entirely recognise that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), as mentioned earlier, is

unusual in his party, in that he wishes everybody to have a compulsory private pension. Those are interesting ideas. It is a reflection on his Front-Bench spokesmen that they are so uninterested in those ideas.

Mr. Field: We shall see how the Labour party fights the next general election: that is the crucial point.

I intervene as somebody who believes that we need a system in which people are in the state scheme and in a second pension scheme as well. I tried to intervene when the Secretary of State made the point that the Government were concerned to reduce liability to taxpayers. I want to bring him back to the SERPS debate.

Given that phrase about responsibility to taxpayers, does the right hon. Gentleman not believe that he has a responsibility to offer advice to those who are currently on low incomes and who may receive a low income over the next few years, that it is not in their interest, or in the interest of the taxpayers, for them to opt out of SERPS? Does not the responsibility go beyond the individual? Should not the taxpayer, at the end of the day, also have some say, whether it is wise or unwise to opt out, and does not the right hon. Gentleman have a duty to exercise that responsibility on behalf of taxpayers?

Mr. Lilley: I mentioned that we have published a leaflet, made it widely available and advertised it heavily, to enable people to give advice on the sort of factors that they should take into account in deciding whether to opt out and what sort of pension provision to make.

It cannot be said that it is always wrong for someone on a low income to take out a personal pension instead of being in SERPS. That would depend on the structure of costs. That is why we have done the next important thing, which I also mentioned, of making it clear to people what the costs are, by introducing transparency. Then people will be able to see whether it is worth their while and to compare and contrast.

It is the underlying duty of those who market personal pensions to give best advice. There is evidence that that has not always been done. That has been jumped on hard—and quite right too. I have absolutely no interest in overlooking any mis-selling in the past. We must get it right, and put it right. The industry has a vested interest in getting it right, so that it can continue to provide a valuable service.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Mr. Lilley: With respect, I have given way to everybody. So that the debate may continue, perhaps I may draw my remarks to a conclusion. The hon. Gentleman will have a chance to contribute to the debate again, as he has already through my willingness to give way.

Our pension promises have already brought the prospect of increased prosperity to millions of people. We have more employer schemes. We have more people taking responsibility for their own retirement income, and we have built a solid foundation of funded pension provision which is the envy of the rest of Europe. We have done that through increased choice and wider opportunity. Those will remain the characteristics of our policy in future.

6.15 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The fine words of the Secretary of State seemed almost designed to conceal a scandal of our age—what occurred in pension transfers. It seemed that much more of a scandal because it involved some of the most reputable and well-known, household-name insurance companies. The one consolation is that a number of those companies are such well-established and well-funded institutions that there is at least the prospect that most of the people who suffered from mis-selling may be able to be compensated. Indeed, the regulatory authorities must insist that all those people be compensated. The size and the scale of the scandal and the involvement of so many reputable companies must be a concern. I expected it to be reflected in a larger proportion of the Secretary of State's speech than it was. Only in his closing lines did he recognise, in response to an intervention, that the Government cannot condone the mis-selling that went on; only then did there seem to be any acknowledgement of what happened.

The sale of personal pension plans was a huge exercise. It has been estimated that more than 6 million have been sold since January 1988. A third of them were sold through independent financial advisers and the rest through tied representatives—large companies and other large companies acting as their tied agents. It is significant that two thirds of the personal pensions were sold by big companies. Much attention has been given to independent financial advisers and there have been some bad apples in that barrel. There have been many concerns in relation to people being given extremely bad advice which was based on commission. However, two thirds of the problem was generated by companies who had no business to do anything of the kind. They had the resources and the experience to do the job properly and failed to do so.

Penalties have been imposed on Legal and General Group plc, and Norwich Union Insurance Group is suspending 800 sales staff. That was significant enough for the *Eastern Daily Press* that this morning it was the only newspaper in the entire country that did not lead on the trials and tribulations of the Prime Minister. It led on the suspension of 800 Norwich Union staff. It is quite a big issue in Norwich, which illustrates the seriousness of the matter for large and well-known insurance companies. Norwich Union will not be the only company to be affected. Many more will be affected and will have to pay out a lot of compensation.

However one considers the Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte figures and however cautious one is about them, they clearly suggest that a large number of people on very low earnings have been wrongly advised to contract out of SERPS. As I understand it, contracting out will not simply include people who are substituting a personal pension for a state earnings-related pension, but will include people who, by transferring out of a contracted-in pension scheme, are giving up a combination of an occupational pension and a state pension for a personal pension. A number of people will have done so with earnings insufficient to cover the charges levied by life insurance. *[Interruption.]* It is an unusual privilege to be presented with a note from the Government Benches while I am making a speech. I shall come to it due course.

It is believed that 500,000 people have transferred into personal pension schemes since 1988. The KPMG study reveals that only 9 per cent. of client files have been treated with "substantial compliance" by firms undertaking pension transfer. That leaves room for the possibility of great financial disadvantage being afflicted on clients who left more suitable occupational schemes. The KPMG report does not quantify the losses. It was not set up to do that. The report quantifies the lack of compliance. The lack

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of compliance was almost total; virtually no one was complying with what they were supposed to be doing. But 37 per cent. of the schemes were suspect or unsatisfactory and suspect, implying that the advice was misleading, perverse or seriously wrong. That is a serious problem.

Among the groups concerned were a number of especially vulnerable people—for example, redundant mineworkers. About 58,000 mineworkers were persuaded to move £736 million of pension fund money into personal pension schemes, followed by 23,000 steel workers, 27,000 teachers and 32,000 nurses. I know from experience in my constituency that redundant mineworkers were hired by insurance companies to provide the names of other mineworkers who could then be approached. Meetings were organised and great promises and offers were made.

The present situation is that I have mineworkers coming to me—some of them have been lucky enough to obtain fresh employment; they are the lucky minority—who are going into a local authority pension scheme. They discovered that if they had remained in the mineworkers pension scheme, they could have transferred rights and benefits into the local authority scheme which they cannot now transfer. They have been severely disadvantaged and must be compensated under the terms that SIB described, and to which the Secretary of State referred. I intend to make it my business to see that any mineworkers in my constituency who are so affected are compensated.

When we look back on this whole episode—what happened and why—we must look first at the role of the Government. At the time, the Government heavily advertised the desirability of transferring into personal pensions. They heavily encouraged opting out of SERPS by offering rebates and the 2 per cent. inducement. The Ministers involved are now respectively the chairman of the Conservative party, the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, and the Prime Minister, who was the Under-Secretary of State in the Department at the time. I ask whether one would buy a personal pension from any of those three. They certainly carry a heavy responsibility for what happened, because they were involved in creating the climate in which it was wrongly assumed by millions of people that it would be better to have a personal pension than to be in an occupational pension scheme or the state scheme. It may have been better in some cases, but in many cases it was not.

Mr. Butterfill: Before the Liberal party seeks to gain too much of the moral high ground on this issue, I remind the right hon. Gentleman that for the past two years his party has failed to nominate an officer to the all-party group on occupational pensions, despite repeated requests to do so, and he is the sole representative of his party in this important debate.

Mr. Beith: If I must appear before the Almighty on judgment day and say that I am sorry that I failed to submit a name for the all-party pensions group, and the three right hon. Members whom I mentioned must appear before the Almighty and say that their advice may have led many thousands—perhaps even millions—of people to finish up with much lower pensions than they should have had, I shall be in a more comfortable position than they are. To assist the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) with that relatively minor matter, I shall certainly try to do so.

Mr. Heald: The right hon. Gentleman complained about the advice given by Ministers to opt out of SERPS. Is not it Liberal party policy to abolish SERPS, as its 1992 manifesto says? If that is right, how on earth will all the people in this country who want enhanced pension provision get it?

Mr. Beith: The advice must be against what is available and what the alternatives are. In the long term, it is not sensible for us to suggest to people that through SERPS we can give them a better deal than good occupational pension schemes, or, in some cases, personal schemes can provide. The question is what advice was given to people for whom that was not the right choice at the time. The wrong advice was given both by insurance salesmen and by the Government in the general background that they provided.

The second failure was that of LAUTRO and FIMBRA. They did not produce any detailed rules until 1992. To some extent, LAUTRO appeared to have been captured by the trade that it was supposed to be regulating and simply did not discharge the job that it was given to do. In mitigation, one can say that those bodies had only just been set up and that it was difficult for LAUTRO and FIMBRA effectively to operate against the background that I described. The fact remains that it was a failure—and the biggest failure was that of LAUTRO. The biggest failure involved the biggest institutions.

Part of the background was the growth of tying. A large number of other financial institutions—banks and building societies—became the sellers of only one company's products. That immediately put the consumer in a very dangerous position. If a consumer goes into a shop to buy a washing machine, even if the salesman is on commission for what he sells, at least he is selling one of a series of washing machines and will give some advice about it. It may not be an ideal position, but it is better than consumers finding their friendly building societies saying, "Of course you can have a mortgage; we can arrange it. By the way, your insurance will be with this company or that company. We have combed the market and in every respect that company provides the best products". That provided an unsatisfactory background for many financial decisions —personal pensions in some cases, endowment insurance in many cases and a whole number of other decisions.

There was a lack of training for staff in those organisations for the job that they were doing. A large number of people went into banks, building societies and even insurance companies expecting to do one sort of job. They then found that they were under heavy pressure to make sales in a sophisticated area in which someone was not buying a small policy or an addition to his savings portfolio but was committing the whole of his pensionability—the whole of his future. That placed a heavy burden on people who were not trained to carry out that responsibility.

Then there was the commission system with all the pressure that it provided in the absence of any real public understanding of how great the commissions and, indeed, the charges were. When I say the commission system, I am referring not only to the commissions paid to independent financial advisers but to the commission-only sales forces of some insurance companies and the employment terms of

those involved in other institutions, whose jobs or promotions were on the line if they did not sell more pension or insurance products.

The insurance industry recognises the scale of the failure and what it must do to provide compensation. Most insurance companies are engaged in working on that task now; it is going ahead. I hope that it will not be delayed too much because I am worried about the number of people who may not yet realise that they should make a claim for compensation in that way, and the need to ensure that those claims are quickly and adequately processed.

What about the future, now that all that has happened? The new SIB rules are welcome. Those rules require, for example, transfer value analysis and a better basis for making judgments about this sort of thing. There are rules for cooling-off periods and rules placing restrictions on independent financial advisers as to whether they are capable of and equipped to carry out business of that sort. However, the rules do not go to the heart of some of the problems. They do not deal with the commission system or the dependence of staff in tied banks and building societies on the sales that they make to keep their job or level of income. The rules do not deal adequately with securing disclosure across the board.

There remains a great gap in all this. There is still no adequate provision of fee-based advice, so that someone can go to a genuinely independent adviser and say, "I want to know what is the best bargain for me. I will pay you by the hour for the advice that you give me". There are places in the market where such advice can be obtained, but people do not generally realise that it is obtainable. People do not always realise that they need to have such advice or that it is not what they are getting. The only way in which the commission system will cease to have the bad influence that it has is if more fee-based advice is available and people can see that it is genuinely to their advantage to pay a relatively small sum of money up front to get decent advice.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, as long as we have a situation where it seems that those who pay commission to an independent adviser are paying a sum of money and those who buy from a direct seller are not suffering from the same disadvantage, fee-based advice will not become popular? We all know that those who buy direct are paying for in-house salesmen, expensive advertising and everything else—and they are paying in exactly the same way—but that is not immediately apparent to the consumer.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman makes more fully the point that I compressed too much. When I talk about disclosure across the board, I mean that people should be able to make a proper comparison of what they are paying through an independent financial adviser and what they pay if they go to a bank or building society and do business through the staff of those organisations, what they pay if they deal with an in-house insurance company of one of those organisations, and what they pay if they deal with one of the companies that do all their business through direct sales. There are charges, commissions and remuneration packages in every case. These can and do influence the sort of advice that is given, and this is something that the customer needs to know.

Then there is the issue of the Personal Investment Authority, which is getting off to a pretty shaky start. I identify two particular problems that are crucial to the future. One is the weakness in the consumer or independent director system. The criticism here is the opposite of that made by Standard Life and by the Prudential. My contention is that consumers or independent directors are not in a very strong position. They owe their appointment to the chairman and other directors, and their approval to a body created by those people. Several of them are directors of building societies anyway and are therefore already enmeshed in the system—some of the disadvantages of which I have sought to describe. That being the case, they are not in a strongly independent position. When it comes to challenging the accepted wisdom, the fact that, in effect, they are being paid £1,000 a meeting—£12,000 a year—to serve on this body might just deter somebody from upsetting those on whom he depends for reappointment. Perhaps that is an unjustified fear, but it is one which some people will hold and it casts doubt on the effectiveness of the independent side.

However, some of the companies involved adopt the attitude that there are now too many of these independent people about and that, as it is not really self-regulation, they will not have it. That was initially the view of Standard Life, although I believe that that company has now accepted that it should be regulated, and that remains the view of the Prudential. In my view, it is indefensible that the Prudential should be allowed to shop around as to who regulates it. Technically it is regulatory arbitrage, but I regard it as an unacceptable notion. I hope that the Securities and Investments Board will say that its agents regulating the Prudential will be the Personal Investment Authority, or, at least, that the Prudential will be regulated according to precisely the rules that govern those regulated by the Personal Investment Authority. I hope that the Prudential will not be able to earn one jot of regulatory lightness by deciding to go elsewhere for its regulation.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that several Conservative Members agree entirely with the remarks that he has just made. It is up to us to ensure that the public realise that a body that tries to choose a regulatory authority to suit itself is not one with which they can deal confidently.

Mr. Beith: My remarks carry that implication.

Then we come to the crunch question that is implicit in the Labour party's motion: is there a statutory or direct system that would have saved us all this trouble and would be a great deal better? We must face the fact that there has to be practitioner involvement somewhere along the line. Otherwise, people simply will not be wise to what the trade was getting up to. There must be practitioner involvement to make the system work effectively. Could that be achieved satisfactorily with a Government-appointed regulator and some sort of practitioner committee structure? Perhaps it could, and perhaps that is the direction that we should have taken. What there is no scope for is a completely detached system of regulation which purports to have a strength that the present system does not have. We can improve the present system by making it more independent and accountable—accountable to Select Committees of the House of Commons, for example—so that it has some focus of accountability. But there is no easy, clear distinction between, on the one hand, what is known as self-regulation and, on the other hand, statutory regulation. Self-regulation is statutory in that there is a

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wide range of Government involvement. It has directors who are not part of the industry. Statutory regulation means some kind of practitioner involvement. Any system is a compromise between those elements.

Moreover, I do not believe that if we had had something that might be called statutory or direct regulation we should have prevented all that has happened in this episode. There are several reasons. The first is the atmosphere and background that I have described. Indeed, it is rather difficult for Opposition Members to imagine that the Government would have made a better job of restraining personal pension growth when their policy was to promote just that. It is rather far-fetched to think that, in this regard, they would have done better than LAUTRO.

I intend to vote for the motion as it rightly focuses on a serious problem and on the need to strengthen regulation. However, I counsel against assuming that the word "direct", which appears in the motion, or the alternative that is sometimes used—"statutory"—implies a simple alternative system that would have delivered the goods, and will do so now. There are still marked weaknesses in the system that we have. We need huge improvements in respect of disclosure, the way in which the commission system works, the provision of fee-based advice and the independence and accountability of the regulators. But we must start from where we are and learn from experience.

Tomorrow's financial regulation problem will not be personal pensions; it will be some other product. I am afraid that, inevitably, this debate is about the stable door and the horse that has bolted. We need to make the system effective to guard against sophisticated new financial products that would pose new threats to ordinary people who do not understand the complexities. That is all the more reason for working from here to build a better regulatory system than we have managed to achieve so far.

6.35 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I should like to preface my remarks by reminding hon. Members of the entry in the Register of Members' Interests that shows that I am an adviser to the British Insurance and Investment Brokers' Association, which, together now with the National Federation of Independent Financial Advisers, represents about half the financial advisers in the country. I have taken a consistent interest in this matter—starting with the Committee stage of the Financial Services Act 1986, to which reference has been made, and continuing in my capacity as chairman of the all-party group on occupational pensions.

It might be helpful if I were to sketch in a little of what I see as the background to the problem. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has done the House a service by bringing this matter forward for debate. There remain a number of very serious issues that the House must confront, and the opportunity to have a long and comprehensive debate of this nature is very welcome. However, we must look back to find out why this situation has arisen.

First, why were occupational pensions derided by so many people? I believe that the answer to that question was provided by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he referred to the restrictions imposed by so many schemes. Many hon. Members may, even today, be victims of those restrictions. I have a pension scheme in which I participated when I was in my 20s. That will pay less than £100 on maturity, when I am 65, as it was frozen when I left it in my late 20s. So many people were in a similar position that there was deep suspicion—now, fortunately, removed by Government action. Then, it was necessary to rely on the discretion of trustees.

Personal pensions have a very important application for certain types of individual. Those who are relatively high earners and those who are likely to change their jobs often may well find that personal pensions suit them a good deal better than occupational schemes. For those people, personal pensions were, and probably remain, entirely appropriate. When all this was going on, there was immense public approval for the Government's proposals. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Opposition Members who say "Oh!" should look at the newspapers of the period—and not just those supporting the Conservative party, but all sorts of newspapers. They were saying how wonderful these proposals were. Television programmes said much the same thing.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that most of the clamour of approval came from the self-interested advertising and promotion efforts of the industry itself, which wanted to benefit from massive commissions?

Mr. Butterfill: Of course the industry was advertising, but I do not by any means accept what the hon. Gentleman says. He ought to do himself the favour of looking back at the newspapers of the period, where he would see article after article advising people what a wonderful thing this was.

The proposals coincided with the banks' and the building societies' surge into the market. These institutions decided that this was a lucrative business in which to become involved, and they therefore used all the marketing pressure of which they were capable. That had not previously happened, and pensions had been largely the domain of the traditional insurance companies. That marketing pressure is what led to an expansion of those schemes beyond all expectations. It was expected when they were first introduced that there would be about 5000,000 sales initially. The actual figure was 3.5 million. As my right hon. Friend stated, the current figure is more than 5 million. The success of the schemes exceeded everybody's expectations, and that put a lot of pressure on the industry.

Although most of the problems have arisen out of opt-outs or transfers, it is true that we have as a result a huge additional capacity which would not otherwise have existed. Many more people have been persuaded to save for their retirement in a way which overall can only be a good thing.

What are the problems that have arisen? The first is the inadequacy of the regulation. It is quite clear that there was a total inadequacy within the regulatory structure, and I lay much of the blame for that not just on the self-regulatory bodies but on the Securities and Investments Board. There has been a total failure to address the problem of disclosure.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) graciously allowed me to intervene on that subject. Disclosure is not merely the commission being paid to the salesman but the total disclosure of all the costs associated

with the product, what the effect will be if there is an early surrender and what other restrictions may be placed on the investor.

All those factors are needed for a person to make a balanced decision. The investor does not need to know how much commission the salesman is getting, but how many pence in his pound will end up being invested on his behalf. Regrettably, there is still a failure in the regulatory arrangements for that to become sufficiently clear. A lot of progress has been made, but more progress still must be made.

I made those points in 1986 on Committee. I remember that the Prudential told us that it was quite impossible to calculate what we were suggesting, although actuaries disagreed at the time. The actuaries have been proved right and the Prudential, once again, has been proved wrong. I believe that it is wrong today in its approach to the problem.

The other problem was that there was poor training of sales staff. That was manifestly because the huge increase in the volume of business forced companies to take on people who had probably never sold insurance or pension products in their lives and who knew very little about it. Undoubtedly inadequate training still exists, as Norwich Union has evidenced.

Mr. John Greenway: My hon. Friend surely will recall that another all-party group, of which I am chairman, went to LAUTRO for the first time more than three years ago and the problem of the lack of training of appointed representatives was identified. Does my hon. Friend agree that Norwich Union's decision and announcement yesterday shows how much we are getting to grips with it?

Mr. Butterfill: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. He and I have taken a long and consistent interest in the issues. It is long overdue that the major companies—particularly those with direct sales forces—ensured that they were adequately trained.

It is a reflection of the inadequacy of the training that the KPMG report—I have here also an analysis of the report from the Association of Consulting Actuaries—shows, interestingly, that pension schemes sold by independent financial advisers—IFAs—tended to be much better advised than those directly sold by the insurance companies. One might expect that that should be the case for all sorts of reasons. An independent adviser would be more likely—indeed, would be required—to look around the market at a variety of products before coming down in favour of one on behalf of the client, whereas those who are tied can offer only the product of their own company.

That factor is also probably due to the fact that many of those recruited had very little experience of the nature of occupational pension schemes. At least the IFAs knew something about them. The new recruits may have been car salesmen yesterday—

Ms Abbott *rose—*

Mr. Flynn *rose—*

Mr. Butterfill: I will give way to the hon. Lady.

Ms Abbott: I am grateful to both hon. Gentlemen.

Does the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) agree that it rather suits the industry to harp on about training? I do not wish to minimise the importance of training, but it seems that the industry would far rather talk about that than about the structural problems of a commission-driven system that drives people to make sales that they ought not to make.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Lady anticipates remarks which I was going to come to later. I will address them now.

The hon. Lady may know that I have made a number of speeches and have written articles in national newspapers about the commission problem. It is entirely inappropriate that people should be commission-only salesman, and should then be expected to give impartial advice. I do not believe that it is possible that somebody who relies on making the next sale to feed his family can be as impartial as he should be in giving advice. I entirely agree with the hon. Lady.

Mr. Flynn: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that it has been a deliberate policy of insurance companies to have semi-trained staff, and that the average time that people stayed in those jobs is about eight months? Is it not in the companies' interests to do that because the poorly trained staff sold policies in a less conscientious way and did not understand what was going on? Were not they also employed to sell policies to workmates, ex-workmates and families? When they had done that, they were of no use to the insurance company. Has not that been a deliberate policy for many years?

Mr. Butterfill: I accept that there may have been an element of that, but I do not think that that would have been a deliberate or conscious policy for most companies.

All the requirements of the regulatory organisations which are now in place lay great emphasis on training. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady will agree that unless we have properly trained sales staff it will be impossible for people to feel confident about the advice they have been given. Training is of paramount importance for the future, and it should have been in the past.

Not only was there a lack of experience of the nature of occupational schemes, but many of the trustees and those who were running occupational schemes were not altogether unhappy about losing some of their beneficiaries. Some were good and advised people to think two, three or four times about transferring or opting out. However, others did not because they saw that a burden on their company would be lifted.

It is also true that many of the trustees advised the actuaries who were acting for them in calculating transfer values to disregard all the discretionary benefits that would accrue to their member. As a result, many of the transfer payments were much less than satisfactory because the person selling the new scheme did not know enough about it. The people involved were therefore unable to get adequate advice on that subject.

Yet another problem was that those who were given that advice did not always take it. It has not always been mis-selling. One can quote a large number of examples of people who were advised not to do it, but nevertheless said that they wanted the independence from their occupational scheme. They did not trust the company or the occupational scheme, or they may have thought that the company might not have a secure future.

One of the disadvantages of occupational schemes, as against personal pensions, is that they rely on the continuing existence of the company that is operating the scheme. If the company goes into liquidation—as some of

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my constituents who were members of the Pynford scheme have found to their cost—the pension goes out of the window. That scheme has been frozen for about three years, and that is another disgrace, which I may bring to the attention of the House on another occasion. There have been many more problems than were immediately apparent.The hon. Member for Garscadden—

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Butterfill: I should be happy to give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Taylor: At this point in his excellent speech, my hon. Friend has raised the fact that there are some problems with occupational schemes. In the context of the debate, we must focus on that aspect, too. Occupational schemes are a problem not only in the circumstances that he mentioned, but when an employee has to leave the scheme because of a change of job. There are difficulties if occupational schemes exist and there is no availability of personal pensions. We have to get the balance right in the debate.

Mr. Butterfill: My hon. Friend makes a valid point.

One of the criticisms that I would make of the otherwise excellent speech made by the hon. Member for Garscadden is that he over-egged the pudding in describing the extent of the problem. There is a danger that in doing so we will discourage people from making personal provision. There is no doubt that we should encourage people to do that, but at the same time we should ensure that there is a framework in which they can do so securely.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman referred to the framework in which people take decisions. May I ask him a question about the regulatory framework? Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied that Joe Palmer, with his record at Legal and General, is fit to lead the Personal Investment Authority? The three early-day motions that I have tabled on the matter are fairly delicately put together. Would it not be good if some Conservatives Members signed the motions to show the industry that people in the House are prepared to say what the industry regularly tells us is the case? The industry has no confidence in that man because of his track record at Legal and General.

Mr. Butterfill: I regret that I do not join the hon. Gentleman in that view. Mr. Palmer has considerable experience of the industry and is widely respected in the industry. The measures that he has taken in setting up the PIA, which was not an easy task and which I shall speak about later in the debate, have been admirable. The PIA is not perfect by any means, but Mr. Palmer is doing a good job and I wish him every success.

Before I gave way, I was referring to the extent of the problem. In the analysis that the Association of Consulting Actuaries made of the KPMG report, there are two time scales. One is the time when sales took place before additional guidance was given by the regulatory organisations. The other is after additional guidance was given. Most of the errors that were identified by the KPMG report amounted to inadequate record keeping. It is true that systems were not in place to ensure that those who sold the products kept adequate records. The lack of adequate record keeping does not of itself necessarily denote that there has been mis-selling for which people would need to be compensated.

The report also says that in other cases, although the record keeping was all right, there was some suspicion that the advice that was given was not entirely impartial and not as good as it should have been. In other cases, there was a combination of that suspicion and inadequate record keeping. Those were the worst cases. If one takes the total of good selling, before guidance, coupled with mere inadequate record keeping, 61 per cent. of all the pensions sold were dealt with satisfactorily.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is trying to put a wholly unjustified gloss on that report. The report said:

"Of 735 client files revealed, only 9 per cent. of the files showed evidence of substantial compliance with the main conduct of business rules."

Mr. Butterfill: To assist the hon. Gentleman, I am stating that those who have some expertise in the matter —the Association of Consulting Actuaries is independent and expert, as I hope the hon. Gentleman concedes—have analysed that raw statistic to show what that failure to comply comprises. In many cases, it is simply a failure to fill in a form or keep an adequate record on a file; it is not evidence of mis-selling. I urge the hon. Gentleman to study the reports again in detail and to study the parliamentary brief prepared for Members of Parliament by the Association of Consulting Actuaries. The brief goes into far more detail and he will find it informative and instructive. One of the dangers in the debate is that people speak from too little knowledge of the reality of the position. It would be helpful if some hon. Members were better informed.

On the basis that I have just described, 61 per cent. of pensions were adequately sold, but in some cases poor records were kept. In only 7 per cent. of cases in which the records were all right was the advice suspect. I do not defend the figures. They are appalling, but they are not the 90 per cent. failure to comply that some people have suggested. All that I am saying is that there is a danger that we over-egg this particular pudding and frighten a large number people, who may have received perfectly satisfactory service from the industry, into believing that all of them, or almost all of them, have been sold an inappropriate product.

Mr. Dewar: The last thing that I would want to do is scaremonger. The pie chart that records sales after the regulators issued guidance, shows that 47 per cent. were both unsatisfactory and suspect and 11 per cent. were suspect. Even if we take that improved performance, 58 per cent. of the total of sales were either unsatisfactory and suspect, or suspect. That is a very unsatisfactory situation. It does not justify scaremongering, but it certainly justifies a great deal more concern than the Secretary of State showed this afternoon.

Mr. Butterfill: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, I think that he is misreading the pie chart. If he looks at it, he will find that after regulation 20 per cent. of sales were passed. The 47 per cent. which he said were unsatisfactory were so because of inadequate record keeping.

Mr. Dewar: And they were suspect.

Mr. Butterfill: No. Only 22 per cent. were unsatisfactory and suspect. It is the darker grey on the pie chart. I agree that the chart is not terribly clear. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the satisfactory sales and those in which there was merely inadequate record keeping, he will see that, following guidance, the number of non-mis-sold or non-suspected mis-sold products rises to 67 per cent.

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that at this stage there is simply no evidence on whether clients have been financially disadvantaged, so one cannot draw conclusions as to what the losses are?

Mr. Butterfill: That is right. Perhaps we should pass from here to a different aspect of the matter. I merely sought to make the point in response to the hon. Member for Garscadden that the scale of the problem was nothing like as big as some commentators on the subject have led us believe. It would be dangerous for us to leave the House having given people the impression that almost everyone who was sold a personal pension had been necessarily disadvantaged. The reverse is the case. It is estimated by the Association of British Insurers that probably only about 10 per cent. of all of them will require some form of compensation and that probably only 3 per cent. will require substantial compensation. That is still a significant and disturbing statistic, but it is nothing like so bad as may have been suggested.

Ms Abbott: I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's flow, but I am bound to do so because he is referring to an analysis of the KPMG report. I have a copy of the report. The hon. Gentleman has referred throughout to failures in record keeping. The report says, for example, that in 85 per cent. of cases there was no evidence of appraisal of pension alternatives. In 76 per cent. of cases, there was no evidence that the salesman had found out whether the client wanted to retire early. To talk about record keeping in a bland way suggests that the failures were merely technical minutiae. We are talking about the absence of elementary information used to decide whether the recommendation was in the person's best interests. The hon. Gentleman should read the report; it might help him.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Lady will be pleased to know that I have read the report. She is misinterpreting what it says. When the report says that there was no evidence of those questions being asked, it means that on inspection of the file it was found that no record had been kept that those questions were asked. It does not mean that the questions were not asked; it merely means that the salesmen concerned were sloppy in their approach and did not write the information down. It does not imply that the questions were not asked; nor that the comparisons were not made.

As I have been trying to explain to the hon. Lady, it is a purely clerical analysis and where further analysis of those problems has been done it has found that the problem is nothing like as serious as the raw statistics suggest. I should like to make some progress now as many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

It is significant that the figures show that the regulator that comes out best is the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation rather than the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation. That supports my suggestion that those people who sought independent advice did rather better than those who bought directly from the insurance companies.

The other concern I have about the KPMG report is that the Securities and Investments Board told us that it undertook the investigation because it looked at the records of the companies that it regulates through the Securities and Investments Board regulatory organisation—predominantly banks and building societies—found that there were serious problems and therefore instructed KPMG to look at everyone else.

However, the SIB did not give us the benefit of an analysis by KPMG of the firms that the SIB was regulating. It would be very interesting to have a comparison, because we may find that the situation in those companies that the SIB was regulating directly was even worse than that in the companies being regulated by the self-regulatory organisations. That has caused considerable suspicion in the industry as a whole.

What went wrong? I believe that the SIB totally failed to regulate the retail sector properly and I think that it goes back to the beginning of the process. Those of us who were present for the Committee stage of the Financial Services Act envisaged that the retail sector would be regulated properly. I was appalled when the SIB permitted the establishment of two regulators—FIMBRA and LAUTRO, one to regulate the independent sector and the other to regulate those products that were sold directly or through tied agents.

It always seemed to me that that would be a recipe for disaster, but powerful influences within the industry were pushing the SIB in that direction. That factor, coupled with the regulatory arbitrage which the SIB has permitted by allowing certain people to be regulated by the SIB itself, has caused much of the current problem.

There has not been consistency of regulation. From the beginning, the SIB should have insisted on a single retail regulator. There are those who ask, "Did the SIB have the power to do that?" I believe that it would have had the power if it had insisted on it ab initio. If it now needs further powers, I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary—my views on this subject are very well known to him—will take the necessary steps to give the SIB the power to direct people to that self-regulatory body by whom they must be regulated. We should also get rid of the four different regulators—there will, I hope, shortly be only two, but that is still too many. I wish the Personal Investment Authority well, despite my reservations about it.

I believe that the SIB brief to KPMG was inadequate, for reasons that I have outlined already; I think that it should have looked at its own regulation as well. Its response was, frankly, a little hysterical and it has raised unjustified fears among the population. That has had an unfortunate side effect: because of the scare created, many independent financial advisers cannot get the professional indemnity cover that they need in order to trade.

I think that the insurance industry as a whole must come forward with cover for IFAs as an industry initiative; otherwise, the IFA sector will disappear altogether. It is high time that the industry accepted overall responsibility for regulation. I have long taken the view that the insurance industry should be responsible for regulating itself properly and that it should not indulge in the factional in-fighting in which it has engaged in the past. When that

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happens, we will see a satisfactory resolution of the problems. If that means statutory intervention by this or any future Government, I will be the first to support it.

How can we remedy the problems of mis-selling? I believe that there are adequate remedies and I pay tribute to the industry in that it is now taking the steps necessary to solve the problems. People can be reinstated to their former occupational schemes where those schemes are willing to take them back. Of course, not all schemes are willing to do that, as the National Association of Pension Funds has pointed out. Some schemes told people that they should not leave and warned them that if they did the schemes would not have them back. It will be very difficult for those schemes to say, "All right, we accept that you did not take our advice, but we will have you back after all."

However, some schemes will take people back and people will have to return with a sum of money sufficient to compensate them for what they have lost, which must be paid by the company that sold them an inappropriate product. That much seems clear. Alternatively, people who wish to return to a scheme could enter a new scheme set up by their original company. If people cannot return to a scheme, additional payments will have to be made into their personal schemes so that they are in no worse a position than they would have been otherwise.

There is an urgent need to look at the whole structure of the industry. I agree with many of the things suggested by Professor Goode. It is essential that we establish an independent pensions regulatory body, and I hope that my hon. Friend will bring forward legislation to achieve that at the earliest opportunity.

However, I am disappointed by some parts of Professor Goode's report. For example, I am very disappointed that it does not recommend the training of trustees, as many pension funds face the problem of inadequately trained trustees. There should be provision for training and, in the future, all pension trustees must be required to go through a process of not just vetting, which is obviously necessary, but training in the duties that they are required to perform.

I think that we should immediately end regulatory arbitrage. We should have a statutory PIA if necessary. The industry must take responsibility for all its products, however they are sold.

There should be much stricter controls on tying-in. I believe that there is still a serious danger in that sector. People are at their most vulnerable when they go to financial institutions to borrow money—usually in connection with house purchase, but also for other purposes. At that time, the financial institutions may say, "It is a condition of your loan that you have some insurance cover or a pension product that will pay out at the end of the day."

There is huge implied pressure on the borrower to buy a product through the provider of the money. The potential for abuse in that area is enormous. Hon. Members will recall the concerns that I expressed on this subject in earlier debates. I honestly believe that it may be necessary to consider making that form of covert tying-in an offence under the regulatory code as it develops.

However, I do not think that we should throw out the baby with the bath water so far as occupational schemes are concerned. There have been many comments to the effect that occupational schemes should preserve their money for the benefit of beneficiaries and when there is a surplus in a scheme the company concerned should not be able to take a contributions holiday. I understand what motivates people to say that, but I believe that it is a dangerous concept.

In a personal scheme, the risk on inflation and investment return is taken by the pension holder. In an occupational scheme, the risk on both of those factors is taken by the company. If the company is required to make up any deficiency, it ought to be permitted—if the markets go well—to have a rest from making contributions at times when there is a surplus. If we do not permit companies to do that, I believe that most companies will abandon occupational pension schemes altogether and offer only money purchase schemes. That would be to the detriment of the entire industry and the general public.

In summary, although the Opposition have done us a favour by giving us the opportunity to have the debate, they cannot take the high ground because they have consistently frustrated and opposed measures to increase personal pension provisions.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), in a press release in June 1990, threatened to turn private pension provision on its head. We cannot therefore take any comfort in what the Opposition might have done had they been in power and we can congratulate the Government on having encouraged ever-greater provision —80 per cent. of people now can rely on more than their state pension. In the United Kingdom, the total amount invested in private pension provision is more than that in the rest of the European Community put together. The Government have much to congratulate themselves on, but there is still more work to be done in the regulation of the industry.

7.10 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It is somewhat surprising to hear the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) attacking the Opposition for their reservations about personal pension schemes when the personal pension system and the Government's fanatical enthusiasm for it have caused the major problem that we are debating.

The problem is a major scandal and the Opposition were right to offer notes of reservation and to tell the Government, "Hang on, think about it. This could be dangerous." They warned that the benefits would be less than those from the state earnings-related pension scheme, occupational pension schemes or other methods of provision. We were right to make those warning noises and surely cannot be criticised for them.

The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West should have criticised the Government, because they perpetrated the problem, in collusion with the industry, which was greedy for commissions—commissions which were never effectively regulated and disclosed. The hon. Gentleman served on the Standing Committee that considered the Financial Services Bill in 1986, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). We heard frequent assurances that the new system would be regulated and publicised and that it would be clear to the consumer whom he was paying for what. It never turned out that way and it is only now, all those years after passing that legislation, that we are getting decisions on commissions.

The system has never been properly regulated. The industry was greedy for commissions and was in collusion with a Government who were fanatical about privatisation. People were pushed out of a good scheme into something substantially inferior. That is the scandal and that is what we are talking about. Massive advertising campaigns by the industry conned those people into contracting out. Through massive Government advertising, people were told to grab the money that they were giving. The Government spent £1.2 million on advertisements to encourage people to get out of the state scheme, in collusion with the industry, which would benefit from the incoming commissions.

We have heard many quibbles from Conservative Members—especially from the Minister—about the number of people involved. Let us stick with the Coopers and Lybrand estimate of 2.4 million, which is equivalent to 40 per cent. of the people who opted out. That percentage —the chief victims—includes all those on low earnings of under £10,000 a year. The contributions that they can pay on such earnings make their scheme too inadequate to out-perform SERPS. In addition, they are paying a substantial commission to belong to the inadequate scheme. Those are the people who have been robbed—the less well off and the very people whom we should have been doing most to protect; but they have suffered most from that scam.

I am aware that other reports put the figure at 3.2 million, which is equivalent to 60 per cent. of those who opted out and in Yorkshire and Humberside it is higher still, at 66 per cent., or a total of 315,000 people, most of whom are on low pay and have suffered because of the scam.

The Minister said that we should not count people who had lost their jobs since they took out their personal pension. Of course we should. The burden of commission, most of which was front-loaded, falls on them especially heavily because the contributions that they made while in work are mainly drained away by it. They must be counted among the people who have suffered and they are included in the 3.2 million figure.

The heavy burden of charges and commission are the real problem. It is estimated that they amount to about one quarter of total contributions during a lifetime. The scheme must be not merely brilliant but supercalifragilistic if it is to increase performance to the extent necessary to cover the huge drain imposed by commissions.

The industry is so greedy for commissions, but they make private pensions cover so inadequate. That is why the Coopers and Lybrand report states that contracting out is of "significant benefit" only to highly paid people in their 20s and 30s, who are prepared to take an investment risk. Those are the only people who should have been encouraged to contract out. The regulators should have compelled the campaign to concentrate on them and the Government should have concentrated their efforts on that group, although they are often sophisticated enough to know what they are doing. The campaign should not have concentrated on the mass of low-paid people who were taken out of the state scheme.

Let us estimate the enormous cost of the scandal—about £11.5 billion to bribe people to opt out, including an allowance for the savings to the SERPS scheme. The Government spent £11.5 billion to encourage people to opt out of SERPS. There was also a cost to policy holders—principally the commissions, charges and mis-selling that took place—amounting to £3.5 billion, as well as the cost of compensation for the people who suffered because of opting out. The last figure depends on how adequate compensation is and I have seen no proposals that satisfy me that people will receive adequate and reasonable compensation for the loss that they suffered. I saw one estimate of £1 billion, which has been put aside by pension companies to cover the liabilities that they will incur because of the scam.

Let us be conservative in our estimates and say that it is not £1 billion but £2 billion. If we add all those costs together, they make a total of £18 billion to make the pensions of a significant section of our population worse. That is a tragedy and it is doubled by the fact that the Government were a conspirator, in collusion with the industry to achieve that end.

The tragedy is compounded by the fact that, to crown the labours of the toiling hosts of Crossmans, Castles and all those who tried to develop an adequate pension system for this country—those efforts were mainly made by the Labour party and Labour Ministers, who, through great difficulties, attempted to develop comprehensive and effective pensions coverage—it was time to give the country a proper, effective and fully comprehensive scheme. Instead, the Government opted for the gimmick of privatising and opting out, in collusion with the industry, and thus wasted all that time and money and conned a significant proportion of our people.

The Government have failed in their task of developing a proper scheme and providing effective pensions for the great mass of our people. They have coupled that failure with breaking the tie between earnings and pensions that a Labour Government introduced in the 1970s and sustained throughout their period in power. The basic state pension is, therefore, much meaner than it should be.

We assume that society will be richer in 30 or 40 years' time—not much richer if this Government stay in power, given their present economic performance and such a fragile and feeble economic recovery—but most people will have pensions that are much worse than the average earnings of people around them. In other words, the standard of living of the elderly will not keep pace with that of society. Most people will be affected by that.

In addition, 9 million people will fall down the holes between the various schemes. That is the estimate in the Institute for Public Policy Research document—an excellent document, which I recommend to all hon. Members—by Bryn Davies, who is the director actuary of Union Pension Services, and an acknowledged expert in the field. He says that three groups cannot now look forward to a reasonable level of income in retirement.

First, there are those people who do not belong to an occupational pension scheme for sufficiently long periods in their working lives and who, for one reason or another, have not taken out personal pensions. Secondly, there are those people who belong to an occupational scheme but change their job so often that the rights that they accrue are much lower than those that would be built up by a long-serving member of the scheme. Thirdly, there are those people who have taken out a personal pension, but cannot afford to pay the level of contributions needed to provide worthwhile benefits. Those are the major sections.

Therefore, 9 million working people need to make additional provision for their retirement, but cannot do so in any of the existing forms of provision. Those existing

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

forms offer no practical way for those 9 million people to make provision for their pensions. Therefore, they will be in difficulties when they retire.

The fact that the Government, who should have been developing proposals to cover those people and sustain them in old age, have wasted their time pursuing that frivolous gimmick, which has been so damaging to less well-off people especially, is a sign of how irresponsible the Government have been about pensions. They are happy to provide for the better off; they are happy that people on substantial earnings can provide for themselves, but they are not prepared to do anything to safeguard the standards of those people who fall between the different schemes and cannot now be covered by any of them.

The tragedy that we are debating is yet another indication that self-regulation has failed, and it has failed especially in that sector. The state, which should have been keeping a close eye on and protecting the interests of pensioners, colluded with the industry to push them out of a good scheme into a less adequate scheme, to damage their pension entitlement.

It is a regulatory failure because the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Orgnisation is criticised harshly by, for instance, the Consumers Association. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West did not want to quote the Consumers Association, but it is pretty damning in its criticisms of FIMBRA, which has acted much more as a self-protection society than as a guarantor or defender of the wider public interest, and especially the interests of those people who were conned.

The Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation has been, as the Consumers Association said, fairly supine in the matter. The Securities and Investments Board has done better, but the Consumers Association makes a number of important points, which I should mention. Even though the SIB has done better than the regulators beneath it, it has made no provision for addressing what went wrong, and no provision for calling to account those who are responsible.

Mr. Butterfill: I am interested to know how the hon. Gentleman can tell us that the SIB has done better because, as far as I am aware, as I said earlier, the SIB did not authorise KPMG to examine its own internally regulated companies. Indeed, there are many grounds to suppose that the companies that were regulated by the Securities and Investments Board have performed worse than most of the others in the market.

Mr. Mitchell: The steering group that the SIB has set up to run the review is dealing solely with the compensation arrangements—I am quoting the Consumers Association's criticism of the SIB and its view that although the two subordinate regulatory bodies have been supine, passive and inadequate, the SIB has done only slightly better. One of the reasons that the Consumers Association gives for that is not the reason that the hon. Gentleman gave, but the fact that the SIB is not calling any of those responsible to account.

As the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West said, the big institutions involved must have known what was going on. They do not simply sit in some Olympian cloud, while the harried sales force is off conning people throughout the country. They either instruct the sales force or they note what is going on. The fact that those people have not been —and will not be, apparently—called to account is one of the most monstrous things about the business. Those are huge, powerful institutions, in which the public need to have confidence, yet they have allowed—perhaps encouraged—sales people to go on a rampage round the country, conning 2.4 million people.

The Consumers Association adds that consumer representatives have been excluded from the steering group and the advisory committee, and it adds that the very regulators who failed to protect the consumers in the first place, and to prevent the breaches of good selling practice and best advice, are now themselves investigating the potential misconduct that has resulted.

There has been a serious regulatory failure. The Government connived in it for ideological reasons when they should have been protecting the public, but in that situation the regulators should have stood firm and controlled the situation. They did not; they failed. It is another nail in the coffin of self-regulation.

I believe that self-regulation cannot work. I have done so for some time—since we went in for the self-regulatory frenzy of the 1980s, which started with the Lloyd's Act 1982. Self-regulation has obviously been a conspicuous success in Lloyd's. That frenzy continued through the Financial Services Act 1986, which was opposed by the Opposition, who demanded an independent statutory regulator. It continued in banking and the building societies. It continued in the Companies Act 1989, when we set up effective self-regulation for the accountancy profession with the recognised supervisory bodies. A fetish has been made of self-regulation, which the Government seem determined to extend to the whole country. I do not know whether they want a self-regulating country, but they certainly want a self-regulating financial sector.

Self-regulation has not worked; it has failed and it is time to dismantle it. Self-regulation cannot work. The mafia cannot regulate the mafia. It is impossible. It is a structure which is over-elaborate, which is overlapping, which is confusing, and which, in the case of the Personal Investment Authority, is stumbling before it even starts, as the Government attempt to fill that gap. The authority cannot work because it has no firm base and no clear powers. Only an effective statutory base, setting out its responsibilities, and an independent role can make it work.

The Government tried to over-compensate by over-elaborate rules, as they did in the Berrill regime in the SIB. Then they went into reverse and tried to simplify it all again, throwing everything into confusion, but the PIA is bound, of its nature, because it is inadequately based and its role is unclear, to be complex. One cannot effectively, through those puny regulatory bodies, regulate the huge big business interests that are involved in that and other areas.

The big insurance companies, for instance, have not been regulated. Even now, they are not being called to account. In the case of the big six accountancy houses, the puny structure of professional self-regulation in accountancy and audit is supposed to call to account five or six multinationals, whose fees run into about £3 billion a year, when they permeate the institutions of accountancy and dominate all the committees of accountancy, running the regulatory structure in their interests. It simply cannot be done. We should not continue with self-regulation. It has failed and must be brought to an end.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), whose efforts in this sphere I much admire, is moving gradually towards supporting a structure of independent regulation. I welcome that process. It is a big advance because Labour Members did not advocate—not, at any rate, during the 1992 election—a structure of independent regulation after the vice-chancellor of the university of Waikato was transferred from his job involving responsibility for trade and industry. However, we are advocating it now, which is right.

We have moved towards the idea of a statutory independent regulator—a new Securities and Investments Board. I welcome that, but it does not go far enough. The structure that I should like to see put in place would be based on the exchange commission in the United States. We should set up an independent, super-regulator with powers to call people to account, to investigate, to prosecute, to fine, to disqualify—all the necessary controls. To support that organisation, a series of commissions should be set up, all of which should be independent, should include representatives of the public interest and should cover the various sectors involved.

Those sectors include banking, where we want an independent regulator and accountancy. We should have a securities and investments commission rather than the puny private company that we now have. We should have a company sector responsible for corporate governance. The structures should come underneath an independent securities and investments commission. That would give us effective, powerful independent regulation. We need that independence and the openness of an open sunshine policy because the City's reputation suffers without it, and a lot depends on that reputation.

The type of scandals that been have allowed to go on and have not been stopped by self-regulation have tarnished that reputation. The financial sector's reputation suffers from the sort of scandals to which we have referred. The inadequacy of accountancy and audit becomes exposed and causes growing public concern unless there is effective independent regulation of accountancy and audit. The reputations of the financial services, the City and the financial sector on which the economy lopsidedly depends are at stake. They will not be saved unless we have an effective guarantee of the public interest in an independent regulator.

7.32 pm

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): The Labour party's attitude to personal pensions lies behind this debate. That attitude is, at best, one of unease and, at worst, one of total hostility. That hostility is shown in the motion because it does not only criticise the poor advice given to people considering what to do with their pensions—a problem which every Conservative Member recognises—but it describes personal pensions as offering

"no real prospect of security".

That shows that the motion goes far beyond a discussion of procedures into the substance of personal pension provision.

I want to make clear the risks and benefits of personal pensions. Many people refer to the obvious risk in personal pensions: the performance of the capital asset that someone has acquired depends on the performances of the stock market and the gilts market. With such pensions, one takes a risk that depends on the future performance of the capital markets. No one can know what will happen to the stock market in the next 20 years. That is one of the problems with the speculative stories about how much personal pensions are worth.

Equally, there are gambles involved in a traditional occupational pension—a gamble on the person's career, on whether he will stay with one employer for 30 years or move around, on whether he will have a period of unemployment, and on whether he will be on peak earnings at the end of his career. When one changes from an occupational pension to a personal pension, one shifts from a pension that inevitably has an element of risk, because one does not know what one's future career will be, to a pension that has an element of risk because one does not know what will happen to the value of one's savings in the capital markets. Neither pension can guarantee total security and many people would rather take a gamble on the future performance of capital markets than on the future shape of their careers, because many more people now move around more in their jobs. That is why we can expect personal pensions to expand as the labour market changes. It is the Labour party's inability yet again to understand the big economic changes and big changes in the labour market which is the source of its continuing hostility to personal pensions.

We should recognise that there are two distinct problems: the problem confronting people who have opted out of SERPS into personal pensions; and that confronting people who have transferred from occupational pension schemes and have gone into personal pensions. I shall consider each problem in turn.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is not in his place. I find the Labour party's sudden concern about the pension entitlements of people who have left SERPS rather bizarre given what it has been saying over the past two years. Many of us in the Chamber will recall previous speeches by Labour Front-Bench spokesmen in which they denounced the incentives given to people leaving SERPS. We were told that those incentives were too generous, and in particular that the total value of the Exchequer's liabilities that were being saved as a result of people leaving SERPS was much smaller than the total value of the rebates being given to people who left SERPS. If that argument is correct—and we heard it persistently from the Labour Front-Bench team—it cannot also be the case that those people who have left SERPS to take out personal pensions are as severely disadvantaged as many members of the Labour party now claim. The figures do not add up.

Mr. Flynn: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that part of the mythology of the Conservative party involves its justification for reducing the value of SERPS—the demographic time bomb involving the number of elderly people? Does he agree with the statement

"we are not facing a crisis caused by the increasing number of elderly people"

at the end of a chapter in a book written by someone called David Willetts?

Mr. Willetts: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that plug for my pamphlet. I do not believe in a demographic time bomb. There are good arguments for leaving SERPS and encouraging personal pensions that do not depend on the demographic time bomb arguments. I believe in people registering claims on future resources for their retirement through private contracts and private

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savings. That is the Conservative approach to pension provision and that is the argument for personal pensions and against SERPS.

The figures that the Labour party has bandied around about the expensive rebates for people leaving SERPS are not consistent with the argument that we have heard today about the supposed problems of people who have left SERPS to take out personal pensions.

It is widely accepted that the financial benefits of leaving SERPS are particularly strong for younger people. We all acknowledge—it is a something that the Government are reviewing as they move towards age-related rebates—that younger people are most likely to benefit from leaving SERPS and taking out a personal pension. The figures prepared by bodies such as the Institute of Fiscal Studies and the Carnegie inquiry into the Third Age clearly show that the typical person leaving SERPS is someone at the beginning of his working career. A research paper for the Carnegie inquiry states that the take-up rate for personal pensions among men aged 22 to 26 who have left SERPS

"approaches 50 per cent. whilst for those aged 47-51 it is little over 10 per cent... high take-up rates among younger workers are not surprising if individuals engage in a rational economic calculus of future returns from various types of pension schemes."

By and large, those leaving SERPS have been younger workers who have probably taken a rational economic decision.

It has made sense for younger workers to leave SERPS and more than half of them have done so in order to take out personal pensions. They have many decades ahead of them during which their personal pensions can accumulate in the saving schemes that they have taken out, whereas under SERPS they had only 20 best years during which to accumulate an entitlement.

My final point about SERPS is that the Labour party's feeling for it is rather odd given that SERPS is essentially a negative means test. It is not a system that gives most to those with least; it is earnings related and gives most to people who earn most. One of the problems with SERPS is that people with low and intermittent earnings do not accumulate much of an entitlement. Admittedly, such people will accumulate modest entitlements to personal pensions, but they are not well served by SERPS either. Personal pension provision simply reflects the bias within SERPS—both are clearly earnings related.

Another problem that has caused much concern is people who had occupational pension entitlements. That is a much smaller group than the many millions who opted out of SERPS to take out a personal pension, and people's worries about it are much better founded. It seems odd for anyone whose employer was contributing to his or her pension scheme to opt instead for a personal pension with no employer's contribution. Many personal pension providers now accept that personal pensions taken out in those circumstances are unlikely to be as favourable as remaining with an occupational pension.

Another category is people who have already left an occupational pension scheme, perhaps because they are no longer in employment, or have changed employment. What were those early leavers to do with the lump sum remaining in their original occupational pension scheme? Those people are subject to scrutiny in the notorious KPMG document circulated by the SIB, entitled "The KPMG Study on Pension Transfers". Some of the Labour party's interpretations of the document are simply not consistent with a clear and close reading of the text. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) pointed out, the study is essentially concerned with evidence on whether clerical procedures have been followed. Although there may be a problem, we cannot be sure of its size simply on the basis of that study. It is concerned with evidence about record keeping, but that is not the same as saying that there is evidence that bad decisions were taken.

Opposition Members have no evidence that I am wearing shoes, but that does not mean that they have evidence that I am not wearing shoes. If, after much careful scrutiny, an extremely pedantic accountant comes up with a report saying that they have no evidence that I am wearing shoes, it would be no basis for their announcing that the Conservative Benches are full of people who, sadly, do not possess footwear. That is one of the ambiguities that Opposition Members have been shamelessly exploiting in the past few hours.

We must also recognise the crucial point made at the beginning of the report:

"There is no automatic connection between a client's file not evidencing compliance and the client suffering financial disadvantage. But non compliance will, in some circumstances, result in financial disadvantage."

Of course it will in some circumstances. The crucial question is how many people are in those circumstances. This much-touted report simply fails to deal with that.

May I consider some of the policy issues that arise from this debate? A parallel can be drawn between the story of personal pensions and the story of personal share ownership. One of the Government's successes in personal share ownership was spreading it widely. The focus was then on ensuring that share ownership was also deeper, which was the origin of marvellous initiatives such as personal equity plans.

The same story applies to personal pensions. The initial success was spreading personal pensions much more widely. The objective must now be to make people's personal pensions deeper—worth more. That means that, alongside taking the rebates that were available from the national insurance fund, we must also ensure that many more people contribute from their own savings and that employers contribute. Instead of always looking at the bad news, we should welcome the fact that a third of people with personal pensions already contribute directly from their own savings. I hope that a consequence of this debate and the debates that have gone on for the past few months is that, in future, more people will recognise that if they want a substantial pension when they retire, they must be prepared to save up for it now.

I also hope that employers will contribute to personal pensions. Looking ahead, there seems to be a sensible compromise between a pure, stand-alone personal pension and traditional occupational pensions which do not take account of changes in the labour market. That sensible compromise is a group personal pension in which an employer identifies a personal pension provider and contributes a top-up for those who take out a personal pension with that provider. Such schemes have lower administrative costs than when individuals take out their own free-standing personal pensions. At the same time,

they have the crucial advantage of personal pensions, in that every individual accumulates his or her carefully defined pot of money.

The Department of Social Security's research reveals clear evidence that many employers have been worried about advising on pension matters and encouraging group personal pensions because they were afraid of breaching the terms of the Financial Services Act 1986. Many of the Opposition's criticisms of that Act are misconceived. The problem is not simply that some financial advisers have not followed its terms, but that it created a monopoly by saying that only certain categories of people could give financial advice, excluding others who may in the past have been happy to do so. Employers felt that, unless they were prepared to go through the cumbersome procedure of registering under the Financial Services Act, they could tell their employees nothing about pension provision.

The speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the beginning of this debate made it clear that employers can give advice to their employees. If employers feel able to give that advice, and if they work with their employees in developing group personal pension schemes, personal pensions will not just be widely taken up in future, but will also deepen. Thus we shall fulfil the Conservative vision of people accumulating their own pot of savings, through their efforts and assisted by their employers, to ensure that they have a high standard of living in their retirement.

7.49 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): The financial services industry is a large industry. It employs about 2.5 million people and is a crucial part of our economy; some 18 per cent. of our GDP may well be linked to the financial services industry. Most of those who work in it are decent, honest and truthful in their personal lives. That has to be said at the start of a speech which will contain a number of criticisms.

There are problems in that industry that require regulation. Although we must be careful that over-regulation does not damage competitiveness or risk-taking, we have to ensure that there is sufficient regulation to protect the consumer. We are debating whether self-regulation is really adequate.

The Treasury Select Committee, of which I am a member, is currently examining that issue. Clearly, it does not seem to have been adequate until now, because we have had a series of scandals and we have had to reorganise the SROs, FIMBRA and LAUTRO. From July, some areas under their control will be passed to the Personal Investment Authority. The PIA will also have a greater independent element.

I was struck by the comments of a number of those who gave evidence to the Select Committee, who saw self-regulation as an important concept whereby the industry would begin to run itself. They were quite critical of the position we are approaching, in which the PIA has a large independent element. That means that we are moving away from self-regulation towards more independent regulation.

Some parts of the industry take the view that if we are to move away in that sense from self-regulation, we might as well have single-tier statutory regulation. The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that the move to statutory regulation from self-regulation may not be such a big step in practice, because the elements of each system may contain parts of both. Indeed, a statutory system may well have practitioners closely involved in the way in which it is run.

The man from the Pru, Mr. Mike Newmarch, when he gave evidence to the Select Committee, took the view that we should have a single-tier statutory system which would be a much more accountable and effective form of regulation. Indeed, the Pru announced today that it would prefer to be directly regulated by the SIB. That is all part of the industry's ability to shop around for the regulation that it wants. In a sense, I disagree with that element of the current SRO system, but the Pru is trying to make the point that a single tier of statutory regulation through the SIB or a similar organisation might be the best route.

There is a strong case for change and for a move towards a system of regulation that can inspire greater public confidence. The key issue is confidence. The current scandals will become more serious. The home loans scandal and the pension transfer scandal will find their way on to the front pages and undermine public confidence in that important part of our economy. It is not necessary just for the consumer and for the industry; it is necessary for our economy and our country to have confidence in the financial services industry. That confidence does not exist at the moment.

The Countrywide Independent Advisers told the Select Committee that the public feels little better provided for than it did before the Financial Services Act and, as we have already heard, the Consumers Association regards the present regulatory system as unacceptable and not providing a basis for any confidence.

The pension scandal should not be underestimated. It threatens not just to expose incompetence and bad advice from some salesmen; it will also further undermine the whole financial services industry. When the SIB says that 500,000 workers might need to be compensated, when there is talk of £2 million to £3 million—and when the Association of British Insurers is suggesting that it could be £300 million—in compensation, there is a significant crisis of confidence in the financial services industry. That crisis must be addressed by the Government.

If that amount of compensation or anything like it has to be paid, someone will be paying for it. The people who will be paying for it are those who pay premiums into the various parts of the financial services industry. It will hit the consumer. That is the nature of the problem.

There is more than the problem of individual salesmen being incompetent or dishonest. Some of the media have suggested that that is the central issue, but there is also institutionalised incompetence and dishonesty within some companies that have had respectable reputations to date. As we are now beginning to understand, they have institutionalised both incompetence and dishonesty within their procedures by employing barely trained salesmen for short periods on commission only.

The Norwich Union has now suspended its work force, having admitted the inadequacy of its training after the SIB drew attention to the problem. We should not be to quick to criticise the Norwich, because it took action. If we are too critical and if there is too much publicity, other companies may well be deterred from taking that necessary action.

Evidence to the Treasury Select Committee—I have not had the opportunity independently to evaluate it, so I am just reporting it—was that companies such as Abbey Life

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have sent salesmen off to work after half a day's training with a copy of the "Yellow Pages". Allied Dunbar employs most of its sales work force on a commission-only basis. General Portfolio has indulged in pyramid selling.

Not all companies have done that. Others, such as Clerical and Medical, are moving towards a salaried sales force. It seems to be working for them. All that shows the degree to which we should be concerned about the standards of many, until now, respectable companies within the financial services industry.

A local concern has already been mentioned. Some 67,000 miners and 27,000 teachers have transferred their pensions from occupational schemes into other schemes where they may well be much worse off as a result. Three pits my constituency have closed, and Daw Mill, the only remaining one, has lost half its work force. As soon as the redundancies were announced, the salesmen were trying to encourage the miners to transfer out of their pension schemes and to invest their redundancy payments in particular ways.

Many people lost because those who were advising them were not competent to do so. They were called independent financial advisers, and in some cases they were not independent enough—and certainly they were not good enough to give advice. Today, the chairman of FIMBRA told the Select Committee that he saw the biggest issue facing the financial services industry as incompetence, as did the chief executive of the PIA when she gave evidence to the Select Committee.

Turning to the PIA, after hearing from both the chairman and the chief executive of the PIA, I am not convinced that they would restore confidence. Mr. Joe Palmer, the chairman of the PIA, was formerly associated with Legal and General, which has recently been fined because of the lack of proper regulation of its work force. To put in charge of an organisation that is seeking to restore confidence in the financial services sector a person with such a record does not inspire confidence in me, and I suspect that it will not inspire confidence in the public. Also, Miss Colette Bowe is associated in the public mind with the Westland scandal.

It does not reflect upon the honesty, integrity or ability of either of those individuals. Although it may be understandable to have one person who has been associated in the public mind with a scandal being placed in charge of a regulatory organisation which is trying to restore confidence, to have in charge of such an organisation two people associated in the public mind with scandals is not the right approach.

I hope that I have made it clear that what I have said does not reflect on either the competence or the integrity of those people, as individuals; it reflects more on the perception that the public may well have of an organisation that—if it is to continue—desperately needs public confidence. I suggest that, if those two people remain in place, it will not have that confidence.

Mr. Heald: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to attack Miss Colette Bowe—who was a civil servant at the time of the Westland incident—in quite a personal way, when she has no opportunity to defend herself, and, I believe, was not in any way criticised for her personal conduct at that time?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): That is not a point of order for the Chair. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) may well have wanted to intervene on what the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) was saying, but it was in order.

Mr. O'Brien: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I clarify what I said? The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) made a valid point, and I did not raise the issue without giving it some consideration, but I am rather worried about the position in which the PIA has put itself.

When I heard that those two people would give evidence to the Treasury Select Committee about the PIA, I at first hoped that we could have some confidence in that institution. Having heard the evidence and examined the issue in more detail, however, I do not think that such confidence can exist.

Let me repeat that I do not wish to impugn the backgrounds or integrity of individuals; I am saying that our objective should be not only to establish institutions which—along with those in charge of them—are competent, but to ensure that they are associated in the public mind with images that lead to confidence and faith in those in charge.

I am not making a personal attack. I am saying that, as spokesmen and spokeswomen for the public, we have a duty to ensure that we place people who will secure public confidence in the institutions that we are discussing.

I am also concerned about admission procedures relating to the PIA. I shall not go into the matter in detail: suffice it to say that about 6,000 firms are involved, and some 100,000 salesmen; the PIA has a staff of 350. Many of those 350 people are not involved in direct regulatory work. The size of the problem with which the PIA is required to deal is not reflected in the resources available to it.

Whoever leads the institution, I have grave doubts about whether, in its present form, it can make the necessary series of visits to all companies; moreover, it may not be able to examine what Miss Bowe, in evidence to the Select Committee, called "sick companies" in the detail required to establish whether disciplinary procedures should result from the question marks hanging over them.

The case can be argued for two tiers of regulation. There should, perhaps, be a less stiff constant regulatory system for big companies that achieve adequate standards and meet inspection limits; firm regulation is needed for smaller companies, however. Such companies often work quite close to the margins, and we must ensure that they are properly regulated.

The commissions issue has already been mentioned. Some advocate a move to advice for which fees are paid. That is clearly a better arrangement, but I am not convinced of its practicality. The public seem to accept that they must pay for legal and accountancy advice, but they do not expect to pay for advice on pensions, mortgages or insurance. Before we can enforce changes in commission procedures—we may be able to tighten them up, but not abolish commission altogether—we shall need a cultural change in people's attitude to financial institutions.

Disclosure of commissions is important, however. I welcome the rules that the SIB now seeks to implement —not only those relating to disclosure of commissions, but all the other disclosure rules. Mike Newmarch—the man from the Pru—suggested to the Select Committee that the

public would not understand most of the disclosure regulations. I think that he meant that genuinely: many financial products are very complex, and people would need some understanding of them to appreciate their terms fully. Nevertheless, I think that the fact of disclosure, of itself, gives people an opportunity to understand much better what they are purchasing. If we are to retain the present system—the Government have given no indication of a move to a different one—the SIB must do more to ensure and enforce full disclosure.

As I suggested today to representatives of FIMBRA —who agreed—there should be a system enabling me, when approached by someone trying to sell me a financial product such as a pension, to telephone a regulatory organisation and find out whether, at any stage, that person has been barred from practising as a financial adviser. I should be able to do that easily and immediately, just as my clients can telephone the Law Society and find out whether I, as a solicitor, am on the roll.

Not only should people be able to find out whether a financial adviser is currently on the roll, or has been removed from it; they should be able to discover whether question marks have been placed over that adviser's behaviour in the past. FIMBRA currently feels that it ought not to provide such information, although it will reveal whether someone has been removed from its register. The PIA does not seem to be clear about whether it is moving in that direction; I hope that, if it continues to exist, the public will have easy access to such a register.

A number of other issues are relevant to the debate, although we have probably discussed them before. Let me mention a local issue. My constituents are concerned about employers' ability to skim off the so-called surpluses from pensions, and about circumstances that can arise when employers sit on the boards of pension funds.

Atherstone Components, in my constituency, was in trouble, and persuaded the pension fund to buy all the plant and machinery in the factory. The company then went bust, the plant and machinery was worth nothing and the pension fund was massively depleted. As a result, the pensioners may not receive all the money that is due to them.

We also need to ensure that only those who are genuine independent financial advisers can call themselves that. People should not be able to use that general phrase when they are working on commission—unless it is fully declared—or working for only one company.

The fundamental issue is the conflict of interest between advisers and their clients in a deregulated market. Banks, building societies, insurance companies and pension companies all seek to make money out of their clients by providing services. The Government have tried to solve the problem by introducing self-regulation; instead, they have created a rather ramshackle and complex structure of overlapping self-regulatory authorities, which have presided over a series of growing scandals—the Lloyd's insurance market, Guinness, Levitt and, perhaps biggest of all, the pensions scandal.

If the Government are not going to move to statutory regulation, they should take seriously the difficulties that many in the industry see arising at the PIA. There is no public confidence in it. There is a desperate need to ensure that there is public confidence. The industry must succeed for the sake of the British economy. It is an industry that consumers need and in which most of the public are increasingly beginning to lack confidence.

8.9 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I welcome the debate. It is a timely opportunity for the House to discuss and consider some important matters. I disagree with most of the Opposition motion.

I remind the House of my interest. I have worked in the insurance and pensions industry for over 20 years as an insurance broker. I am an adviser to the Institute of Insurance Brokers. Perhaps most important in terms of this debate, I am an elected member of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council which regulates some, although not all, insurance broking firms under the Financial Services Act 1986.

It may interest the House to know that the IBRC is a statutory regulator, answerable to the House through the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, operating under the provisions of the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act 1977 and subsequent amendments. It has a majority of practitioner members, all of whom are elected, which in my experience greatly assists its effectiveness. The registration council was set up to regulate the profession of insurance broking, and I should like to pay tribute to its founder, Mr. Francis Perkins, who sadly died recently, and for whom a memorial service was held in the City of London today.

The IBRC is authorised by the Securities and Investments Board as a recognised professional body. That provides authorisation only for those insurance brokers whose business profile is not wholly or mainly the giving of investment advice. The registration council currently authorises some 1,460 insurance broking firms under the Financial Services Act, out of a total of about 3,850.

The chairman of the council, Mr. Ian Ritchie, wrote recently to all the authorised firms requesting details of any pension transfer business that they had undertaken. No less than 99 per cent. of authorised firms have responded to the survey, and the council's provisional assessment of the responses is that there has been a small number of pension transfer cases transacted by firms authorised by the council. I should make it clear that that relates to people transferring out of occupational schemes into personal pensions.

Seven cases have been identified. It does not yet relate to any who have opted out of SERPS into personal pensions, although my impression is that the number will not be as great as in other sections of the market.

I cannot give the House any idea about the position on pension transfers with those insurance broking firms that are regulated under the Financial Services Act—not by the council but by FIMBRA. There are about 735 such firms. It may surprise some hon. Members to learn that there is a division of regulation under the Financial Services Act of members of the insurance broking profession. It arises entirely because of the drafting of the Financial Services Act and the "wholly or mainly" provision. The registration council has consistently argued that that anomaly should be removed, but that is an issue for another day.

The IBRC scope rule permits firms authorised by the council to transact only life assurance and pensions business, not give other investment advice. It is a narrow scope rule. It is important to remember that the registration council provided perfectly adequate regulation of insurance broking firms for that class of business long before the Financial Services Act came into being.

[Mr. John Greenway]

Under the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act, the council continues to have a statutory duty, answerable to the House, to oversee all the work of all insurance broking firms for all their business, even that part of the business, such as pension schemes, for which they may be authorised under the Financial Services Act by FIMBRA.

I am sure that the House will see that that leads to considerable difficulty, of which the House should be aware. Intermediaries—insurance brokers—are sometimes struck off the council's register as a result of disciplinary action, often for failing to provide the required evidence of continuing solvency. Yet their authorisation with FIMBRA continues. They drop the term "insurance broker" from their letterhead and continue to give advice about general insurance, subscribing to the Association of British Insurers' code of practice.

The insurance ombudsman, Sir Julian Farrand, in his latest report criticised strongly the ABI code of practice as inadequate. He has constantly called for all insurance intermediaries to be supervised by the registration council, but that idea has not found favour with the ABI or the Department of Trade and Industry, which appears to take the view that statutory regulation of intermediaries can create a barrier to entry to the profession or business, and that it would be anti-competitive.

In essence, if an intermediary is to give advice about life assurance and pensions contracts, he must be authorised by a recognised body under the Financial Services Act; otherwise, it is a crime to give advice. However, he does not have the same statutory obligation to be authorised by anybody to give general insurance advice. General insurance is not the subject of this debate, but it is important for the House to understand that that is what is adding to the confusion in the marketplace about the status of various independent intermediaries. The House needs to grasp this issue firmly.

Too much confusion of the differing objectives of regulation and competition policy lies at the heart of many of the problems that we now see in the Financial Services Act regime. It certainly undermines its effectiveness. That is nowhere better illustrated than in commission payments.

There is justified concern that if one company pays a higher level of commission than another, it can influence or be an inducement to the advice of an adviser and the choice or recommendation of the company. That problem dogged the life assurance and pensions industry for years. When the Financial Services Act was introduced, life offices agreed a maximum commission scale, which most people in the industry believed was in the interests of the consumer.

What happened? The Office of Fair Trading advised that the maximum commission agreement was anti-competitive, and it was scrapped. The result was a bidding up of commissions, with life offices doing deals with high street banks and building societies through tied agency agreements, under which over-the-odds commission has been paid for new business in personal pensions and in endowment policies linked to mortgages. The commission scramble coincided with the changes in pensions legislation which allowed pension transfers and allowed individuals to opt out of either occupational schemes or SERPS into a personal pension plan.

Some six years later, what do we find? The problem of commission and disclosure of status remains unresolved, because of the continuing confusion between the need for strong regulation in the consumers' interest and the anti-competitive argument from the Office of Fair Trading. We still await the outcome of the SIB consultation on the new commission disclosure regime upon which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor insisted.

I would not argue that all independent intermediaries and insurance brokers are whiter than white—some are not—but independent intermediaries have undoubtedly been disadvantaged by the current regime, while so-called tied agents, or appointed representatives, who currently outnumber them by about 10 to one, have gained considerable business volumes, often at the expense of the quality of advice to the consumer. It is my deep suspicion that, when the inquiries into pension transfers are fully unscrambled and resolved, we shall find that the problem was mostly in the tied sector, where people were not properly trained to give advice.

It is therefore crucial that, in any new disclosure regime to be approved by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Director General of Fair Trading, in which I am absolutely sure that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will have a considerable involvement, independent intermediaries and tied agents are put on an equal footing.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that part of the confusion has been the concentration in many debates on the divide between the independent and tied sectors? The consumer requires good advice, and there is a suggestion that somehow "independent" advice does or does not mean good advice, and that "tied" advice does or does not mean good advice. We need good advice, whether it is independent or tied, and we need the same standard for both.

Mr. Greenway: That is true, but the situation is even worse. General intermediaries—household names such as AA Insurance Services and Swinton Insurance—are tied in respect of life assurance. How can they possibly say that they are giving independent advice across the board when, on the general insurance side, they are giving advice from a range of companies while under the Financial Services Act they are tied?

That is why some firms are no longer regulated by the Insurance Brokers Registration Council. It highlights the extent of the confusion in the minds of the public. I was going to deal with the PIA, but my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) reminded me of another important point, for which I am grateful.

It has been said time and again that the public will have greater transparency about where the problems lie in respect of the PIA and who regulates or authorises whom. The trouble is that, unless we square the circle across the insurance industry in terms of intermediary advice, there will continue to be the confusion highlighted by the Consumers Association in its evidence to the Treasury Select Committee the other day. It said that visiting an insurance broker was like going to the worst kind of disreputable second-hand car salesman. I look forward to seeing the Committee's minutes of evidence to clarify that quotation, which has been reported heavily in the financial press. The trouble is that that notion is not true.

The problem is that people do not know the difference between intermediaries who give the best advice and

volunteer for effective regulation as all insurance brokers do—as I have already said, there is no statutory requirement to be registered, and one needs to be registered only if one uses the words "broker"—and the typical Arthur Daley outfit which should be drummed out of business. It is a tragedy that that still remains the case.

There are encouraging signs that the commission explosion to which I and other hon. Members have referred is at an end, and that we may yet see a return to the more sensible arrangements of some years ago, when commission had to be earned over a longer period, thus creating a much better link between the quality of advice and the commission received—if a policy lapsed immediately, one received almost no money. That is not what happens at the moment.

It is often suggested that some policyholders do not understand the long-term nature of the policy they are buying. On the face of it, that cannot be said of pension policies—one cannot possibly expect to benefit from a pension policy until one reaches retirement age. What has confused the issue, and what lies behind much of the criticism that we have heard today, especially from the Opposition—to the effect that people received bad advice about, for example, opting out of SERPS into a personal pension—is the ability to opt in and out.

People were sold long-term contracts for perhaps 25 or 30 years, whereas their personal circumstances were such that, after two or three years of premium payments, large chunks of which were swallowed up in commission and charges, they had to opt back into SERPS, if they were given the right advice. That is one of the issues that the Government must sort out in their review of the incentives for people to opt out of SERPS.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) made a brilliant speech, in which he made it absolutely clear that, although it has to be conceded that there has been bad advice on pension transfers, the scale of the problem may be rather smaller than has been suggested. Although there will be different views about the extent of the problem, it is clear that the industry itself is making excellent progress in putting matters right.

The problems of pension transfer cases are not, as the Opposition would have us believe, evidence that self-regulation does not work—quite the opposite. It is only because regulators, under the supervision of the SIB, have acted as they have that the issue has come so forcibly into the public domain. That is not to say that FSA regulation was perfect when some of the pension transfers about which we are concerned took place.

I have already outlined the problems caused by the commission structure. A matter of even greater concern was the inadequate supervision of life offices by LAUTRO, which meant that far too many representatives were giving advice without proper qualifications or training. More than three years ago, LAUTRO told the all-party insurance and financial services group, of which I am the chairman, that it was tackling the problem head on. We now need to examine the results of its activity.

At that time, more than 200,000 individuals were authorised as appointed representatives or tied agents by LAUTRO for its member firms. We are now down to fewer than 90,000. Why has the number dropped so remarkably? It is because LAUTRO, like FIMBRA and the Insurance Brokers Registration Council, has introduced a regime whereby one will not be authorised without having passed the exams for the professional qualification, with either the Chartered Insurance Institute or the Society of Financial Advisers which is being set up. The industry is now moving towards a situation in which everyone who gives advice will have to have a proper professional qualification before doing so.

LAUTRO realised that Norwich Union had not come up to scratch or met the required professional standard. I dare say that other life assurance companies will receive similar treatment. We should applaud what has happened, and the fact that standards will improve, because that must be in the interests of consumers.

I fail to see how a statutory regulatory regime would have made a scrap of difference to the regulatory improvements that we are now beginning to see. If there is any sadness in this, it is that Norwich Union thinks that it should have an 800-strong direct sales force strong to sell life assurance and pensions contracts. When I was involved with the day-to-day running of my firm, life offices such as Norwich Union used to offer their policies only through insurance brokers and other genuine independent intermediaries, including the banks and building societies in the high street. Of course, that was before the FSA.

With the notable exception of the Bradford and Bingley building society, high street banks and building societies no longer offer independent advice—only tied advice. That is one of the problems that the FSA has created of which we should not be proud, but we can be proud that the industry is at least putting right the quality of advice. Self-regulation is now beginning to deliver a significant improvement in the regulation of investment advice for the benefit of consumers.

In the context of pensions transfers, the current regulatory regime has taken the appropriate action. If the FSA had introduced a statutory regulatory regime, as some suggest is now appropriate, it would not have brought the benefits that some people believe it would, because the same officials at the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury and the Securities and Investments Board, or its equivalent, would have drawn up and implemented the various rule books.

It is not meant as any personal criticism of any Minister past or present, but I also strongly suspect that if Ministers had been more directly answerable to the House for regulatory failures, they would have been more, rather than less, defensive in answering questions. We must not forget the lesson of the Barlow Clowes affair. In that case, the ombudsman report said that the officials in the DTI were not sufficiently streetwise to see what was going on in the industry. That is why we must maintain a strong practitioner involvement in all the regulatory regimes.

A number of hon. Members have mentioned the Personal Investment Authority. I simply want to say that the costs of regulation envisaged are far too high, and I fail to see how a 40 per cent. increase in costs for FIMBRA members next year could possibly be said to achieve the Personal Investment Authority's objective of more efficient and cost-effective regulation.

The PIA has not done its homework soon enough and adequately enough on professional indemnity insurance, and it now recognises that. While there has been a lot of consultation already in the formation period for the authority, it would have been better if the prospectus recently published had been more of a consultation document rather than a "take it or leave it" proposition, which has so angered and outraged people in the independent intermediary sector.

[Mr. Greenway]

Nevertheless, I believe that, on balance, the PIA represents the best alternative available for resolving the current difficulties of the financial services industry, especially those relating to compensation and consumer complaints. Opposition Members should at least welcome the fact, as I do, that my noble Friend Baroness Turner of Camden, who used to sit on the IBRC, will be the ombudsman for the PIA.

There may need to be some further legislative change to help the PIA on its way. Perhaps the best thing that could happen in the next two or three weeks is for the PIA to recognise that a start date of 1 July is probably too ambitious, and to consider a three-month delay so that we can resolve some of the problems.

Mr. Hawkins *rose—*

Mr. Greenway: I will not give way, because I want to draw my remarks to a conclusion.

It is undoubtedly a matter of great concern if individuals have been given wrong advice about their pensions. The financial services industry recognises that fact, and is keen to put matters right. Nevertheless, we should ask ourselves what happens when people make bad choices in other facets of their lives, such as buying the wrong house or the wrong car or the wrong shares, or putting their money in the wrong building society. Do we have, or do we expect to have, a regulatory regime to deal with every silly mistake that consumers make? I believe that we should not expect that.

The last thing I would urge of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary not to overlook, because it was never answered in the retail regulatory review that the SIB set up on the instructions of the Chancellor 18 months ago, is that we still must work out where the balance should be struck between caveat emptor—let the buyer beware—and a proper regulatory regime for the benefit of consumers.

8.33 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Over and over again, we have to listen to Conservative Members get up and make self-serving speeches in defence of the financial services industry. I should like to say a few words on behalf of the consumer. The essential point about the pension transfer scandal is that it goes to the heart of what is wrong with our financial services industry and the regulatory regime with which we have been saddled after 14 years of Tory Government. The Consumers Association described the financial services industry as one which is

"characterised by a level of incompetence, greed, arrogance and fraud".

That just about sums it up. The problem that we face in 1994 is that, as a result of financial deregulation and the policies of the Government, more and more people are being exposed to the workings of the financial services industry, and the regulatory system is failing them. As more and more ordinary consumers whose mothers and fathers would have never had any dealings with insurance agents or stock brokers or the financial services industry have become engaged with them, it becomes clearer that the regulatory system has failed.

Where did the pensions transfer scandal start? I believe that it started, as did so many of the ills that currently beset us, in the triumphalist atmosphere after the 1983 election. After that election, a group of Thatcherites based at the Centre for Policy Studies began their so-called campaign to free the pensions industry. It was not about freeing the pensions industry, but about freeing the City to make vast profits out of hapless consumers by selling them insurance and other products. Norman Fowler, the then Secretary of State responsible, set up a retirement study group which involved a number of people including Mark Weinberg, the then chair of Allied Dunbar Assurance plc. At the time when the Government were involved in that project, Derek Bandey of the National Association of Pension Funds Ltd. said:

"I kept warning the Government that there is more freedom, and more security in a fund managed by elected trustees than in private pensions managed by a bank or an insurance company."

The association also said:

"It would be obdurate and shortsighted of the Government to disregard the strength of feeling about the very real disruption that must follow if the proposals are implemented . . . We regret that the stability necessary to provide for the long-term retirement needs of the working population is now to be destroyed",

and destroyed it was.

The Social Security Bill 1986 contained incentives for people to go into their private pension—a 2 per cent. rebate on national insurance contributions—and it was described at the time as a cowboys' charter. Some Conservative Members have talked about the benefit of hindsight, but, at that time, people tried to put to the Government the dangers that would follow from deregulation and opening up ordinary people to the attentions of the cowboys in the financial services market.

As it happens, at the Department of Social Security in those days, there was a Parliamentary Under-Secretary called John Major. When he was asked about the possibility that many people might lose under the new regime that he was bringing in and what he would do to stop people losing out badly, he did not quite say that it was nothing to do with him, but he said:

"The concept of turning this into a one-way risk-free option is entirely alien."

In other words, people were going to lose and he had no plans to do anything about it. In that Bill, John Major turned down statutory limits on commission charges which would have been the answer to many of the problems that we face today. He turned down statutory limits on administrative charges which would have also spared many people the financial misery that they face today.

With the Social Security Bill 1986 and with the green light being given to the private pension industry cowboys, the cowboys went to work and we now see the results. The KPMG survey, to which hon. Members have referred many times—I shall not repeat what has been said—was a careful analysis of 735 client files which found that 91 per cent. did not comply with regulations and that 37 per cent. were suspect.

Conservative Member after Conservative Member has bobbed up to say that the press and Labour Members were making too much of the report, that the report was concerned only with technicalities and that there was not much to worry about. For Conservative Members to say that the KPMG report is simply a matter of technicalities is like Al Capone saying that he was done for his tax problems. The KPMG report revealed, and the further inquiries that the SIB is conducting will reveal, that tens or hundreds of thousands of people will have lost out because of the activities of pensions salesmen. They were not pensions salesmen who did not know, or who had not read

the right forms, or who had not been trained, but pensions salesmen who were driven by a commission-led system so that they did not care about the outcome as long as they could bank their commission. Some Labour Members will be able to speak from personal experience about the damage that those pensions salesmen have wrought in their communities.

Let us hear less from Tory Members about the problems being mere technicalities. The problems are structural and relate to the workings of an under-regulated sector and commission-led salesmen. One of the characteristics of the debate on the pension trusts debacle has been a high degree of complacency from both the industry and Conservative politicians. Tory Members said that the pension transfer scandal shows that self-regulation works and we should look at how the industry has moved to deal with the matter. The fact is that it has taken from 1988 until 1993 for the regulatory authorities to do anything about a problem that was foreseen when the legislation was introduced.

A series of representatives of the industry have appeared before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and breathed complacency and smugness. Colette Bowe, the executive-to-be of the Personal Investment Authority, said that the problem with pension transfers was largely an issue of competence. We had Mr. Newmarch from Prudential, which was heavily involved in selling pensions to mineworkers to their financial detriment. Mike Newmarch said that Prudential had examined its affairs carefully and found little evidence to support any need for concern among the pension transfers that it had arranged. Up and down the country, people who bought private pensions from Prudential say differently. Mr. Newmarch talked about the possibility of poor selling on the margin.

Worst of all perhaps, Godfrey Jillings, the chief executive of FIMBRA, said that the SIB, in pursuing its investigations into pension transfers, made a mountain out of a molehill. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, showed more complacency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Lady knows that if she is referring to current Members, she must give the constituency—in other words, Rushcliffe, Huntingdon or Sutton Coldfield. Perhaps next time we can have the constituency.

Ms Abbott: The right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke)—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: You should know.

Ms Abbott: He is no colleague of mine. He came before the Select Committee reeking of complacency and said that the SIB appears to be dealing with the matter; it seems to be on top of the problem. He should tell that to the thousands of pensioners who now have a shadow of fear over their old age because they believe that, as a result of the activities of private pension salesmen, they will be worse off than if they had stayed with their occupational pensions.

Why are the issues important? They are important not only because the industry is anxious to have its interests catered for. They are important, first, because of the personal plight of the ordinary people who have incurred serious financial losses and who are living in a shadow of fear; and, secondly, because we have a Government who are committed to moving key elements of the welfare state into the private insurance sector.

We have heard the discussions and we have read the papers about the possibility of not only expanding the private pension sector but moving sickness and unemployment insurance into the private insurance sector. If the Government tell ordinary people that the things that they took for granted in the past—security in sickness, security in old age and security in unemployment—will be moved into the private pensions sector, the Government must give them an assurance that the financial services sector is properly regulated. However, that assurance cannot be given at present.

The issues are also important because in the 1990s patterns of unemployment are changing out of all recognition. When I left school in the 1970s, people left school and sought a profession, be it hairdressing, advertising or banking; we were looking for a job for life. However, young people leaving school now are looking at careers where they will move through a whole series of employers. Perhaps they will work much more on a freelance basis than we or our parents envisaged.

When we talk about a working environment in the year 2000 and beyond, people will not be looking at a single employer for life. They will be looking at a series of employers, a higher level of self-employment than we have seen and a higher level of freelance work than we have seen. That makes it important for the financial services industry, as it relates to personal portable pensions, to be beyond reproach and properly regulated.

The issues are also important because they shed light on the problems that are built into the financial services industry, to which I referred earlier, and the predatory nature of the industry. That predatory attitude is leaking into the activities of banks and building societies. We all find in our postbags complaints from people about the changed attitude in the high street banks and building societies.

The question that the House must address is what should happen now. One thing that should happen is that we should hear fewer complacent and self-serving speeches from Tory politicians and paid representatives of the industry. First, the financial services industry needs to be called to account for the pension transfer scandal. If necessary, people must be prosecuted for mis-selling. With all the soft soap and the talk about the matter being one of technicalities, there is a danger that the guilty people—the managers of organisations who deliberately drove their salesmen to meet targets, regardless of the benefits of the product that they were selling—will go untouched. First and foremost, the people who bought the pensions and incurred a loss want to see the industry called to account; it must not be allowed to get off scot free.

Secondly, it is important that any investigations into what happened should be made in the open. Last but not least, all the consumers who have lost out should be fully compensated. It is important that Ministers realise that it should not be for the individuals who bought the private pensions to think that they might have been sold a dodgy or inadequate pension. The industry must identify those people and contact them all. Where there has been a loss as a result of mis-selling, the people must be compensated. That is what consumers want to know. It should not be up

[Ms Abbott]

to them to know that they have been sold a poor product. They must all be contacted, and they must all be compensated.

Another thing that should happen is that Ministers must look seriously at a system of commission-only financial advisers. I have no doubt that if we clear away the verbiage about training and competence, at the heart of the problems is a commission-only system which drives people to make sales, whether or not the product that they are selling is in the long-term good of the client.

We must also ensure that we have proper disclosure under whatever regulatory scheme eventually unfolds. I have lost count of the times that representatives of the industry have told the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that we cannot have disclosure because the consumer would not understand it and would not know what to do with the information. That attitude is patronising, arrogant, smug and self-serving. Of course, there must be elements of disclosure which even the simplest consumer like myself can understand. The industry must not be allowed to get away with saying that it will not disclose commission and relevant information because the poor consumer will not understand.

Above all, what should happen is that the Government, who are committed to a large and expanding financial services sector, and who some of us believe are committed to moving elements of the welfare state into the private insurance market, must look seriously at the financial services regime. If the current regime has failed, and if the PIA is dead on arrival—as some of us believe—the House must look sooner rather than later at a tough system of direct statutory regulation.

On the pension transfer issue, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe said that anyone who has been adversely affected can see their way to a remedy. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Thousands of people who may have been adversely affected do not know what the remedy is, and they want the Minister to shed some light on the issue tonight.

The Government seek to dismiss the idea that the question of legislation on financial services can be opened up once again. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has dismissed the notion of statutory regulation. He said to the Select Committee:

> "At the moment I have seen nothing which suggests to me that it calls for fresh statutory provision."

Far too many hon. Members who speak about the subject of financial services, far too many who serve on Committees and far too many people who advise the Government represent vested interests and, essentially, represent the industry. It is time the House listened to a balance of voices. If the intention is to open ordinary consumers up to the attention of the financial services industry, people deserve an industry that is cleaner, better regulated and more honest than the current one. The pensions transfer issue is a major scandal—a fact that all the speeches by paid advisers to the industry will not alter. The public are waiting to hear what Ministers plan to do, especially about the structural problems in financial services and about regulation of the industry.

8.50 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): This has been an extremely good debate which has demonstrated a great deal of expertise on the Government side of the House. No amount of jibing by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) will cover the lack of real knowledge of the issue that has been evident in some quarters of the Opposition. Lack of knowledge does not help the consumer.

I immediately declare my interests, which are recorded in the Register of Members' Interests. I advise the Commercial Union and Barclays de Zoete Wedd Investment Management. I happen not to advise them on insurance, as that is not my field of expertise, but on economic affairs. In any event, I am not speaking for either organisation this evening. Thus I have no embarrassment in declaring my interests. If some Opposition Members were capable of being retained by large companies the quality of debate on their side might be improved.

The difficulty that has been evidenced is that many Opposition Members are against long-term capital accumulation and are therefore hostile to the principle of private pensions. The problem is profound. It is not the main subject of this debate, but I draw attention to something that influences the way in which people think whenever these problems emerge. There is a problem in relation to transfers out of occupational pensions and SERPS into private pensions—that is what we are addressing today—but there is nothing inherently wrong with private provision. It is very important that that be recognised and underlined.

Another very important point is that, looking forward 20 years, it is almost impossible to conceive of any provision by the state out of current revenue—by which I mean a year's taxation—being sufficient in terms of pensions. In other words, we need means other than state provision to enable people to have a tolerable life after retirement. Those problems will not get any easier, partly because of the changing age profile, which I do not want to over-stress. The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) shakes his head. I hope that he will continue to shake his head after his retirement, when there will be a relatively much smaller working population.

Mr. Flynn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ian Taylor: I am conscious of the time, but I shall give way once to the hon. Gentleman as I have mentioned him.

Mr. Flynn: As I said, there is no demographic time-bomb to justify this. If it is not now possible to provide a decent pension out of public funds, why was it possible for the 30 years following 1945?

Mr. Taylor: The argument about a demographic time-bomb will continue for ever. The hon. Gentleman should consider whether state benefits alone have ever been sufficient. Many of us would like pensions to be much higher. The problem arises in relation to the taxability of the public. Bearing in mind the degree of people's readiness to bear taxation, we shall never achieve pensions sufficiency. My point is that the situation will get worse and that there will be more reliance on personal pensions.

Another reason for the need for personal pensions, which has been mentioned by one or two hon. Members, is the change of jobs during the expected working life of any

person. Indeed, in this respect the situation may become quite dramatic. The experts now say that a young person starting work can expect to change his job between 10 and 20 times during his working life. In those circumstances, an occupational scheme alone would not be sufficient. This is a real concern. People need to think very carefully about the sort of personal pension provision they make. Occupational pensions have drawbacks. I shall not go into those, as I intervened during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill).

There is no doubt that any personal pension scheme involves risk. Every scheme must carry that health warning. The public should understand both the benefits and the risks of personal pensions. There are benefits that derive from funding, but there are risks attached and some of the risks have been discussed during the debate.

In addition, considerable mistakes were made during the 1980s. Before becoming a Minister, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, who will reply to the debate, was a very outspoken but constructive critic of the whole process of the Financial Services Act. I pay tribute to the work that he did when that legislation was going through its Committee stage. There have been mistakes. Clearly there are difficulties in the whole question of transfer out of SERPS. This is too big a subject with which to deal in great detail, but I have to say that the savings will be much smaller than was anticipated. Here we have a matter to which the National Audit Office has drawn attention. There will also be continuing problems relating to people's ability, under the Social Security Act 1986, to opt back into SERPS. I fear that any savings that the Government hoped to make over a period will be reduced unless some of the incentives are age-related. Thus, the Government must think very carefully about the way in which they target further incentives to contract out.

The second area of mistakes relates to transfers out of occupational schemes, and the third concerns the inadequacy of explanations about maintaining adequate levels of contributions to pension schemes. It is one thing to start properly, but if contributions are allowed to decline, problems about the adequacy of the fund will clearly arise. Despite tax rebates of £6.9 billion between 1987 and 1992, there may not yet have been an adequate shift to long-term savings for people's retirement. Hon. Members have not focused on that additional worry today.

The size of the problem is in dispute. Part of the reason for this is that the figures are not fully available. The Association of British Insurers has estimated that more than 6 million personal pensions have been sold since July 1988—about one third of them through independent financial advisers and the rest through tied representatives. Transfers and opt-outs from occupational pension schemes account for nearly 10 per cent. of the total. That is a useful background, but it is difficult to know the extent to which bad advice has been given in any of the new schemes. FIMBRA issued a report dated January 1994 which records a high level of evidence on client files that there was inadequate documentation on whether the client was made

"fully aware of all relevant matters to enable him to make an informed decision when comparing the accrued rights in the occupational scheme with the likely benefits from the receiving plan."

That is not sufficient evidence that proper attention was not paid. It is very difficult to get an estimate from the negative to the positive—

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I should love to give way, but I am conscious that several other hon. Members wish to follow me. The hon. Gentleman must forgive me. I am not ducking out of it, but I am trying to be kind to those who wish to get in on the debate.

The Association of British Insurers has estimated that the final cost for insurance companies will be between £200 million and £300 million, rather than the figures of over £1 billion which have been widely touted. Final estimates must wait for the SIB guidelines which will be made in terms of being able to assess the problem. Market performance will of course have an influence on the final figures in any event.

On SERPS, the Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte report stated that it is

"unlikely that insurance companies will need to make provisions in their annual accounts for bad advice in respect of individuals who have contracted out."

In no way do I fall into the trap set by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington—that I am insensitive to the problem. It is agreed that there is a genuine problem. But there is no point in exaggerating the problem and causing concern to or scaring people who have taken out a private pension.

There is also a problem of regulation. Have we yet got it right? I do not believe that a statutory regulatory formula is a panacea. There are plenty of points of evidence that indicate that the Government are fallible in regulation. A professionally related procedure—what is known as self-regulation—within a statutory procedure seems to be the right way of going ahead.

However, as some of my colleagues with a greater knowledge of those matters have pointed out, a self-regulatory procedure has to be effectively run. In my mind, it has not yet been so. There are clear difficulties and many regulatory authorities had not got their act together by the time that there was a big push for personal pensions. Many of them did not seem to realise how much of the problem they should take into account. Many of them were swamped by the numbers and therefore were giving the problem inadequate attention.

The setting up of the Personal Investment Authority is welcome, but it has been clearly set back by internal difficulties. That is not a satisfactory arrangement and the public are right to be concerned. I look forward to the comments of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary on that. I am not advocating a move to a different system—just that the present system should be more efficient.

We must help those who are disadvantaged by mistakes that have been made. There needs to be some procedure that the public can use with confidence to enable them to assess whether they have a problem. In many cases, that is one of the biggest difficulties.

I have noticed in some newspapers that one or two independent bodies are, on a fee basis, prepared to assess people's personal pensions to see whether there is a difficulty. Arrangements should be made by the industry to ensure that every person who has made the transfer is visited by someone independent of the insurance company to give quick advice on whether there should be a case for compensation, to help complete forms stating the basis of the claim, to sort out documents, to advise on the

[Mr. Taylor]

appropriate claim and the level of compensation and to assist in dealing with the insurance company and pension trustees.

Those are basic things which otherwise may be rather too complicated for personal pension holders to take on. There will have to be some pressure through the industry to enable occupational schemes which people have opted out of to take people back, although there will be difficulties if the trustees find that they cannot take back people who have subsequently left a company. That area must be clarified, and I hope that it is given urgent attention by the industry.

For the future, it is clear—I echo some of the speeches made earlier—that employers must provide more advice to those in occupational schemes, and explain to them the full benefits that they are currently obtaining and which they could put at risk by transferring prematurely to a personal pension.

The issue of advisers working for commission only has already been dealt with exhaustively.

The suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) that employers should be in a better position to make contributions to personal schemes so that there is almost a joint venture is a good way forward.

Finally, training is absolutely essential. There should be training for the sales forces of insurance companies and it should be made sure that all salespeople can pass set examinations. The Prudential may be worried about transferring to the PIA because its sales force may not meet the examination requirements, but I think that the Prudential has a lot to answer for in its current activities. There should be more training and preparation for the trustees of pension schemes. I noticed with interest a proposal by Sir Martin Jacomb that the Securities and Investments Board should issue a code of conduct for trustees which would be enforced by the chancery courts. Those are positive ideas. The industry is looking at its problems. There is no doubt that the events of the past year have created a difficulty.

We should certainly ensure that people who transferred their pensions on sound advice are not encouraged to revisit that decision. Where people were given bad advice and, as the Association of British Insurers has said, have been materially disadvantaged as a result, the problem should be rectified. Everyone in the industry should co-operate in rectifying it so that dependence on personal pensions in the future is not undermined by a lack of confidence now.

9.4 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I found it strange earlier to hear a Conservative Member talk about risk and how people should be more capable of dealing with risk on a personal basis. When one thinks that we are faced by the party of the Lloyd's losers and a Government who, like some mad member of Gamblers Anonymous, threw money at the pound to the tune of £8 billion to try to keep it afloat, one doubts whether the Government could tell anyone about taking risk sensibly.

I wish mainly to speak to the part of the motion that states:

"That this House deplores the widespread abuse and unscrupulous techniques used to sell private pensions, which have prejudiced individual clients and induced them to leave occupational pension schemes and the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme".

In speaking tonight, I have to put on record my thanks to my hon. Friend Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham), who has assiduously raised this problem in the House in the past couple of months and with whom I have had a number of conversations. I wish to focus particularly on the problem of mis-selling because that is what this is about. That is what has been going on under the present regulations.

Under the rules laid down by the financial regulator, sales people have a duty to provide the best advice possible and to sell only suitable financial products. Under almost no circumstance can I imagine that the best advice would be to leave a final-salary occupational pension scheme with a current employer for a private pension. Yet 500,000 people are calculated to have done just that. Employers usually make additional contributions to an occupational scheme. Occupational schemes often provide additional benefits not available with a private pension. The pension received is guaranteed.

The transfer value—the sum of money that one can move—is often worth a lot less than the value of the contributions to the occupational pension fund. So why do transfers occur? What inducements were offered to encourage people to leave such schemes? We must come to the conclusion that, with the regulations in place at the moment, mis-selling took place. We must worry that without stringent Government regulation, mis-selling will continue to take place.

The case is not so clear when an individual transfers funds from an employer's scheme into a private pension after he has left the scheme. In a number of cases, it would still be advisable to stay in the occupational scheme and transfer to the new employer when employment is found, but many people left in that circumstance also.

We have also been told that a small group of people were affected. When one is talking about what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) described as often the single biggest financial transaction in people's lives, it should be deeply worrying that 500,000 people took that decision. It is not a small number. It is a large number. There are only 5 million people in personal pensions schemes, so 10 per cent. of them left a safe occupational pension scheme. Something was certainly going wrong.

Where the Opposition are locking horns with the Government is over the general background of the bribes given by the Government costing, we are told, £18 billion. I am used to that. I have just been debating, in the Committee considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, water and the water transfers. It cost the Government almost £12 million to transfer water from public into private hands. It seems that the Government are good at bribing people to take on their ideologies.

Then there is the problem of commission selling and particularly sole commission selling. Commission is the only source of income for the person who has been told in sparkling adverts, "Your life can be like this: £40,000 a year and more; a house in the country." They have to go out and keep meeting the targets of their company or the broker for whom they work or they will be out of a job. I believe that that is what drove people to mis-sell. Unless we regulate against that, we shall never stop it.

The Securities and Investments Board investigation has been referred to. On 8 December, the SIB announced that it was reviewing the position. The KPMG study came out on 16 December.

We have had some dispute about the facts, but only 9 per cent. of the policies sold totally complied with the regulator's rules. If that is not an indictment, I do not know what is. Fifty-four per cent. were unsatisfactory. We have had disputes about whether they were unsatisfactory because they did not fill in the form correctly, forgot to send back some records or forgot to keep a piece of paper that they should have kept, or whether it was something more serious. The fact is that on neither side of this Chamber can hon. Members give a definitive definition of that—54 per cent. were unsatisfactory, 8 per cent. were suspect and 29 per cent. were unsatisfactory and suspect.

The moderate estimate of the number of people who suffered is 500,000, but there is no way of knowing for sure, basically because 83 per cent. of the cases, as the Securities and Investments Board reported, have insufficient information to tell. That must tell us something about the atmosphere in which people operate when they take out a pension. That is not something for which the Government or the industry can pat themselves on the back. That situation should not have existed; there should have been regulation in a much more disciplined way.

There is no way of knowing how many individuals involved were opting out of the current scheme—how many people were actually in work in an occupational pension and were persuaded to leave that safe haven and go into the situation which they are now in, where they cannot guarantee an adequate pension for their old age.

Mis-selling basically takes place because of the drive for commissions. I remember many years ago in university —I would not call myself by any means an expert—running the student insurance bureau and working with the experts and doing it for no pay; doing it because I thought it was a good idea. I think that such expertise is very important. We have heard that when people are selling on commission, they have been trained for eight weeks. Eight weeks is not adequate. They are trained for eight weeks and then sent out to chase their friends—the people in their former industries, such as the people who may have worked beside them in the coal industry. It then became like a chain letter, moving from friend to friend, feeling somehow that it was a reference and a recommendation and getting deeper and deeper into the same trap as had been set for the first members who went into the scheme.

The time scale of the years that it will take for the SIB investigation to come to pass is in the document. The letter that I received on 23 March had a huge list of the recommendations, but the time scale on page 25 was interesting. It says that the date is November 1994, which is as soon as is practicable, but the report mentions June 1995, with a review in September 1995. That is far too long and it is actually far too late for the 500,000 people who have been sold a pup by the people who were selling only on the basis that it was better for them, either because it had been tied to one company or because of the high commissions which they earned.

Insurance companies whose sales people encouraged people to opt out will be liable for compensation. But if in 83 per cent. of the cases we cannot tie them down to the actual liability—why they were or were not at fault—obviously they will have difficulty getting that money. The calculation is that the bill will be £1 billion if compensation is paid in full. I do not see the industry coming forward and offering that £1 billion to compensate individuals. I have a funny feeling that the message that we got from some of those who are paid to speak in the House on behalf of the industry is: people should take their own risks and take their own falls. That is not good enough in a pension scheme, whether that pension scheme is sold under Government ideology in the private market, is put together as an occupational pension in a company or is the state earnings-related pension scheme, which I believe we should be giving people as a fall-back position.

The regulated insurance companies have said that they were optimistic about the growth rates in their estimates. I suggest that they must now be optimistic in their compensation calculations to make adequate recompense for the things that have been done.

We have heard that people can opt back into SERPS. That is at least one bolt hole for which many people will be grateful, and I am sure that many will take it when they realise that it will not be as profitable to remain in a personal pension plan, with the administration charges and commission charges taken off before their investment is put into anything worthwhile.

The problem is with occupational pension schemes and the attempt to get re-entry into pension schemes. My hon. Friend the Member for Itchen has been doing a survey of companies and only two—British Airways and British Telecom—have said that they will automatically allow current employees to re-enter their schemes; whereas every other company said that they would either not allow it or would allow it only at their discretion and, in most cases, with some restrictions. None would allow former members to re-enter. The coal industry is one example where former members who have retired or widows cannot re-enter the scheme and they have lost their benefits. Most schemes have rules that forbid re-entry. Only one—BP's—provided independent financial advisers to members thinking of opting out: in other words, advisers to provide a balance to the commission salesmen—to the people who are selling for tied companies and want to keep their target up because their job and future salary depend on it.

The Government have said that it is up to the companies, but—on behalf of those 500,000 people—I must say that that is not good enough. The Government must ensure that those people who have lost are adequately compensated. The Government must intervene in some way because they created this monster, which has caused a great deal of distress for people with pensions in the private sector.

The Government, together with the pension sales force and the company, are culpable and they should ensure adequate recompense and direct regulation. It is not good enough for the Government to say that insurance is just another market. We are talking about people's long-term futures and their security in old age. If the Government want to have any credibility, they must consider moving in that direction.

We have heard of the LAUTRO actions, which restrict the number of people selling in the market and ensure that they are better educated. That probably means that they will not sell bad policies through ignorance, but it does not mean that the tied-policy selling will stop. It does not mean that selling on commission will stop, or that the idea of getting the bigger car and house and faster life style will not be depicted in the advertisements, which will still say, "Do you want to be a self-made entrepreneur? Come and

[Mr. Michael Connarty]

join our company." What that means is selling people things on commission and if they are selling insurance, it will be sold just as hard as cars or anything else that people buy. However, it is different with cars, washing machines and hi-fis. We are talking about people's long-term security in their old age.

I suggest that the Government should look seriously not only at their ideological differences with the Opposition but at the ways in which we could meet and do something for the 500,000 people who find themselves in trouble, the 2.4 million people whom Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte estimates to be in trouble and facing a negative situation and possibly, with direct regulation, ensure some credibility for the insurance industry.

9.16 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I shall deal with the narrow subject of regulation, especially self-regulation. I am not an expert and I appreciate that there has been much expertise in evidence in the Chamber today. We have heard from many hon. Members with interests in the industry, either as practitioners or as members of the Treasury Select Committee and the Standing Committees that dealt with legislation on such matters.

I agree with the Government on the principle of self-regulation, which is the best method because in that way one ensures the maximum amount of expertise as close to the regulators as possible. Regulation is a very complex task and widespread practitioner input is essential for it to stand a chance of being carried out effectively and efficiently. I hope that there will be a change in the constitution of the Personal Investment Authority board, to give it a majority of practitioners.

The Government's aim of creating a single regulator, in the form of the PIA, for the retail financial services sector is the right one. The elimination of regulatory arbitrage would a fundamental step forward for consumer protection and my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) welcomed that. Those arguments were developed by Sir Kenneth Clucas in his report two years ago, but I am worried that the proposals have since been wrongly constituted.

It seems that the original intention of creating a level playing field failed to materialise. The present system fails to apply consistent standards across the board. For example, the bank assurance sector is not subject to the compliance and training requirements imposed in the independent sector. Also, it does not require individual registration, which independent financial adviser members of the authority will continue to carry.

The PIA promised comprehensive and permanent funding for the investors' compensation scheme, but that has not happened. The PIA expects the present figure of 7,200 IFA companies to be whittled down to 5,800 in the new authority. That means a loss of about 1,400 companies and those will probably come from the independent sector, as it is highly unlikely that either the banks or insurance companies will be refused membership.

The PIA will not deliver the promised step up in standards that we have read about. That is not even a guarantee that standards will remain at current levels.

Developing professionalism in financial services is the best way of ensuring the health and probity of the sector. However, the PIA has rejected the training and competence proposals that would ensure that step change in approach. The admissions process would be an invaluable opportunity to vet all those operating in financial services, but the PIA has dropped its original intention to implement individual registration, and I should like to know why. It seems to me that the only step-up guarantee that has been given is in the costs of regulation, so let us not be under any illusions about that. Increased costs will, in the long term, have to be paid for by the consumer. The consumer has a right to be protected against fraud and malpractice—we all accept that—and the consumer interest should be the guiding principle of any regulatory system, but, if the costs are to increase, the consumer should be guaranteed a similar increase in protection.

I hope that the Minister will tackle those anxieties when he replies to the debate, but the key question is: to whom will the PIA be accountable? Some of us are not satisfied with the PIA reporting to the SIB. The PIA and SIB seem to be trying to move away from self-regulation without bothering to refer to Parliament. As a result of that lack of accountability, some members of the industry have begun to suggest a statutory regulatory regime without fully understanding what they mean.

There is an obvious duplication of effort and interest between the PIA and SIB. I believe that their roles should be separated. I should like the PIA to be created a designated authority. It would then have to report directly to the Treasury, while it would be released from its overlap with the SIB.

I believe that the PIA should be headed by a fully independent chairman, free from industrial ties. I think that it was LAUTRO who told the Finance and Services Select Committee earlier this month that there is no one left in the industry with a totally clean record and the day-to-day responsibilities should be overseen by a chief executive who has a thorough and developed understanding of the financial services sector.

I hope, therefore, that the Treasury will delay the implementation of a single retail regulator—the PIA. That would require the extension of the life of FIMBRA and LAUTRO—a task which I believe that they are more than ready to perform. The Government should not give a commitment to the PIA in its current form, the industry should not have to join the PIA in its current form and the consumer should not have to accept the PIA in its current form. The omissions from the PIA's prospectus should be rectified to reflect the original spirit of the single retail regulator that was proposed two years ago. Until that is done, I do not believe that anyone can apply to the PIA for recognition with real confidence.

I want the step change in self-regulation that we have heard about to be a step forward—not, at the very best, a step sideways.

9.22 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I agree with the conclusion that the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) has reached, although not the reasons for it, and I shall discuss the Personal Investment Authority later.

This has been an extremely useful debate because hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that a debate on

regulation is long overdue; that is one reason why the Opposition have devoted one of their Supply days to the discussion of this matter.

We are discussing, first and foremost, a matter of public interest. A pension is probably the most important thing that someone will ever buy. It is security for perhaps 20 to 30 years following retirement—sometimes almost half a lifetime. Buying a pension is more important than buying a house. We are also discussing an important industrial interest, however. Two and a half million people are employed in that industry and it produces 18 per cent. of the country's gross domestic product. It is therefore important that Parliament gets the regulatory system right. The problem with pensions is that the wrong choice made now may not become apparent for 25 to 30 years. Perhaps the only decent thing that Robert Maxwell did was dramatically to remind people that their pensions are vulnerable, and that nothing can be taken for granted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) discussed pensions. I shall discuss regulation, which has dominated much of the debate.No Government and no regulation can ever take the place of an individual's judgment. However, a Government can and must ensure, first, that there is choice and competition in pension provision—that means providing knowledge—and secondly, and perhaps more important, that there is effective and efficient regulation.

The issue before us tonight is not one of private against state provision; that is a false division. This is not the place to decide whether or not—or how many—pensions were mis-sold. That should be the function of an independent and detached regulator; it is not an issue which we can decide in the House tonight. The question before us is whether we have the confidence in the system of regulation that the Government have set up. I think that the answer for the Opposition, for a growing number of people in the industry and for the public is that we do not have confidence in a self-regulatory system. For that reason, we believe that the Government should bring it to an end.

It is interesting that Conservative Members blamed the regulator but said that the system was all right. That seems to be inconsistent. The problem is that people want to make an informed choice, but are unable to do so. Far too many people may have become prey to unscrupulous salesmen or the casual approach of management. We should not always blame the insurance salesmen. It is evident that the management of some of the insurance companies must have known what was going on, particularly in the late 1980s. It is unfair and wrong simply to blame the infantry —the generals must take their share of the responsibility.

We currently have ineffective and expensive self-regulation under the Financial Services Act 1986. That self-regulation has been dominated by the self-interest of certain vested interests in the trade. Those same self-interested parties fought the disclosure of commission and have been going about trying to talk down any concerns about the KPMG study into the possible mis-sale of up to 500,000 personal pensions. Those same self-interested parties are now only reluctantly facing up to the fact that the wrong advice was given in far too many cases; I do not know in how many cases, but I know that even the most conservative estimate shows that far too many people were given wrong advice in that crucial sector.

For most people, a pension provides security in retirement. A decision about pension provision is probably the single most important decision that a person ever takes. But for the Government in the late 1980s, pension provision provided an opportunity to allow a lethal combination of inadequate regulation and the promotion of a pensions free-for-all. It provided an opportunity to peddle Tory dogma. Some unscrupulous companies saw private pensions as providing rich pickings from vulnerable people.Self-regulation has failed to protect the public interest and must be replaced by effective and efficient direct regulation. I do not mean regulation by the Government or the civil service; I mean direct regulation to end the nonsense of self-regulation.

In order to understand what happened in the late-1980s, it is important to remember what was happening with pensions. In the same year as the Government handed over regulation to private interest, they were vigorously promoting the sale of private pensions through the Social Security Act 1986. The Government spent £1.2 million of taxpayers' money on a dramatic advertising campaign.

It is extremely silly and stupid for the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) to say that the Opposition are holding this debate because we are against private pensions. We believe that state and private provision are complementary; they go hand in hand. I see the difficulty of that the hon. Member for Havant faces. He was director of the Conservative research department during much of that period in the late 1980s. Rather like a child who is reluctant to give up his comforter, many Tories are reluctant to give up the dogma, which they have clung to, notwithstanding the fact that it has failed.

State and private provision are complementary. It is necessary to make an extremely complex series of calculations in order to reach the right decision about whether someone should opt for a private pension. It is abundantly clear that for many people, those calculations were never made—or if they were, the wrong conclusions were drawn from them. We must ask why possibly up to 500,000 people were wrongly persuaded to leave their occupational schemes. Common sense tells us that two people contributing to a pension scheme is better than one.

We must ask why possibly 2.5 million people were wrongly advised to leave SERPS. Despite what the Secretary of State said about the Coopers and Lybrand advice, it was given. There would have to be good reasons to persuade elderly people or those on low incomes to leave SERPS and go for private pensions.

Let us consider the events in the mid-1980s that led to the difficulties—to so many people being exposed to salesmen who depended on commission to make ends meet and on sales to keep their jobs. We should remember that the public are paying for the mistakes made by the industry. The public—the policyholders—have to pay for the failures of Tory dogma, which was put into practice in the late-1980s. When we consider those events and what Ministers were saying, it is not surprising, as many of my hon. Friends have said, that people were gulled into believing that private was always best.

When he was the Secretary of State for Social Security, the present chairman of the Tory party circulated a press release dated 13 April 1988:

"During the next few months there will be dramatic new opportunities for the public in pensions. Everyone will now have the opportunity of a pension of his own . . . Every worker . . . needs to realise the new opportunities that there will now be."

The advertising campaign showed an individual strung up in a straitjacket, which emphasised the Government's

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

belief in the importance and desirability of private pensions. It was not until four years later that the Government started printing advertisements on a much reduced budget that emphasised that it was important to read the small print. It is not surprising that many people made the wrong decisions or that many in the industry saw an opportunity that they had never had before to sell pensions to people who should not have bought them.

We accept that, for many people, it was appropriate to go into private pensions. There was nothing wrong with that. The choice of many others to do so, however, was ill-advised. Those are the people who will suffer. If a mistake is made, it may take many years to discover it and many years for the contributions to be made up and for the rightful position to be reached.

It is interesting to consider the comments of the Prime Minister in 1986, when he was just starting his first job as a junior Minister with responsibility for social security. Although he expressed concern that there might be a problem with mis-selling pensions, he said that he was confident that

"the Financial Services Bill will provide a cooling-off period." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*; 4 February 1986; c. 27.]

It was eight years before the cooling-off period was applied to the sale of personal pensions—eight years during which many people were wrongly sold pensions and were made to suffer for the rest of their lives as a result.

The Government have to accept that, because of the dogma that they peddled in the late-1980s, many people may have been sold policies that they should never have bought. The Government must accept a major responsibility for the climate that prevailed at that time and for the fact that many people may have lost substantial sums of money. Of course we blame unscrupulous insurance companies. Many insurance salesmen were unscrupulous in their techniques. The problems, however, would never have arisen if the Government had not created the lethal combination of inadequate regulation and a Government-sponsored promotion of a pension free-for-all.

There were warnings at the time. It is all very well for the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) to say that no one knew. We hear the same excuse for the tax increases. We are told that no one knew that the economy was in a mess. Just as there were people who knew that the economy was in a mess, there were organisations, including the CBI, who warned in the mid and late-1980s what would happen with a pension free-for-all. Many in the industry also expressed concern, as did the National Association of Pension Funds. The Government deliberately chose to ignore those warnings because they did not want to know. They peddled their dogma with reckless disregard for the consequences of their action.

The Securities and Investments Board is already investigating the possible mis-selling of 500,000 private pensions to those who were persuaded to come out of the occupational schemes. It is interesting that many in the industry and many self-regulatory organisations such as FIMBRA and LAUTRO are extremely resentful that Andrew Large of the SIB decided to make that inquiry public. That speaks volumes for the weakness of self-regulation dominated by trade interest. It is fundamentally important that the regulatory system should have the public's confidence. It must be seen to be impartial and detached. It is singularly unhelpful when we see the self-regulatory organisations appearing to act as trade organisations and trying to play down what in anyone's view is a major scandal. I do not know how many people were affected, but I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that there has been a serious problem. We shall not know the answer for some time. But for Conservative Members, and the Secretary of State who is no longer here, to say that it is all rubbish and is simply cover for Opposition Members seeking to attack certain pensions is grossly irresponsible—

Mr. Butterfill: Who said that?

Mr. Darling: The Secretary of State for Social Security said it during his brief appearance tonight. I understand that he had his mind on other matters. He is delivering the first *Spectator* lecture and it must have been a dreadful inconvenience to have to come and explain Government policies to the House before he pushed off. He tried to minimise the problem. It can do public confidence no good when the Secretary of State and some of the regulators attempt to rubbish the concerns that have quite rightly been raised.

The SIB should also mount an urgent inquiry into the question of commission. Many hon. Members, particularly Opposition Members, have drawn attention to the problem, but all the training in the world and all codes of best practice will be undermined when salesmen are desperate for commission to feed themselves and their families and desperate to sell policies to keep their jobs. Some salesmen have been sacked for not selling enough policies. It is time that the industry faced up to the fact that, if that structural problem is not tackled, problems will increase.

Members of the public will increasingly look to the financial services industry to make provision for themselves, but, in turn, they rightly demand that the Government provide an efficient and effective framework of regulation, which does not exist at present. A growing number of people in the industry realise that the system is deficient and that confidence, which they need as much as the public, has been badly damaged.

A review of the regulatory structure is long overdue because we now have a dog's breakfast of regulation, which the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) touched on. Had the hon. Member for Havant bothered to stay for the rest of the debate, he might have found his hon. Friend's contribution instructive.

It is absurd that the Personal Investment Authority must bid for members at the same time as negotiating with the SIB for recognition. While the PIA is making regulations, the SIB is also making regulations under which practitioners must work. That cumbersome duplication is expensive, and the expense must be borne by the public.

The PIA, due to open in July, has yet to start vetting some 6,000 applications, yet it says that it will examine each application individually. We shall believe that when we see it. It has still to agree its rules, regulations and qualifications, yet it wants people to join by 5 April.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman said that he agreed with the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). Is he now saying that insurance companies should, like the Prudential, hold out and not join the PIA? If so, what confidence can there be in the meantime, before a fundamental change is made in the system?

Mr. Darling: My position on the PIA is that I wholly welcome an opportunity to bring together LAUTRO, FIMBRA and bits of IMRO. My fundamental criticism of the PIA is that its roots are in a self-regulatory system that has failed. It is clearly a stop-gap rather than a permanent solution. I have spoken to people with all views in the industry and more and more believe that PIA can only be a stop-gap solution. They look to the Government, possibly in vain, for firm leadership on the matter. The public and the industry want a system that will last for 10 or 20 years and command universal confidence. One might have thought that that was not too much to ask, yet I do not suppose for a minute that we shall hear anything about it tonight.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) said, people are concerned about the PIA's chairman because he was chief executive of the Legal and General insurance company when it was fined a record £400,000 for gross breaches of LAUTRO rules on three occasions. It is not surprising that people wonder whether he is suitable to lead regulation of the industry. I note in passing that, in the same year as those fines were visited on Legal and General, it managed to raise its contribution to the Tory party from £28,000 to £40,000. Conservative Members may be grateful for that, but the public expect better and are legitimately concerned about the establishment of the PIA.

The time has come for us to recognise that direct regulation is necessary. By direct regulation, I mean regulation by the SIB which would be answerable to Parliament. The SIB board should have a blend of practitioner and public interest.Practitioners should have a substantial input into regulation, not least because the industry will pay for it. It is important to have people who know and understand the problems, but it is equally important for those people—both from the industry and the Government—to be seen to be impartial and detached. We should remember that the Government have a vested interest in covering up some of the problems that are of their own making. We need a board that is seen to be impartial and detached to police the industry, and it is high time we got that. We shall be publishing a consultative paper early in the summer, but, in the meantime, it is important that people realise that the present system is simply not working.

There is grave concern about the lack of training and the lack of competence. I agree with the hon. Member for Havant that ticking boxes and answering questionnaires is not an adequate check on whether proper advice is needed, but we need to imbue the industry with a greater a sense of long-term commitment and professionalism. We need the kind of professionalism that enables a salesman to say to a prospective customer, "No, you should not buy this policy," rather than attempting to sell a policy at all costs.

Direct regulation needs to be put in place now because it will be cheaper and more effective and will command the confidence not just of the industry but, more important, of the public. It will avoid duplication and the present nonsense of horse trading for membership and continually reacting from crisis to crisis. We ought not to be having such debates in the House; we should have complete confidence in the regulator to investigate any allegations of wrongdoing, properly to police the industry and, above all, to enforce the rules and regulations without fear or favour.

There is a growing problem in the financial services industry. The pension transfer illustrates those problems and is one example of them. For some reason, the Government seem paralysed and are not prepared to do anything about it. Before he became a Minister, the Economic Secretary used to say there were many criticisms of the regulatory system, but, since taking office, he has said nothing about it, Not surprisingly, the Chancellor has not turned his attention to the matter in detail.

The industry employs 2.5 million people who look to effective regulation to carry out their trade. The public depend on the financial services industry and will increasingly look to it for pensions and savings products. People look to the House and the Government to start to govern and put in place a regulatory system that commands public confidence, but I suspect that when the Minister replies, we shall yet again listen in vain for assurances as the Government continue to abdicate their responsibility in this crucial sector.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for me to clarify that my reference to Atherstone Components was a reference to a company which has been taken over in the past three years by reputable directors, and that the pension scheme to which I referred was the Burlington pension scheme which is the one being questioned by those workers now at Atherstone components?

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for clarifying his earlier statement. I hope that all hon. Members, before they make speeches and comments, will ensure that what they have to say is absolutely correct before they stand in the House and make such statements. *[Interruption.]* Order. That applies to all Members of the House, irrespective of their status.

9.43 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): We have had a serious and measured debate, as befits the subject, which is of serious concern to many of our constituents and has raised anxieties beyond the House. I say immediately that I welcome the opportunity of answering what I think has been a forthright and measured debate on an important subject.

The Government give high priority to investor and depositor protection and I shall seek to argue that, in a number of ways, we have sought significantly to enhance the protection of both. We also have an interest in free and fair markets. The employment in the industry to which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) referred is extremely important, as are the liquidity and trade it brings to the country. However, while a balance must always be struck between the needs of an important industry—as part of our economy—and the protection of investors and depositors, I must make it clear that, in the context of our responsibilities, the Government and I will always place more emphasis on the latter.

In the short time that is available for me to respond to an extensive debate, let me observe the proper courtesy and refer to some of the points raised by hon. Members. Following the opening speeches by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made an important point about commission-driven business. That point was picked up by a number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Garscadden.

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

There is a lot of sloppy thinking about this matter. I do not agree with those who say that commission must be outlawed; I do not believe that it is necessarily a bad thing. I also believe that, if we highlight commission as the cause of some of the serious problems that have undoubtedly arisen, we may not be dealing with the real cause of those problems.

If commission related to these or other products were outlawed, it would certainly lead to a diminution in the number of distribution outlets. Moreover, many people who would otherwise want to give advice—tied company representatives—would find themselves in a difficult position if they could not give that advice, whether on a commission basis or objectively. There is a danger that people would be even less well informed about the products on offer.

Surely transparency of commission is much more important. There should be much more clarity about what is involved in buying a product: we should ensure that people understand what they are getting into.

If I may presume to make one small criticism of the debate, I think that there was inadequate discussion of the awareness of the investing public: precious few hon. Members mentioned that. The Government—as well as the House, in various capacities—should turn their mind to how we can ensure that our constituents are more aware of the novelty and content of products, and the risks involved.

We can seek to construct a system that will create greater public confidence in the industry, but we cannot deny that "caveat emptor" must play its part. The taxpayer cannot always pick up the bill for things that go wrong, any more than he can provide an absolute guarantee that everything will go right. We must place some emphasis on protecting the individual.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Nelson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make some progress in the limited time available. I will try to give way later.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed mentioned the PIA. I reiterate my belief that its establishment may have advantages. I am subject to some limitation: I must wait for a report that I am expecting from the Director General of Fair Trading about the competition aspects before I can extol the PIA with more enthusiasm.

However, although it may not be the only show in town, I think it is the best show in town and that it is "on track". I hope that the various constituents of FIMBRA and LAUTRO will view it favourably. I also believe that it should not, and will not, be deflected by the self-interest of some of its detractors. I hope that its prospectus will be carefully and favourably considered.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed also spoke of the need for tougher statutory regulation. I would argue that that is exactly what we have tried to introduce, within the ambit of the Financial Services Act. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, with his revolutionary approach, would seek to cast aside our present system in favour of a lurch into the unknown—a new direct, dirigiste statutory system of regulation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said, we do not support such a system.

What I found most incredible about the speech of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed was his comment, after he had made the points that I have mentioned, that he did not agree with the motion but would nevertheless vote for it. That is another typical example of the Liberal Democrats' wish to appeal to all aspects of opinion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), whom I acknowledge as chairman of the all-party occupational pensions group, made an outstanding speech. He spoke about the KPMG report, and said that the scale of inappropriate selling may not be as widespread as some alarmists have suggested. I agree entirely.

The degree of non-compliance with the rules of conduct does not necessarily translate itself equally into the extent of possible mis-selling or disadvantaged selling. That is why the Securities and Investments Board has established a steering group to look into these matters and take a considered and careful analysis of the extent to which things have gone wrong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West also said that the SIB should have insisted from the beginning on one self-regulating organisation rather than two for the retail sector. Because he was a member of the famous Financial Services Bill Committee, my hon. Friend will remember that there was an argument in the mid-1980s about not having a streamlined, simplistic approach towards regulation, and that there might need to be diffusion.

With the benefit of hindsight, that was an erroneous judgment about how things should or would turn out. The legislation does enable a more streamlined structure to be delivered, and that is exactly what is happening.

The Government's approach has been to seek to maximise within the existing legislation the powers that are available. Andrew Large's report, which I wholeheartedly endorse and support, is determined to do exactly that, by bringing about a quantum leap in the standards and adequacy of investor protection, by using its powers of enforcement, by having more adequate standards of monitoring, and by ensuring that the competence of the SROs to oversee is more adequately met. I believe that it has already signified that such changes are in the making.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West spoke also about the problems of professional indemnity insurance. The PIA is aware of the problem. Cover is available, but I acknowledge that it is at a price. I expect the PIA to look at that.

My hon. Friend made an important point about the training of trustees. That was looked at by the Goode report. It made a number of recommendations in that regard, one of which was that companies should allow time off for their employees who are trustees of occupational pension trust schemes, so that they can engage in training. I attach great importance to the training of trustees, and it is an important recommendation.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is not currently in the Chamber, but he raised the problems of the cost and burden of commission charges. He said that he felt that, in future, pension provision would be inadequate. That point was picked up by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), who said that he did not expect a demographic time bomb to explode. However, a theme running through much of the debate was whether

provision, in addition to that provided by the state, will be adequate for the long-term future, and whether it will disappoint those who have contributed to it.

We know that the size of the working population in this country will diminish relative to the pensioned population. Currently the ratio is about 3.3:1. Over the next 50 years, it will reduce to 2.5:1. That need not necessarily bring about major problems if the economy continues to grow, and grows substantially, and if both the private and public sectors can maintain their obligations.

However, if the state is not to place an impossible burden on this and future generations, the case can be argued for increasing private provision. That is why the Government have supported the case for personal pensions. That is why the arguments for deferred consumption and displacing spending now for longer-term provision to care for an increasingly elderly populace are well made, and will be delivered more efficiently through the private rather than the public sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant made an extremely telling and compelling speech. He denounced Labour's inability to understand that the labour market has changed. Such changes make more appropriate our provision for personal pensions rather than for a monopoly of state schemes. My hon. Friend also said that the concern about transfers was better founded than that about opt-outs. That is absolutely correct.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) said that there was a crisis of confidence in the industry. That is an overstatement. There is legitimate concern about the problems that we have been debating, but it is in no one's interest to be alarmist. The Government have sought to be neither alarmist nor complacent about those problems. The hon. Gentleman said that the PIA might not have sufficient resources, but it has also been argued that it is going to make too much of a demand by way of subvention on its members.

It is true that the projected costs for the new PIA will be more than the sum total of the existing running costs of LAUTRO and FIMBRA, but good regulation costs money. Also, there is a clear trade-off between the cost of compensation, which is made if there is inadequate regulation, and the cost of regulation itself. The prospectus for the PIA contains reasonable and modest proposals for funding such activities.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke about Mr. Palmer and Miss Colette Bowe, the chairman and chief executive of the PIA. I consider Mr. Palmer to be well qualified to do the job. He gave considerable public service as a member of the board of the SIB, and it is hurtful and inaccurate to suggest that he is unfit to fulfil the valued role that he is currently undertaking.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale spoke about the Insurance Brokers Registration Council. It is interesting that it has a lower incidence of problems with transfer business: that is indicative of the IBRC's high standards. He also said that a new disclosure regime must put tied agents and independent intermediaries on the same footing. That is an extremely important point, which was also raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). People must understand that the intention is that there should be a more level playing field between tied representatives and independent financial advisers.

For many years, we have been all around the houses on the issue of commission disclosure, and it was only when my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer faced up to the problem, made a decision and ensured that it applied not only to independent financial advisers but, on an equivalent basis, to the management charges of the tied sector, that we witnessed a significant change, which has been widely welcomed not only in the financial services industry but by the investing public.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Mr. Nelson: I am sorry, but I cannot give way. I wish to deal with the points that have already been made.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) spoke up for the consumer, and I congratulate her on that. She said that the industry must be beyond reproach. I agree that that is an aspiration which the industry should always hold before it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) did not advocate statutory regulation, but said that the present system must work better. I agree, and that is exactly the course on which the Government have embarked.

My hon. Friend called for redress for those who have been disadvantaged by the problems that we have discussed, and the complicated issues involved in assessing exactly how that can be brought about are now being considered by the working party and steering group of SIB. I attach great importance to the assurance given by the chairman, Mr. Andrew Large, that redress must be forthcoming, but it must not be at the taxpayer's expense. Why should the taxpayer stand as an indemnity behind such cases? It must be for the industry to put right any mistakes that have been made.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Mr. Nelson: I shall give way in a moment.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) said that there was inadequate training for representatives. I share his concern to deliver higher standards of training in this respect. It is one of the issues that the PIA should be considering.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside, with whom I feel a special sympathy for having to make a speech at 9.16 pm at the tail end of a long debate, welcomed the PIA in principle; I thank him for that. He asked to whom it will be accountable. The answer is that the PIA will be accountable to the SIB. It will have to determine whether the PIA, as an SRO, is conducting and fulfilling the statutory requirements. It will be possible for such authorisation to be withdrawn if it is not fulfilling those requirements.

In that and other ways, I believe that the Government are delivering a step change in standards of investor and depositor protection in the country. We have taken very seriously the concerns that have been expressed in the debate, as I am sure have members of the PIA and the industry more widely.

We must ensure for the future that we have a system of private pensions that meets people's aspirations, but delivers them the security they require. We must have for the future a system of personal social security that not only relies on the provision of state finance but allows people to make provision for themselves.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

[Mr. Derek Foster]

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 254, Noes 309.

Division No. 190] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Haxham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes

Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Derek Conway.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 299, Noes 190.

Division No. 191] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Boneor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin

Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Davis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'ld's E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the extension of individual choice of pension provision brought about by the Government's pension reforms, which has resulted in substantial increases in funded pension provision through both occupational and appropriate private pension schemes; welcomes the Government's steps to ensure the effective regulation of occupational pensions and to ensure that individuals have adequate information to make informed choices about provision for their retirement; and welcomes the measures being taken by the Securities and Investments Board, with Government support, significantly to improve investor protection.

PETITION

Residency

10.29pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I wish to present a petition on behalf of my constituents Eddie and Pauline Khor of 5 Coltman close, Swallow Park, Gloucester, against the deportation order that they face.

Mrs. and Mrs. Khor originally came from Malaysia to study in the United Kingdom. They have been resident here for eight years and have integrated fully into the local community in Gloucestershire.

Mr. Khor is a chartered quantity surveyor and Mrs. Khor a qualified accountant. They have never claimed any state benefits, are completely self-sufficient and present no drain on the nation's resources.

The petition has 3,000 signatures as testimony to their popularity, their many friends and the belief of local people that they should be allowed to stay in this country. Their young son Ben was born here.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.
The Humble Petition of Eddie and Pauline Khor sheweth
That they and their son, Benjamin, wish to remain in the United Kingdom as permanent residents.
Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House request the Home Secretary to exercise discretion and grant residency to this family outside the immigration rules.
And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Point of Order

10.30 pm

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As some of my constituents have told me that their employer, Asda, has informed them that unless they are prepared to work on Easter Sunday they will be sacked, and as those are illegal and coercive practices which are in breach not only of the Shops Act 1950, but of the commitments given in this House about the Sunday Trading Bill, which is being considered in another place, have you been informed of any Government intention to make a statement on the matter?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Madam Speaker has received no such indication.

Peanut Allergy

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.31 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I am grateful for the opportunity to open this Adjournment debate. I thank my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary for his attendance, and other hon. Members for theirs, at a debate which will be constructive and of interest to many people outside the House.

I accept that, at first glance, the subject of the debate is not one which immediately commends itself as suitable for parliamentary debate. It is legitimate to ask why the peanut should be allowed to keep the House at work beyond the conclusion of the main business of the day, on this of all days—the last evening before we break before Easter.

Before going any further, I must tell the House about the peanut, which is not a nut, but a vegetable belonging to the pea or bean family. It comes from a herbaceous plant that grows to about 2 ft tall and whose stalks, after flowering, bury into the ground, which is where the nut matures; hence its name of groundnut.

Groundnuts are native to Brazil—the home of all real nuts, although I am looking around me to see whether there are any others—and are grown all over the world, perhaps most famously by Mr. Jimmy Carter, the former President of the United States.

A less happy peanut growing enterprise was that set up in east Africa by the Labour Government after the second world war, to solve this country's food supply problems, which failed at the then enormous cost of £40 million.

Despite that setback, peanuts are increasingly popular in this country. In 1992—the latest year for which figures are available—we imported 138,000 tonnes compared with the 121,000 tonnes in 1988. Hardly a reception takes place in this Palace that does not feature the popular peanut and there is hardly a child in the country who does not have strong views about the desirability of peanut butter at teatime. The peanut is part of everyday life and is here, no doubt, to stay.

In introducing the subject, I intend to do no such damage to the peanut as was perhaps done to the egg on previous occasions.

I am not the first Member of Parliament to raise the subject of peanut allergy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) raised it in a written question to our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in January, and early-day motion 834, in the name of the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) and some of her hon. Friends refers to it.

Peanut allergy has already been the subject of a number of press articles in the past few months, in *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Sunday Mercury* and the *Leicester Mercury*—my local newspaper—all of which reported on that issue generally or with reference to individual cases, some fatal, some nearly so, but all acutely distressing to the families concerned.

My interest in peanut allergy was provoked by a constituent, Mrs. Shirley Hammond of Oadby, whose six-year-old daughter Jessica suffers from that condition. Mrs. Hammond wrote to me in January, having seen a

television programme that dealt with the allergy and its fatal consequence in the most serious cases brought about by anaphylactic shock. I shall read a little of that letter:

"12 months ago my daughter . . . almost died with this condition."

She had eaten a handful of peanuts at school. She was rushed to hospital in Leicester where, fortunately, her life was saved by speedy action by the medical staff who recognised the symptoms, but Mrs. Hammond was told that her daughter's condition was not only rare, but one which she would not grow out of. Her letter continues:

"My life and my family's life has since changed quite dramatically; life-saving courses taken at St John Ambulance and injecting lessons taken"

so that she now knows how to give Jessica adrenaline, the antidote to the allergin, in an emergency. Delay of as little as five minutes has, in some recorded cases, proved to be sufficient to kill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), who is in his place, has mentioned to me a case involving a little girl in his constituency who unwittingly ate a biscuit containing peanut and died as she ran the few yards to the school sanatorium—a young life literally snuffed out in seconds.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): One of my constituents died from eating a pretzel which had peanut oil coating. The daughter of another of my constituents fortunately survived, but was very ill after eating fish that had been coated with a batter which had peanut oil in it. It is a very serious matter for those people who are affected.

Mr. Garnier: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's support in this matter.

As I was saying, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North has also referred to a case in his constituency, involving the daughter of a Mr. and Mrs. Crocker of Pulham. This is not the esoteric issue that some might think. My hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) has recounted to me a similar incident in his constituency. As the hon. Lady has just mentioned, there will be other hon. Members with similarly tragic stories of sudden deaths caused by anaphylactic shock brought on by peanut allergy.

Mrs. Hammond's letter goes on:

"Having had 12 months of being educated on this subject I write to you, not as a paranoid mother nor as a scaremonger, but as someone who feels very strongly"

about it. I have now met Mrs. Hammond twice in my constituency surgery and can testify to her rationality, her calm and considered manner and to her deep and wholly natural concern for the health and safety of her child.

Jessica Hammond is not alone in suffering from that potentially lethal allergy. Mrs. Hammond tells me that approximately 600 cases of life-threatening reaction to peanuts have been recorded and that that allergy is the fastest growing variety of food allergy or intolerance. Seven other children aged between three and seven years old at her daughter's primary school have been recognised as sufferers and the school, thanks to the common sense and wisdom of the head teacher, Mrs. Sonja Hudson, has in place contingency plans to cope with any emergency brought about by contact with, or ingestion of, peanuts or peanut products.

You will not be surprised, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I tell you that Mrs. Hammond has started a support group, the Peanut Allergy Support Group, in Leicestershire, an organisation whose aims are, I believe, complementary to those of the Anaphylaxis Campaign based in Ash near Aldershot. The chairman of that association, Mrs. Reading, had a daughter, Sarah, who died at the age of 17 having eaten grated peanut sprinkled on the top of a piece of lemon meringue pie bought in a supermarket. The aims of those groups are to educate the public about potentially fatal food allergies, to increase awareness of them among health professionals, especially general practitioners and those working in schools, to encourage research into the causes, means of prevention and treatments for them, to campaign for legislation compelling caterers to the public to list the ingredients of all food and drink on sale, and to campaign for legislation to compel clearer labelling of food products containing peanut, peanut extracts and oils.

I agree with those aims, with the exception of those calling for legislation.

I do, none the less, want the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the food industry, the retail trade, food scientists, dieticians and others concerned with public health to co-operate in an effort to ensure that practical steps are taken, and taken soon, to resolve the difficulties that legislation could cause, so that it is not necessary.

What does intolerance do to an affected person? Most commonly, it causes swelling around the mouth. If it causes only the lips to swell, that is unpleasant, but not necessarily dangerous. But if it causes the throat to swell, it can constrict it and inhibit breathing. It can cause a skin rash like a nettle sting and it can cause allergic reactions to the whole body—anaphylaxis, in which the blood pressure becomes dangerously low. It can also bring on an asthma attack.

Before discussing the worrying matter further, I shall put the risk in perspective. Without doubt, peanut allergy has been lethal in a small number of cases, but vast numbers of people with nut allergy manage very well without suffering a dangerous reaction. According to Dr. Martin Stern, a consultant clinical immunologist at Leicester general hospital, it is possible, with sensible precautions, for a sufferer from peanut allergy to be far more at risk from death from the ordinary incidents of life and old age than from the allergy. Only 2 per cent. of the population suffer from some form or other of food intolerance, and within that group are those suffering from allergic reactions, including the other forms of real nut such as hazelnuts and walnuts.

I have spoken to representatives of the Food and Drink Federation and, from what they have told me, I am sure that their members are only too well aware, not only of the concerns of people such as Mrs. Hammond, but of the need to do something about them in a practical way. There has been some useful work already.

Following the 1984 report on food intolerance by the Royal College of Physicians and the British Nutrition Foundation, those organisations were involved—with the British Dietetic Association, the FDF and the Leatherhead Food Research Association—in an initiative to establish a central source of information about the composition of food to assist in the professional management of food intolerance. That led to the establishment in 1987 of the food intolerance databank, which sought to list products that were free from one or more of the most common causes of food intolerance, such as milk, egg, wheat and soya.

At that time, it was felt that peanuts were fairly easy to exclude from the diet, so it was not seen as a priority to

[Mr. Garnier]

include foods that did not contain peanuts. The databank is updated annually, and consideration was given earlier this year to extending its scope to include such foods. However, given the lack of understanding about the precise cause of the reaction, and thus the difficulty in identifying which part of the peanut is responsible, it was impossible to establish a medically correct definition of "free from" in the case of peanuts. Therefore, it was not possible to extend the databank.

For similar reasons, it is understood that the anaphylaxis support group has recently abandoned its attempt to produce a list of products that sufferers from peanut allergy may eat with safety. The group also appears to share the view that the establishment of a list of products that are free from peanuts per se would be of limited value and, more critically, potentially dangerous to any individuals who might react adversely to peanut oil.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because this is an important subject, and I congratulate him on raising it.

Although there are difficulties involved, we could have a labelling system that includes foods such as the nuts that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. Peanuts are not the only food to which people are allergic, although peanut allergy is one of the fastest growing food allergies. Apparently, until 1992 there were no deaths from peanut allergy in this country, but we have had five or six in the past year. Does he agree that labelling is an answer to some degree, and perhaps the Government should consider that?

Mr. Garnier: No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will return to that issue, but there are problems with labelling, and I shall seek to develop them in the few minutes left to me.

Notwithstanding the proven success of the food intolerance databank in assisting professional dieticians to provide positive advice to those who suffer from food intolerance, the option of improved labelling of the ingredients of foods has also been explored as a means of assisting those who are allergic to peanuts. That is not likely to be particularly helpful, because, while an indication of the presence of peanuts, or their possible presence, may alert sufferers to avoid such products, labelling cannot provide assurance about products that are not so labelled. Furthermore, until the causative agent has been identified, such labelling would have to embrace not just peanuts but all their derivatives, including minor components, which would be an impractically complex task.

Moreover, it is the nature of the oil refining industry's processes that oils can be unintentionally but unavoidably mixed within a product. It is therefore possible that not just a generic vegetable oil but a specific single oil may contain a minor admixture of peanut oil which, other than to the individual who might react adversely to its presence, would have no other consequence for the user or consumer.

Peanut oil is particularly stable and thus, in its refined and de-odourised form, is frequently chosen as a carrier for colours, flavourings and vitamins, as well as the essential lubrication of food processing equipment. The search for, and validation of, alternatives will inevitably take a considerable time, to ensure that there are no untoward effects on product quality.

While the industry is prepared to extend the labelling of products where the presence of peanuts is not currently required by labelling legislation, it is hesitant to do so because, on current evidence, it would be of limited value to those who suffer from peanut allergy. Extending such labelling to include all peanut derivatives would, given manufacturers' reluctance to guarantee the suitability of products to sufferers against current medical uncertainties, mean that many products could be identified as "possibly" containing peanut derivatives. That would almost certainly embrace products that sufferers had previously consumed without adverse effect and, thus, serve only to confuse and diminish the value of labelling the presence of peanuts.

What should we look for? To address the medical background, I understand that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will shortly initiate work with Professor John Warner of Southampton, a noted clinical allergist and paediatrician. In addition, the oil processors' association is considering funding complementary work designed to clarify the allergenicity of variously refined and processed peanut oils.

In the meantime, educating the public and those involved in preparing and providing food should be a priority. The Food and Drink Federation is assisting the Ministry to increase awareness both among the public and within the industry. I welcome the liaison between the various interest groups, including the Ministry and the anaphylaxis group, and trust that they will continue to search for ways of assisting those who suffer from food intolerance, including peanut intolerance.

May I place on the record my gratitude to the Parliamentary Secretary for his close interest in this subject?

10.47 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) on making such a steady, sensible and well thought-out speech about this extremely difficult and emotive matter. I am grateful to him, as the House of Commons will be, for raising the issue of peanut allergy for debate. I have been interested to hear his account of the problems experienced by his constituents, particularly Mrs. Hammond and her daughter Jessica. Mrs. Hammond sounds like a remarkably sensible and level-headed woman. The letter that she has written to my hon. Friend about her daughter is similar to many received by me and other hon. Members.

My hon. Friend mentioned the letters received by my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), who is in his place tonight, and for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), who is also here. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) mentioned two such tragedies in her constituency. Those letters from people who are allergic to peanuts or with dependants who are so allergic have often portrayed harrowing stories. The many letters that I have received have confirmed the picture that I have built up over the past few months, which was entirely unexpected by me.

First, may I express, on behalf of the Her Majesty's Government, myself and all my colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my profoundest sympathy to all those who have lost loved ones as a result of a severe reaction to peanuts or other nuts, or as a result

of other food allergies. The people who have to cope with the problem daily have my deepest admiration for the way in which they endure what is inevitably a nightmare scenario.

Secondly, I pay tribute to the efforts of various people around the country who have formed action groups. Mrs. Hammond's group is particularly concerned with the peanut allergy. Last week, the anaphylaxis group came to see me with my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow), who has taken a keen and close interest in the matter, through his constituent, Mr. David Reading, a remarkable man who has so tragically lost his daughter Sarah, as my hon. Friend said tonight.

I was most impressed by the balanced, sensible and pragmatic approach that those groups have adopted in increasing our knowledge and the depth of knowledge of all those involved in this matter throughout the United Kingdom by their sensible, balanced and thoroughly responsible campaigning methods. We are grateful to them and my Department looks forward to working closely with all those groups in future.

It is extremely difficult to be precise about the prevalence of peanut allergy in the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend dealt with the matter extremely well and I shall not go over it again; suffice it only to say that the foods most likely to be associated with intolerance reactions are more extensive than my hon. Friend mentioned. In addition to the nuts, there are cows' milk, hens' eggs, wheat, soya, chocolate, fish and citrus fruits.

Only a small proportion of the 2 per cent. who are affected will be allergic to peanuts and an even smaller proportion will have life-threatening reactions. We believe that the number at risk could be around 5,000, though there are arguments about that figure because of the difficulty of finding a satisfactory model.

My hon. Friend mentioned the research to be carried out at Southampton university by Professor Warner to establish how widespread the peanut allergy may be and to identify what parts of the peanut are allergenic, but the results will not be available for at least a year or probably longer.

The House may recall that, on 13 January, we announced an initiative by the Government to raise awareness of the problem in the food industry. On the instructions of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I wrote to the leaders of the main trade associations concerned. Subsequently, their representatives have met officials of the Ministry and the Department of Health to learn more about these issues and to consider what best could be done to help.

Officials from both Departments have also met representatives of consumer bodies and the enforcement authorities, and several of the parents most directly involved in dealing with this affliction.

I am pleased to say that the response has been positive, and all those we have contacted have expressed willingness to spread the word within their organisation, through trade journals, training courses and seminars. We have provided material to help them do so.

Some food companies have started to take action with voluntary labelling. I have been particularly impressed with the example that one major retailer has shown me, though there is much work being done by many others. Also, some in the food industry have been investigating alternatives to the use of peanuts and peanut oil. I am pleased that enforcement authorities' representatives have offered to distribute our information notes to the small and medium-sized businesses that their officers visit. It will mean that awareness of the problem will become widespread.

We are keeping in close touch with all those contacts so that we can, in the near future, assess the results of the initiative.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Although the efforts by the food industry are commendable, as are the efforts to publicise problems with peanut and other allergies, has the Minister had discussions with the British Medical Association which says categorically there should be mandatory food labelling in this area?

Mr. Soames: I personally have not had discussions with the BMA, but the Department of Health and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are in constant touch with all the relevant bodies that we consult as a matter of course. I am sure that they have talked to the BMA, but I shall let the hon. Lady know the nature of any substantial discussions we may have had.

As I have said, we shall keep in close touch with all whom we have consulted to ensure that we follow up our initiative. We are also acting on many other matters. We are funding research, which my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough has already mentioned—particularly that led by Professor Warner. We are producing information for consumers, including an excellent booklet—to be published in April—which will advise people on how to deal with food allergies: it refers to nut allergy in some detail. We are collaborating with allergy experts to produce better information for sufferers, particularly on how they can use food labels to avoid problem products.

We are also issuing updated guidance to general practitioners. That is one of the most important things that have emerged from consultation with families—and one of the most important things impressed on me by David Reading, of the anaphylaxis group, was the vital necessity of ensuring that when doctors see a patient suffering from such a reaction, they can identify it. Thank God, in the case of Jessica Hammond there was a doctor to hand, who knew what he was dealing with.

It is not the doctors' fault that they are expected to know everything about everything. I think that we owe it to them, and to all sufferers, to ensure that the symptoms of anaphylaxis are immediately available to doctors as part of their training and on-going knowledge. I assure the hon. Member for Selly Oak that the Department of Health has taken steps to ensure that doctors have that information at their fingertips, through its excellent system for disseminating such information.

We are issuing guidance to other health professionals as well, to raise their awareness of these allergies and of the appropriate treatment for people who may be at risk from anaphylactic shock. We are consulting the Food Advisory Committee, which advises the Government independently on such matters and which will consider the issue next month. I know that many of the groups that have made representations to the Government have also made submissions to the Food Advisory Committee, and I very much hope that that includes the anaphylaxis group. I saw the group last week, and I know that it was going to make a submission; I hope that it did so earlier this week.

The complicated issue of labelling is at the heart of the debate. The labelling of pre-packed foodstuffs is already

[Mr. Soames]

extremely comprehensive: as a general rule, if peanuts are an ingredient they should appear on the label. However, there are one or two exceptions—stemming from the EC directive on food labelling—which might mean that the peanut component is not properly identified. We should like those exemptions to be removed or considerably reduced; last year, we vigorously argued the case for such action at two meetings with our European Union partners.

I regret to say that we have not made much progress so far, but there are signs that an agreement to list specified food allergens whenever they are added to food—even when they might have qualified for exemption—may be possible. We shall support such a change, but achieving it may take a considerable time. I have warned those who have been to see me; it is important for hon. Members on both sides of the House not to delude themselves about the time that it may take us to reach a conclusion.

I must consider very carefully how far we should get ahead of the rest of the Community. If we took unilateral action, we would come under pressure not to apply our new rules to imports from other member states. As the origin of pre-packed products is not always stated on labels, there would be a risk of misleading consumers into thinking that all products on the retail shelves were subject to the same rules, whether they were or not—with potentially disastrous consequences for people in the difficult position that we are discussing. That would be very dangerous and unsatisfactory for some people, which is why better co-ordinated action by the Community is so much more worth while. Indeed, such action is essential, and we shall press for it.

So far, I have dealt with pre-packed foods. Let me now deal briefly with foods that are sold loose: for example, cakes and baked products sold in bakers' shops, and foods sold in catering outlets. The hand of labelling legislation falls lightly in those sectors and for good reason. First, intending purchasers can ask for information from shop assistants and waiters. Secondly, imposing full labelling rules on what are often small businesses would place an unproportionately heavy burden on them. Thirdly, there is the simple and practical problem that notices can become separated from the foods to which they apply. We have spoken to experts in the catering sector and their advice has been that, although there is scope for greater awareness and information availability in catering outlets, detailed labelling is simply not practical.

As I have said, the Food Advisory Committee will look at these issues further in April and we shall not hesitate to consider with care, as we always do, the advice that it gives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough has done a signal service in a measured and dignified way. This is a highly emotive and difficult issue which causes untold anxiety and great worry to rather more people than any of us had any idea about. My hon. Friend has done an important service and I want to assure him that the Government are thoroughly committed to trying to find a sensible, pragmatic and workable way in which we can make life easier for these people.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 31 March 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Genetic Processes

9.34 am

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I wish to present a petition to the House of Commons which has been signed and organised by the Rev. John Leonard, vicar of Kingskerswell. It has been signed by him and by about 200 of his parishioners in the parishes of Coffinswell and Kingskerswell.

The petition draws the attention of the House to three abuses of genetic processes: first, the use of eggs from aborted foetuses to induce pregnancy; secondly, the implanting of donated eggs in post-menopausal women; and thirdly, the choosing of donated eggs to determine the colour and sex of a child.

The petitioners who have signed the petition regard these practices as abhorrent—a view which I entirely share—and ask the House to take two courses of action. They ask first that steps be taken to discourage the process; and secondly, if that discouragement does not work, they call on this honourable House to enact suitable legislation.

The petition ends in the usual way.

To lie upon the Table.

Disabled Facilities Grants (Wales)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.35 am

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I am most grateful for the opportunity today to bring to the Minister's attention one aspect of the problems associated with disabled people in Wales—the provision of disabled facilities grants.

My constituent Mrs. Rogers—I have deliberately altered the name—is 72 years old. She weighs about eight stone; she has always been a very active and busy lady. Her husband is also in his early 70s. He was admitted to hospital last year and had both his legs amputated at the knee. He weighs about 15 stone.

Mr. Rogers was discharged from hospital to his home, a comfortable three-bedroomed, semi-detached house. He was only too pleased to be going home, and his wife could not get him home soon enough—except that, when the ambulanceman left, the reality of community care came home to the family

Mr. Rogers cannot get up or down stairs, he cannot sit himself up in bed, or get on a bedpan or use a commode. He cannot get in and out of bed, or in and out of a wheelchair, or a bath or a shower. He cannot wash his hair. He cannot be taken in or out of the house in a wheelchair.

Mr. Rogers is a game individual. His wife is practical and a tower of strength, but she cannot lift him or safely steady him. It is just not physically possible for an eight-stone elderly lady to manhandle a disabled man almost twice her weight. He needs gadgets, such as pulleys and handrails, so that he can get up and down, and in and out of bed, and into or out of a wheelchair. He needs adaptations: perhaps not an extension to the house, but certainly a stair lift, wider doorways and ramps, instead of steep steps, so that he can move around his home and not be a prisoner in one room.

Mr. Rogers needs a different shower, unlike the one he has over the bath, so that, as he puts it, he can keep himself clean and enjoy some privacy and dignity.

Mr. and Mrs. Rogers need a disabled facilities grant for these adaptations if they are to cope. They have been told that they will have to wait three years for such a grant. They are just one of many couples who have approached me for help. Patients are being discharged from hospital to schemes of care in the community. They move from the boundaries of health care into social care. The keys to adequate and successful care for the disabled in the community are adaptations to their homes.

There are 300,000 carers in Wales. We rely on them as the backbone of care in the community. They look to us in the House to ensure that the basic facilities that will make their task possible will be available to them.

In Wales, according to the 1986 Welsh house condition survey, while only one in four owner-occupied households are pensioners, two out of every five pensioner households live in homes needing more than £3,000-worth of repairs. People aged over 75 are more likely to live in poor housing. Almost two thirds of households eligible and entitled to grant aid are elderly people.

As people get older, their need for a disabled facilities grant becomes more likely. With the introduction of care in the community, more pensioners will need grant help if they are to stay in suitable housing where they can be warm, safe and comfortable. The ability to meet that need

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

at an average cost, based on Swansea city's experience, of £3,000 in disabled facilities grant per household is vital to the success of community care.

I have raised the issue during Welsh Questions on a number of occasions and have drawn both the Secretary of State's and the Minister's attention to the fact that, in my view, care in the community cannot work unless disabled facilities grants are available and adaptations are carried out before a patient is discharged home from hospital.

The Secretary of State's response resembled that of a petty schoolboy in the playground. "Don't blame me, blame the Labour councils," he told me, "Let the councils put their money where the hon. Member's mouth is."

If that really is the response of the right hon. Gentleman to a legitimate question about the funding of grants for the disabled and frail elderly, he should get himself back to basic courtesies, never mind constructing glib slogans. It is neither appropriate nor seemly to make such comments and push the frail elderly and disabled into that argument to avoid responsibility for implementing his own Government's policies.

The Under-Secretary of State who is to reply to the debate informed my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on 10 January that £27.9 million is available to local authorities for disabled facilities grants in the financial year 1994-95. That is somewhat less than the Secretary of State led me to believe. He told me in a parliamentary answer on January 17 this year that local authorities had had £26 million in 1992-93, and that he was increasing that figure this year by £6.6 million. So in seven days the disabled in Wales seem to have lost £4.7 million.

Since 1 April 1992, however, the allocation of moneys for disabled facilities grants is a notional inclusion into the basic credit allowance of local councils. It has therefore become easy for any Minister in Wales to claim that there has been no cut by central Government, even though local councils are having to make up progressive year-on-year reductions in funding for all housing needs.

It is unfortunate that, because of the switch to care in the community, the increased demand for disabled facilities grants has coincided with the Government ceasing to make a distinct and separate allocation of disabled facilities grant moneys, shifting such grants into the basic credit allocation and away from the supplementary credit allowance. That means that grants for the disabled now have to compete with other demands on the council's capital programme.

In Swansea, for instance, the city's ability to switch money to disabled grants is limited by the city's commitment to long-standing projects such as the PRC housing refurbishment programme. Disabled facilities grants now have to compete with other grants for council house repairs and improvements. Those competing demands jostle for priority within a reduced budget.

A recent survey of local authorities in Wales undertaken by Swansea city council shows that the proportion of basic credit allocation used for disabled facilities grant purposes varies from a mere 7 per cent. to an enormous 83 per cent. The question seems to be by how much one can rob Peter to pay Paul. Of the councils that took part in the survey, 62 per cent. experienced a shortfall of finance for disabled facilities grants, with increases required ranging from 10 per cent. to 150 per cent. The average increase in capital required to deal with demand was 33 per cent.

The experience of Swansea city council is that the number of applications for grant has increased. In April 1991, 204 applications were approved, out of a total of 555 applications. In 1992, 491 applications were approved, from 706 original applications. From April 1993 to June 1993, when disabled facilities grants were stopped for lack of funds, 66 applications were approved, from 162 original applications. The city now has 250 applications awaiting approval, and 470 inquiries on hold. To meet that need, the city will need an extra £2 million.

It has been a source of satisfaction that in Swansea there has not been an excessive wait for disabled facilities grant. —until this year, when it became apparent that the amount the city had allocated for disabled facilities grant, along the lines the Government had suggested would be the city's needs, no longer met increased need for adaptations. There is now a backlog of 263 full applications awaiting approval. Acceptance of new applications has been frozen. Approximately £500,000 of next year's disabled facilities grant allocation has been spent, and the system is breaking down.

It is not just that the vulnerable and their carers are having to cope with special problems and difficulties in totally unsatisfactory circumstances, as in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Rogers; it is grossly inefficient that a system of care which depends on three agencies—the health authority, county social services and the district councils grant system—should be jeopardised in this way.

Hospitals do not want elderly patients commandeering scarce acute long-term beds, but the health authority is not prepared to pay for nursing care in private nursing homes.

The Under-Secretary and I served together on the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs that in 1992 examined community care in Wales, especially in respect of the needs of the elderly. One aspect we explored was the discharge of patients from hospital. I am extremely perturbed that, as far as I know, there remains in force a Welsh Office circular dated 5 January 1990, which was included in the annexe of the fourth report of that Committee, published on 11 March 1992. It states:

"No NHS patient should be placed in a private nursing home against his/her wishes if it means that he/she or a relative will be personally responsible for the home's charges."

Among the witnesses from county council social services departments who appeared before the Committee on 5 February 1992 was Mr. Byron Williams, assistant director of community care for Gwynedd. At column 159 of the minutes, I suggested that there was a hidden conspiracy between consultant geriatricians and hospital social workers in discharging elderly people from hospital into private nursing homes, without explaining the meaning of the relevant paragraph in the Welsh Office circular. Mr. Williams replied:

"I quite agree with the sentiments you are expressing. What we have to look at is the pressures on those people in those circumstances, and they are quite appalling. Sometimes it is a kind of social conspiracy, almost, involving a number of people, quite unconsciously, to achieve certain tidy outcomes, which is residential nursing home care."

It concerns me that the Welsh Office circular remains in force and that patients are still discharged into private nursing homes without a proper explanation of the financial implications. I am certain that still goes on, but it is complicated by the fact that the patients return home first before entering a private nursing home, which avoids the provisions of the Welsh Office circular.

Whatever happens, when the elderly patient is discharged home, the social services department eventually makes an assessment of need, based on the requirement for adaptations. My experience is that social workers take no account of the length of time that work will take to complete. In any case, is it efficient to pay for a nursing home place for any length of time when a relatively small amount of money spent on aids and adaptations can often enable a patient to live happily, competently and decently at home, with ancillary care support services?

Disabled facilities grants are extremely cost-effective if they allow the individual to remain in his own home, if that is where he wants to be, compared with admission to a nursing home at a cost of up to £16,000 a year. If community care is to be a meaningful alternative, it must be paid for in terms of not only social workers, health visitors, district nurses and care assistants but adapting homes where necessary—and quickly, so that the health, morale and well-being of patients and their carers are not worn down by the strain of barely coping.

I hope that the Minister will re-examine that issue and amend the Welsh Office circular, so that the financial burden of means testing is clearly explained to patients. They are given a so-called choice, but in reality there is no choice in terms of being discharged from hospital into a nursing home. I hope that he will also consider the needs of patients receiving care in the community and will increase funding of disabled facilities grants.

That allocation should be ring-fenced and specific, as part of community care funding. Local councils need to be on top of the demand for care, so that they may take their crucial place in the community care chain. For patients such as Mr. Rogers, returning home should be a continuum of suitable care, not a sentence of house arrest.

I hope that the Minister will reconsider that important issue. The fundamental error in April 1992 was to transfer the only mandatory housing grant—the disabled facilities grant—out of the supplementary credit allowance and into the basic credit allowance. If the Minister examines the issue carefully, I am sure that the lives of many people who experience tremendous anguish in trying to cope at home without necessary adaptations will be made much more pleasant.

9.57 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I am glad of the opportunity to respond to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on this important matter. I listened carefully to his comments, and various points that he raised deserve replies.

The hon. Gentleman described the take-up of moneys allocated to Swansea city council. The figures I have for the latest available year substantially bear out the hon. Gentleman's comments about better take-up by that council. In the previous year, it used less than half the moneys allocated for disabled facilities grants.

I appreciate the difficulties experienced by the hon. Gentleman's constituent, Mr. Rogers. That is exactly the sort of case to which we all want to see local authorities responding sympathetically and speedily.

I must correct an apparent confusion in the hon. Gentleman's mind. The sum for disabled facilities grant in the coming year will be £27.9 million, which is £1.5 million more than the current year. In turn, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is bringing forward an additional package of a variety of measures to try to help disabled people, totalling £6.6 million, so there is no question of a reduction of £4.7 million in seven days.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that housing has a crucial role to play in the success of community care. If we are to encourage people to continue to lead independent lives in their own homes or non-institutional settings for as long as possible, we need to ensure that their accommodation and the arrangements for their care are appropriate for their individual requirements.

There are impressively high levels of home ownership in Wales, emphasising the importance that the vast majority of people in Wales attach to owning their own homes. Similarly significant is the community spirit, which we are anxious to maintain and enhance and which gives us tremendous opportunities to develop community care in a way that is sensitive to, and takes advantage of the strength of, those communities.

As many homes were built during periods of rapid industrial expansion around the turn of the century, proper maintenance, repair and improvement of those homes plays a vital part in securing their future. It must first be for owners to take responsibility for looking after their homes, but it is important that we provide help for those in need. That is where our home renovation grant arrangements have provided invaluable assistance, not only in renovating and improving property, but also by providing essential adaptations for disabled people in Wales, through disabled facilities grants and minor works assistance.

Rightly, those grants form a very important part of care in the community. By providing substantial assistance to adapt homes for disabled people, they help to ensure that disabled people need not move away from their existing homes, but can remain in familiar surroundings, living in dignity and comfort with the support of families, friends, neighbours and carers. That makes best use of strong, existing communities, which are essential in underpinning the principle of care in the community.

Since the new system was introduced in 1990, disabled facilities grants worth more than £30 million have been made available to disabled people in Wales. We should not underestimate the impact that that has had, not only in providing the facilities to enable people to remain in their own homes, but in easing the difficulties that many of those people who help or care for them may have experienced.

Obviously, disabled facilities grants form part of the wider home renovation grant arrangements. That is especially important as many of the homes in which disabled people live will not only require adaptation but may also need works of repair or improvement.

From the outset, the Government realised that the new grant system would have tremendous value in Wales. The special financial arrangements that applied in the first two years of the new system have ensured that Welsh authorities were well placed, and the system was off to a good start. The substantial sums of the taxpayers' money that we have since made available have helped authorities to tackle the repair, improvement and adaptation of the homes of those who are least able to help themselves. Those have often been the elderly, the disabled, or people who were simply unable to make any contribution towards the cost of repairs under the earlier grant arrangements.

Following the introduction of the current system in 1990, almost £650 million has been provided for home renovation in Wales. Next year, a further £149 million is

[Mr. Gwilym Jones]

allocated for mandatory renovation grants alone—£3.5 million more than in 1993-94. A further £27.9 million, as I have mentioned, is available specifically for disabled facilities and discretionary grants. That is £1.5 million more than this year, and that total of almost £28 million will enable local authorities to give about 6,300 grants for disabled people in Wales at the average grant rate if that money is used for disabled facilities grants alone. Those are substantial sums.

From 1992-93, we have ensured that funding arrangements for disabled facilities grants are such that local authorities can respond more flexibly, in liaison with social services departments, to the needs of people with disabilities in the context of care in the community. With disabled facilities grants being of help in enabling many disabled people to continue to live in their own homes, there will be occasions when alternative approaches may be more suitable and are felt to be more appropriate by the disabled person. The current funding arrangements are designed to enable councils to consider all housing options, including transfer to more suitable accommodation, in responding to the needs of disabled people.

Local authorities have greater operational flexibility in the way in which the moneys are used, so that they may determine their own spending priorities and make the best judgments of how they should respond to the needs of disabled people, alongside other priorities, within the significant total sums from the taxpayer that we have made available.

During the three years since 1992-93, more than £80 million will have been made available in Wales specifically for disabled facilities grants and discretionary renovation grants. In 1992-93, less than half of those sums available for adaptations was spent on such grants. We estimate that, for the current year, the figures will again be no more than half of the available moneys.

There is obviously scope for councils to direct more money to disabled facilities grants. I hope that Welsh local authorities will take full advantage next year of the increase that we have made available to ensure that disabled people can obtain the assistance they need to adapt their homes in the community.

Given the moneys that have been, and are being, made available, there is no reason why any disabled person who is entitled to a grant should not receive the help that he or she needs, where the housing authority and social services department agree that the package of care should include adaptations. There can be no foundation for any suggestion that the absence of a grant can stem from lack of financial provision.

It is essential that there is a partnership between housing and social services authorities in agreeing with the disabled person the package of care that is most suitable for his or her needs. Indeed, there is a statutory duty for housing authorities to consult the social services departments. I know that, in many areas of Wales, effective working relationships and liaison have been developed, and that can only be to the benefit of those seeking assistance.

I urge all Welsh local authorities to consider carefully their current liaison arrangements, to ensure that there is no blockage which may cause difficulties or delays in the provision of assistance for adaptation, making full and best use of the substantial sums of money that we have made available.

There have been comments about the delays in disabled people receiving the assistance which they deserve, and to which they are entitled. Timing and handling of applications must be a matter for individual councils. Councils must already make decisions on all renovation grants, including disabled facilities grants, within six months of receipt of the application. Councils must, rightly, consult social services colleagues and the disabled person in deciding the most suitable forms of assistance to meet the needs of that individual.

While it remains for the councils to administer the system and determine the priority which they give to applications locally, in so doing they should account for their actions in helping to meet local needs sensitively and sympathetically.

It is essential that the substantial sums of the taxpayers' money available for disabled facilities and mainstream renovation grants are targeted on those people who are in greatest need. The test of resources that currently applies to all grants ensures that those in most need receive the greatest help—up to 100 per cent. of the cost of works. Correspondingly, it is right that those who are able to make a contribution towards the cost of renovation or adaptation to their home should do so. That is essential if those who are not in such a fortunate position are to receive the help they need from the taxpayer.

The Government have recently undertaken a review of the renovation grant system to ensure that it will continue to be effective in tackling housing condition issues over the remainder of the decade. That review also covered disabled facilities grants, and we are grateful for the comments that have been provided by local authorities and others with experience of operating the system.

We are currently looking carefully at the comments that have been made, including those on some aspects of the disabled facilities grant arrangements. Clearly, it would be premature at this stage for me to pre-empt any decision that may emerge from that review, but I can assure the House that the continued provision of help to adapt disabled people's homes, where that is the most suitable approach, will continue to be uppermost in our minds.

Although I have concentrated on adaptations to homes which are owned by disabled people, we must not lose sight of the importance of providing facilities for those tenants of local authorities who may also suffer from disabilities. The principle of community care applies here equally, and it is essential that they too should be given the facilities to remain in their own homes and within their existing communities where that is appropriate.

Councils can, of course, adapt their own housing to the benefit of their tenants. The extent of adaptations carried out, or the possibility of transfer to more suitable council accommodation, must be for the council to consider, in liaison with social services departments and tenants.

Funding for the adaptations will come from the councils' budgets for repair and maintenance of their housing. Again, considerable financial resources have been made available for that in Wales. For the current financial year, some £52 million has been provided. Disabled facilities grants are also available to council tenants if they would prefer that route to secure adaptations to their

homes. Whatever route is chosen, the end result must be the same for council tenants and home owners who may suffer from disabilities.

It is clear that we have recognised the importance of caring for people in their communities by providing substantial support for disabled facilities grants and renovation more generally. Judged by the proportion of the money spent where it is intended, adequate funding is already available, and there is scope for councils to direct more of those moneys to disabled facilities grants. It is essential that the various local authorities and agencies work together in assessing and providing the most suitable package of care for disabled people.

Suitable housing is a vital component of any care package, either through the adaptation of existing homes or the provision of alternative housing. It is important that the accommodation best meets the need of the individual. We have the mechanisms in place to achieve that and we have provided substantial funding to support it. The key issue is that those councils and agencies in the front line provide the packages of care that disabled people deserve and need and to which they are entitled.

The White Paper "Caring for People" placed emphasis on the necessity for effective arrangements for assessing the care needs of people with a wide variety of dependencies. It was recommended that local social service authorities should identify and assess people's needs, taking full account of personal preferences and those of their carers, and design packages of care best suited to enabling people to live as normal a life as possible.

The key objectives remain. The first is to promote the development of domiciliary, day and respite care to enable people to live in their own homes wherever feasible and sensible, and to encourage the targeting of home-based care on those who need it most. The second is to ensure that practical support for carers is a high priority. Assessment of care needs should always take account of the needs of family, friends and neighbours. The third is to make proper assessment of need and good care management the cornerstone of high quality care. Care arrangements should be in line with individual needs and preferences. The fourth is to clarify the responsibilities of agencies and hold them to account for their performance.

That is the basis on which we continue to move forward. I fully share the regard that the hon. Member for Gower has for the importance of disabled facilities grants in Wales. We have made substantial sums available. The basis is right, and we will continue to keep it under review. I look forward to continuing progress.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link (Voluntary Purchase)

10.15 am

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport knows, I have had to detain him and the House many times over the past two or three years on the issue of compensation for those who are unfortunate enough to have homes immediately adjacent to the existing rail routes to the channel tunnel. Today, I shall deal with a different but related issue—the position of those who are unfortunate enough to find their homes in the path of the proposed new route, by means of high-speed rail link, between London and the channel tunnel.

For those people, the terms of the voluntary purchase scheme that was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport in his statement on 24 January are critical. The terms of that scheme will decide whether they can escape from blight in the near future and be able to move by selling their homes to British Rail at an unblighted price, or whether they will be blighted for a considerable time ahead.

This is now a significant regional issue, covering London, Essex and Kent. We are talking about people with homes within the 108 km which is the length of the high-speed line between St. Pancras and the channel tunnel terminal at Cheriton. We are talking about people who are facing blight not just for a year or two. On the most optimistic forecast by British Rail, construction will not begin for two and a half years—at the end of 1996.

Therefore, those people will face blight for some seven to ten years. Even after the channel tunnel rail link is completed, it will take a further year after its full operation for them to be able to seek financial redress for any depreciation in the value of their homes under the injurious affection provisions of the Land Compensation Act 1973. This is a profoundly important issue, affecting the people between the two ends of the channel tunnel high-speed rail link.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the voluntary purchase scheme on 24 January, he said that the voluntary purchase arrangements would be available to two groups of homes. The first would be those within the statutorily safeguarded route. The details and maps of the statutorily safeguarded route were released on 25 February. He said also that the voluntary purchase scheme would be extended to another group of homes outside the physical parameters of the statutorily safeguarded zone. I should like to examine the proposals for the voluntary purchase scheme in relation to those two groups of homes, starting with those within the statutorily safeguarded zone.

I was left with the clear impression from my right hon. Friend's statement of 24 January that all homes in the safeguarded zone would be eligible for voluntary purchase, but, on examination of the small print, I find that that is not the case. It turns out that the voluntary purchase scheme extends only to the part of the statutorily safeguarded zone that runs on the surface; it does not extend to the part below the surface.

[Sir John Stanley]

The key paragraph in the document published by British Rail, which is headed "Guide to Property Purchase Procedures for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link", is paragraph 3.3:

"An important distinction is made between property safeguarded at the surface that is, at ground level, and property where the safeguarding applies only to areas below the surface, either for tunnels or ground support works. The voluntary purchase scheme applies only to property included within the surface safeguarded area."

I shall examine the justification provided for the exclusion of properties within the safeguarded zone but where the route lies in tunnel. I must stress the significance of that exclusion. We have been told that 23 per cent. of the route is now in tunnel, which means that the voluntary purchase scheme does not apply to properties along nearly a quarter of the whole route, even though they are within the statutorily safeguarded zone.

In his correspondence to me, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State justified the exclusion by reference to the practice that has been followed in schemes to extend the London underground system where blight purchase provisions have not been applied to new underground lines such as the Jubilee line.

I accept that it seems reasonable and fair that, in the construction of an underground line in a city such as London, it would not be possible to proceed if one had to acquire all the properties above the underground line. However, I do not accept that it is fair or reasonable that that precedent should be used as a justification for automatically excluding every other property above the tunnelled sections of the channel tunnel rail link.

It is not reasonable, because there is a world of difference between the impact on property situated above a relatively slow-moving underground line, where trains travel at about 20 or 30 mph in a tunnel with a relatively small diameter, and that on property above a tunnel with a much greater diameter, which carries international trains running at speeds of up to 140 mph. I believe that the latter case needs to be examined separately. It is relevant to me and some of my constituents, because the rail link enters the tunnel under the north downs at Blue Bell hill in my constituency.

I suggest that the Government and British Rail are taking the wrong approach by asking the wrong question. In considering whether the voluntary purchase scheme should apply, they are asking whether a particular home is situated alongside the route on the surface or alongside the route in tunnel. Where the route is on the surface, they say that the scheme should apply but, where it is in tunnel, it should not.

That is the wrong question. The right question is whether the property is or is not blighted. If it is blighted, surely the voluntary purchase scheme should be extended to it, regardless of whether the route is that point on the surface or in tunnel. I have no doubt that the property of my constituents who are in this predicament is blighted. Indeed, I would say that it is comprehensively blighted, and I have brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the particular cases of Mr. and Mrs. Margerum and Mr. and Mrs. Sandford.

In case there is any doubt in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport about whether homes have been blighted, I read to him from a letter that I have recently received from Mr. Margerum about his efforts to sell his property in the present circumstances:

"We have at U.R.'s"—

Union Railways'—

"request, tried to re-market the house. This includes contacting 13 estate agents; 7 of these knowing the situation refused even to come and value. 3 came to view the property but when realising the situation refused to market. 3 others are currently marketing, 2 of these have written reports to us that the proposed works are having an adverse effect, thus making a sale at a reasonable figure unlikely."

Mr. and Mrs. Margerum are now down to one estate agent, and I suspect that it will only be a short while before that estate agent tells them that it is hopeless trying to market their property at a reasonable price. I believe that such homes are without question comprehensively blighted.

The acute difficulties faced by such individuals have been added to by a letter that they received from British Rail at the end of January. I read from a letter received by Mr. Sandford, which is the same as one received by Mr. and Mrs. Margerum. British Rail wrote:

"I am writing to let you know that the Secretary of State for Transport has announced the Government's decision on the route to be safeguarded for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. This has been developed by Union Railways for the Department of Transport.

The route selected is proposed to be in tunnel at this point and may affect the subsoil to the property described above."

The property described was, of course, Mr. Sandford's home, and Mr. and Mrs. Margerum received exactly the same letter, which amounted to a formal warning from British Rail that the subsoil to the properties may be affected. That is a devastating letter to receive.

I took up the letter and the terms in which it was written with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He gave me a very interesting and in some ways remarkable reply on 15 March about British Rail's letter. He wrote:

"There is no requirement to send such letters, but this was done as a courtesy so that everyone affected by safeguarding knows where they stand."

I doubt whether Mr. and Mrs. Sandford or Mr. and Mrs. Margerum regard it as a great courtesy to receive from British Rail a letter that has a devastating effect on the value of their property for the foreseeable future, and makes it wholly unsaleable.

At the end of his letter, my right hon. Friend provided some remarkable new information, which was wholly excluded from the letter sent by British Rail. He said:

"In answer to the point put by Mr. Sandford to Union Railways about possible damage from the construction of the railway, any damage would be put right (though in fact damage is unlikely over such a deep tunnel)."

The remarkable situation is that British Rail sent a letter that caused certain and devastating blight to particular houses by saying that the subsoil might be affected but which contained no mention of any rectification of damage —but, lo and behold, the Secretary of State in his letter tosses out the fact that the damage will be rectified. That is no way to deal responsibly and reasonably with individuals.

It is absolutely apparent that the British Rail letter should now be formally withdrawn, and replaced by an alternative letter that would fully discharge the Secretary of State's commitment, by including a full indemnity from British Rail for the owners of properties, and for any subsequent purchasers, against the effects of damage resulting from the construction works due to take place under their homes. It is imperative that that be done.

Secondly, the properties must be dealt with from the standpoint of blight. It is no good making a blanket automatic exclusion from the voluntary purchase scheme of every home above tunnel along the entire route. The issue is whether individual homes are seriously blighted. If they are, in fairness to their owners they should be acquired.

The Secretary of State described the homes that would benefit in the part of the safeguarded route on the surface, where the voluntary purchase scheme applies, as follows:

"Homes wholly or substantially required for building the railway, together with those seriously affected by the works or operation of the railway, will be included in the safeguarded zone and will be offered voluntary purchase".—[*Official Report*, 24 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. 20.]

My right hon. Friend included two groups of homes in the scheme, the first of which was those where the land would be

"wholly or substantially required for building the railway".

Of course, that is not a concession; it simply gives effect to the standard blight purchase notices provisions that would apply to any transport or highway scheme where the land was required for the development.

The second leg represents a potentially important concession. My right hon. Friend said that, where the land itself was not required but homes would be

"seriously affected by the works or operation of the railway",

they would be brought into the safeguarded zone and made the subject of the voluntary purchase scheme.

The critical wording is the phrase, "seriously affected". The worth of the concession will depend entirely on how that phrase is interpreted. It is not satisfactory that British Rail, which has a vested interest in reducing to the minimum the sum that it will have to shell out in compensation, should be the arbiter of whether a property is seriously affected or not.

It is imperative that there should be some independent appellate body to which individuals could turn. The obvious body would be the Lands Tribunal. I urge my right hon. Friend to create an independent body to which people could appeal if they believed that their properties were seriously affected, but British Rail tried to maintain that they were not, and denied them the opportunity to use the scheme.

The second group consists of homes outside the statutorily safeguarded zone. I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has agreed in principle that some may be eligible for the voluntary purchase scheme. That reflects the principle embodied in section 62 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, a welcome policy development that acknowledges the fact that property certainly can be blighted even when it is not the subject of statutory blight. Section 62 gives a discretionary power to the highway authority—or, in this case, British Rail—to acquire homes which are blighted but not statutorily blighted.

However, there is a sting in the tail of what the Secretary of State said, to which I drew attention during the questions that followed his statement. The sting in the tail lies in the following wording:

"Any other homes that may be affected by operational noise above the proposed threshold for noise insulation will qualify for purchase in cases of hardship."—[*Official Report*, 24 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. 20.]

In other words, two criteria will have to be satisfied before individuals can use the concession. First, they have to demonstrate hardship. I hope that British Rail will interpret the word "hardship" in a sympathetic and understanding way, and will not be tight-fisted, mean and uncaring when, for example, it decides whether an individual illness in a particular family represents hardship.

The other critical requirement is that the predicted noise disturbance must be above the proposed threshold for noise insulation. Here the Government are in danger of making a significant error. The consultation period on the Department of Transport's proposed new noise insulation regulations for railway lines ended in February, and we await the Government's conclusions. However, all the hon. Members who represent constituencies in London, Essex and Kent along the route of the new high-speed rail link believe that the Government are setting the threshold for noise disturbance far too high.

The higher the threshold is set, the fewer the people who will qualify for noise insulation—or, in this case, for having their homes acquired under the voluntary purchase scheme. Indeed, if the Government persist in setting noise thresholds too high, the concession may prove almost worthless. Almost no properties at all may be able to use the scheme under the concession.

As my right hon. Friend knows, among local authorities and residents in the affected areas there is total unanimity on what the noise threshold should be. That level is set out in the papers that I know my right hon. Friend has received.

The standard is described—at least in Kent—as the Kent noise standard, but the paper was sent not only by the Kent district councils and by Kent county council, but by the London borough councils, the Surrey district councils and the Essex district councils, all of which have agreed a basis for the new noise insulation threshold. Of course, it is materially lower than the threshold that the Government originally proposed. I urge my right hon. Friend to adopt the local authorities' Kent noise standard, in preference to that suggested in the consultation paper.

I shall now briefly summarise the four points on which I hope that the Department and my right hon. Friends will be prepared to make changes to the voluntary purchase scheme in connection with the channel tunnel rail link. First, I hope that the scheme will be extended on a case-by-case basis to homes within the safeguarded zones that are above the tunnel sections and are individually well and truly blighted.

Secondly, I urge my right hon. Friend to get British Rail to withdraw the devastating letter dated 31 January that it sent to certain individuals above the tunnelled section, and replace it with an alternative letter that properly gives fair warning that the subsoil may be affected. The alternative letter should include a copper-bottomed legal guarantee to the owner of that property, whether the present owner or the subsequent purchaser, of full indemnification if the property is disturbed as a result of the tunnelling operations due to take place.

Thirdly, I am asking that there should be established, for those who have homes in the area of the line where it runs on the surface within the safeguarded zone, an independent tribunal, probably the Lands Tribunal. That tribunal should arbitrate independently and on the basis of the facts between individual home owners and British Rail on whether or not individual properties will be "seriously affected", either by the works or by the operation—the key trigger as to whether or not one can take advantage of the voluntary purchase scheme.

Fourthly, I am asking that the owners of those properties outside the safeguarded zone should be helped by the Government in the following way. When the Government

[Sir John Stanley]

lay before the House the noise insulation regulations, they should introduce a noise insulation threshold that is more reasonable, significantly lower and preferably the Kent noise standard. That acoustic threshold would ensure that those who face disturbance from the channel tunnel rail link trains, but who live outside the safeguarded zone, will be able to benefit from the voluntary purchase scheme and escape the blight.

10.41 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) for his consistence and perseverance in setting out to protect my constituents, as well as his, against the worst effects of blight. His work on compensation deserves the highest praise, and the gratitude of us all. I am grateful to him for allowing me to have two or three minutes to speak in this important debate.

I strongly endorse all that my right hon. Friend has said, particularly the need for some form of independent appeal. The voluntary purchase scheme operates in an arbitrary way. There are clear cases which, in my view and that of my right hon. Friend, should be treated sympathetically. We must have some independent appeal that overrides the internal and secret workings of Union Railways' or British Rail's tribunals.

The issue of noise is important. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport knows, many of us are deeply concerned about the intention to build a line capable of running trains at 180 mph, while building in the noise protection necessary for trains that run at 140 mph. It seems that, if the capacity to run faster trains exists, as soon as the signalling is capable of absorbing it, whoever runs the line in future will undoubtedly run faster trains. As I understand it, that will have considerable effects on noise. I hope that that will be part of the current planning.

There is a serious difficulty with blight. The length of time taken to complete a big project exceeds—by 2.5 generations of normal house ownership—the occupation of a family in a house. Most families spend, on average, less than six years in their homes. Many of the projects, particularly the one that we are discussing, will take at least 10 years. The one under discussion will take 15 years to complete. That is a long period for people to be unable to sell their houses at anything other than a distress sale price, leaving them with no scope for buying an alternative home.

Action groups and others face a cruel dilemma. We recently had a meeting at which North Downs Rail Concern advised as many solicitors, estate agents and professional advisers as possible to come to a presentation. We explained how much additional protection had been won by the work of action groups and others since the line was first proposed. As Union Railways will agree, the effect of such action has, in some ways, exacerbated the sense of blight. However, had we not fought like cats to win the protection, we would not have achieved the remarkable improvements in protection that have been obtained.

It is not just a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister. The Government must think about ways of achieving some buyer of last resort for people whose properties have been plunged into blight by large-scale Government schemes, but who are outside the statutory blight corridor.

10.46 am

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): Once again, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) has done the House a service by raising specific issues; he has certainly focused my attention and that of the officials in the Department. I shall respond to the four points that he raised, but it may be helpful to my right hon. Friend and to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) if I put on record a number of the points that relate generally to the voluntary purchase scheme.

Since the debate on 13 January, we have announced the route of the new channel tunnel rail link, with the exception of Ashford and Pepper hill, where we expect to reach a decision in the next few weeks. When we announce our conclusions, we shall be able to safeguard the entire route. We have also issued formal safeguarding directions for the route, except for the two exceptions that I mentioned.

Those directions came into force on 25 February, and are essentially a planning mechanism to ensure that conflicting development does not take place on land required for the purpose of an undertaking—in this case, the rail link. They also initiate the statutory blight arrangements for affected homes. Union Railways wrote to all those affected at the time, and has also produced a guide to property purchase procedures for the rail link, from which my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling has quoted.

Two safeguarded zones have been defined in the safeguarding directions and shown on the plans that accompany them. One is for land required for surface works, and the other is largely for land above deep-bored tunnels. The surface safeguarding creates a right to statutory blight compensation where homes and some other properties would be wholly or substantially required.

So that those affected know where they stand, all those homes included in the surface safeguarded zone will be offered voluntary purchase without the need to demonstrate a statutory right to compensation. Purchase will be on the same basis as if the houses were being acquired under a compulsory purchase order. The owners will be paid the market value of the home as if the rail link proposal did not exist, plus home loss payments, legal and agents' fees and disturbance costs as appropriate.

If agreement cannot be reached on voluntary purchase, blight notices may be served by the property owners qualifying, and any disputes can then be settled by the Lands Tribunal. That tribunal would also settle any disputes on statutory compensation for compulsory purchase and compensation for loss of value due to the physical effects of the operation of the rail link on the surface or in the tunnel under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973.

Compensation under that Act is a statutory right, and may be claimed 12 months after the start of use of the rail link. That is simply because time is needed to assess the actual impact, whether in tunnel or on the surface, of the railway once it is operational.

Advanced predictions of the physical effects, such as re-radiated noise, would probably not be sufficiently precise, and could cause later problems associated with

overpayment and underpayment. It would not be right for compensation to be available from an earlier date than the normal 12 months, especially as, during the construction period and for a time thereafter, the property market may well be distorted by the effects of the project. There could be difficulty in assessing the extent of any long-term drop in the value of homes.

However, exacting design aims have been set for the rail link, not only for noise, but for all other areas of potential environmental impact, such as vibration. Our paper on property purchase and compensation policy explains that the thinking behind this is that it is better to limit the environmental intrusion at source, as far as reasonably practicable, by putting the rail link in a cutting or providing mitigation in the form of noise barriers and landscaping, than to rely simply on compensation.

Union Railways has included in the surface safeguarded zone all the land that may be acquired, either temporarily or permanently, for the rail link and associated works, including land required for construction sites and ventilation shaft sites, and homes seriously affected by the works or operation of the railway have also been included. Having purchase arrangements related to property taken or seriously affected is nothing new; it is the accepted practice for road building. It is a tribute to the abilities of Union Railways in designing the project that so few homes need to be taken or are judged to be seriously affected and hence included in the zone.

In general, Union Railways is not seeking to acquire non-residential property at present before compulsory purchase powers are sought in the hybrid Bill for the rail link. Any non-residential property owner and occupier whose property interest meets the criteria for statutory blight is invited to contact Union Railways to discuss the position.

Acquisition by mutual agreement, with the blight notice procedure being held in reserve, can then be discussed. Statutory blight procedures for non-residential property apply to commercial properties with a rateable value not exceeding £18,000, and agricultural units. For properties not meeting the statutory blight criteria, purchase notice procedures may apply, as provided for in part IV of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Again, property owners and occupiers considering a purchase notice are invited to contact the relevant local planning authority, and to advise Union Railways of their position.

I know from the representations that I have received that many argue that a much wider surface safeguarded zone is needed. There is no planning argument for extending the safeguarded zone further, although I appreciate that, as an alternative, some people would like to see a purchase buffer zone apply along the route beyond the safeguarded zone.

It is true that such buffer zones, a set distance from the track, have been tried in the past, but after initial enthusiasm, the communities affected have found them a mixed blessing. That is because, first, a standard width zone, regardless of its width, is somewhat arbitrary and creates many anomalies and complaints about fairness. For example, a property over 100 m from the rail link in open country may be more affected than one half the distance away but shielded by buildings, or one that is close to the rail link but on the far side of a motorway from it.

The second reason is that, wherever the line is drawn, there is a perceived blighting effect just beyond it, and the wider and more arbitrary the delineation of the zone, the greater this problem tends to become.

Thirdly, in a wide zone, the increasing loss of neighbours and an influx of new neighbours on short-term leases is in itself perceived as generating blight. The people —usually the majority—who originally had no intention of moving as a result of the railway proposals increasingly feel that the community is changing too much for them to stay.

That is why we feel that the surface safeguarded zone is best restricted, as far as possible, to the homes that are either taken or seriously affected by the works, and that it should not be influenced by general fears or the perception of blight where in reality none should exist. As we said in our paper last year, this has to be coupled with the provision of information on impacts, particularly to building societies and estate agents, to try to bring fears down to the level of the likely impacts.

In addition to the homes included in the surface safeguarded zone, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport said in his January announcement, any other homes that may be affected by operational noise above the proposed threshold for noise insulation contained in the draft railway noise regulations will qualify for purchase in cases of hardship.

As with highway schemes, hardship needs to be proven, and each case is looked at individually. Those who think that they may qualify for the scheme should contact Union Railways. I should stress that the scheme is not a statutory requirement, and that decisions are entirely at the discretion of Union Railways.

As I have said, homes within the surface safeguarded zone will be offered voluntary purchase. In line with long-established practice for underground railways, purchase is not available for homes above bored tunnels. The practical evidence of underground railways in use is that their impacts are not sufficiently serious to justify purchase.

Land within 40 m of the centre line at a tunnel portal has been surface-safeguarded. Where land falls within the criteria for both surface and sub-surface safeguarding, the surface safeguarding will always prevail. Where tunnels are shallow—less than 9 m below the ground—the land above would normally be subject to surface safeguarding.

In addition, we have made it clear that property surveys will be undertaken of potentially affected homes both before and after construction of the rail link, and any damage caused by construction, including settlement due to tunnelling, will be put right. Any loss of value of homes caused by the physical effects of the rail link in operation in tunnel—from re-radiated noise, for example—may qualify for compensation under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973.

In the construction of the rail link, every effort will be made to minimise the impacts. However, if a home were made temporarily uninhabitable because of the disturbance, compensation would be paid in respect of the cost of moving to temporary accommodation. A code of practice for construction will be drawn up in consultation with the local authorities.

I now turn to the four points made by my right hon. Friend. I am grateful for his patience in letting me get on the record some wider points.

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

First, my right hon. Friend has not convinced me, on his first point, that all houses—he referred specifically to those above the tunnel—that are blighted should be bought. Blight is clearly a very real problem, which often arises from people's perceptions and is not based on hard evidence of what might be the effects of the construction and operation of the tunnel.

I cannot concede the general principle, which my right hon. Friend is forcing on me, that all houses that are blighted above tunnels should be bought. If one thinks of the number of houses that would be affected in Greater London, for example, one realises that thousands of properties could be involved.

My right hon. Friend has advanced powerful arguments on his second point, and he has persuaded me that the present position is not satisfactory. There is doubt what the consequences would be for property if the subsoil, for example, was affected. My right hon. Friend quoted from a letter which caused me concern when I read it.

My right hon. Friend is also concerned about the nature of any indemnity that would be offered if there was settlement. I take his point about an assurance or guarantee being given in writing. Although I repeat at the Dispatch Box that in all cases of settlement or structural damage there is an absolute guarantee that the damage will be put right, I take my right hon. Friend's point that that assurance should be repeated in writing.

I also take on board my right hon. Friend's point about what the distinction is between underground rail tunnels and broad-gauge rail link tunnels in terms of re-radiated noise. We have little experience, because we have not built such tunnels before. I am happy to repeat that if, as a result of re-radiated noise—that is when the building itself vibrates as a result of the movement of the trains—there is any reduction in value, under the Land Compensation Act there will be payments. That, of course, comes after the tunnel is open and the trains are running.

On my right hon. Friend's second point, I undertake —I shall take official advice—to reflect on the need to issue, or to have issued by Union Railways, fresh advice. There will be a new letter to all those affected who live over tunnels, not only to set out the best scientific evidence we have on settlement and re-radiated noise, but to explain precisely what the rights of the owners of the properties are. I shall read the record to ensure that I have covered my right hon. Friend's point. I hope that he is satisfied with that answer.

Thirdly, I also believe that my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent have deployed powerful arguments in relation to the definition of properties that will or will not be seriously affected by the safeguarded route. That must be a matter of judgment—I understand that—but it is in a category wholly different from whether a property is affected by the hardship scheme or not outside the safeguarded zone.

I understood my right hon. Friend to be referring to the safeguarded zone and to properties that might or might not be seriously affected. He has deployed powerful arguments there, and I shall reflect on whether it might be sensible to seek to clarify the position and perhaps—I can give no commitment from the Dispatch Box—whether there might be some reference to an independent party to establish whether a property or land is or is not seriously affected.

Fourthly, there is the question of the land outside the safeguarded zone. Not only properties affected by noise above the threshold may qualify for the hardship scheme; in some cases, others will qualify. I refer my right hon. Friend to paragraph 4.4 of the document issued by Union Railways.

Union Railways must define hardship, because this is a voluntary ex gratia scheme. However, I take my right hon. Friend's point about the noise threshold. The higher the threshold, the fewer properties will be purchased: we shall therefore pay close attention to the advice offered by local authorities.

I look forward to a debate later in the year—but, I trust, before the House rises for the summer recess—on noise thresholds, for which we shall seek the House's approval.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before I call the next speaker, I must notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Act:

British Railways Act 1994.

Asylum Seekers

11.1 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I want to discuss the treatment of asylum seekers in Britain. It is a serious matter—indeed, a scandal of growing proportions.

I have notified you, Madam Deputy Speaker—and the Minister—of the wish of my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), if he arrives, to speak briefly. We shall keep an eye on the time, so that everyone can have a say.

The asylum issue has acquired growing political importance. The newspapers seek to portray all who seek asylum as economic migrants, bogus asylum seekers or ne'er-do-wells. We should recognise, however, that, over the centuries, waves of people have fled from religious or social intolerance, political oppression, violence or wars, and have sought safety and sanctuary elsewhere. Centuries ago, people fled from this country to others; successive waves of people have come here from elsewhere in Europe.

Our history would be very different but for those waves of migrants. The social history of much of London, and many of London's achievements, can be traced to people who have fled to escape oppression. Jewish communities have come from Russia and Nazi Germany; people have come from the low countries; more recently, others have fled from oppression in different parts of the world.

The world is now in great turmoil. Many people are unable to speak freely: they fear the knock on the door at 4 am, and being taken away by the police. They also fear that, if they went to a police station and made inquiries about friends or relatives who had been taken away, they too would be arrested. People languish in fetid prisons around the world; those people seek asylum and safety.

We should never underestimate the enormous step involved in leaving one's own country, possibly never to return or to see family and friends again, and possibly unable to pursue a career. We should bear in mind the importance of that fateful decision. I know of people who, in their own countries, were professors, doctors and leading academics; now they are sweeping the streets of this capital city, unemployed or washing up in restaurants. Although such jobs are valuable and useful, those people could be doing something better suited to their skills.

Asylum seekers come from countries with oppressive regimes and a lack of human rights, where people are often in social danger. We should also bear in mind the foreign-policy impact: the policies adopted by the British and United States Governments—and a number of others—in regard to oppressive regimes are double-handed and full of double standards, to say the least. While people were fleeing from Chile during the Pinochet years, the British Government were selling arms to that same dictatorship. The Zaire regime has been supported by the west because it has carried out the wishes of the International Monetary Fund and the World bank, and the west has chosen to ignore many of its human-rights abuses.

Like many others, this country is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva convention, which guarantees a place of safety to people in legitimate fear of persecution on political, religious or social grounds. However, the record of the British Government—and that of Britain as a whole—is not particularly good. We tend to view history through rose-tinted spectacles; we tend to say that we knew about all that went on in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, and supported the victims of Nazi oppression.

That is not true: too many Jewish people were not admitted to other countries as the Nazi holocaust developed. Too many were not granted places of safety. I think of those poor people who died on a ship in the Black sea because no one was prepared to take them in at a crucial time in their lives. Our record is not as wonderful as we like to make out.

There has also been what I call the deterrent factor—the way in which, over the years, British Governments have sought to deter people from seeking asylum here; the way in which the visa regime was introduced in 1984, aimed particularly at Sri Lanka; the way in which Members of Parliament were not allowed to intervene to stop deportations at that time. A large number of Tamil people sought safety elsewhere, but, not unnaturally and not unreasonably, a number of them chose to come to Britain: Sri Lanka was once a British colony, after all, and many of them had significant family and educational ties with this country.

Another deterrent was the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987—an attempt, in my view, to pass immigration and asylum control in part to the airlines. The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 increased the fines to £2,000 per case, and a great deal of money has been paid as a result.

The legislation has also acted as a spivs' charter. It is possible to go to any travel agency in Istanbul and obtain a single ticket to London for about £100; but for a Kurdish person fleeing from Turkey to seek asylum in this country, the fare is not £100 or £500, but more like £1,500. That means that the airline can pay the fine, if there is one, as well as the cost of sending the person back to Turkey if he is not admitted to this country. That does not strike me as a whole-hearted adherence to the principles of the 1951 Geneva convention; it strikes me as the exact opposite.

Last Christmas, some Jamaicans arrived in this country for a holiday. Their treatment presents an appalling vista. They were detained at the Campsfield detention centre, and many were deported. I understand that—despite questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West—the Home Office is still unable to say how much it cost to send those people back to Jamaica. We need some answers from the Home Office, and some openness.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): My hon. Friend mentioned the Campsfield detention centre. As he will know, a number of people have been on hunger strike there. One of them, a constituent of mine, is an asylum seeker. She has now ended her hunger strike, and has collapsed. Her family want her to be taken to hospital, but to date that option has been denied her. Is it not disgraceful that someone who is clearly ill and in need of hospital treatment—as opposed to medical treatment at Campsfield—should be denied it?

Mr. Corbyn: It is not only a scandal; it is at variance with what I have been told by the Home Office and Group 4 about the treatment of people in that detention centre. The other day, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West was able to go inside the centre: no doubt he will speak about that shortly. I shall return to the subject in a moment; first, however, let me make two other brief points.

[Mr. Corbyn]

I have explained the way in which the law in this country—the use of the third-country option—acts as a deterrent to people seeking asylum. There is a growing trend in the Home Office not to grant asylum, but to grant exceptional leave to remain; that means that people cannot be joined by their families for at least four years. People from Somalia who have sought asylum here, knowing that their families and loved ones are languishing in refugee camps somewhere in that part of Africa and cannot even contact them, are experiencing heartache and misery.

Those who are able to settle in this country often have great difficulty in obtaining housing, and some difficulty in securing educational opportunities. The Government should recognise the specific needs of those refugee communities in their funding of local authorities—especially those in the north and east of London, such as Islington, Haringey, Hackney, Waltham Forest and Tower Hamlets. Likewise, the Government's cut in section 11 funding has meant enormous problems in many schools, where English as a second language needs to be taught.

It must be clearly understood that people who seek asylum do so because they are forced into it. They are high-achieving and determined, and seek to make an enormous contribution. One can think back through history to all the contributions made by refugees.

An interesting report has been written for the Detention Advice Service by Kathy Lowe entitled "Britain's Forgotten Prisoners". It says:

"Use of detention powers by the Home Office and immigration authorities has reached its highest level ever. Also increasing is the length of time detainees are being held—up to 18 months in some cases. In 1991, detained asylum seekers came mainly from Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Middle East. Only 4 out of 21 countries involved were in Europe. The following year, the largest groups detained came from India, Zaire, Nigeria and Ghana."

It appears that, as asylum seekers now come from south Asia and Africa rather than Europe as in the past, the attitude of the Home Office has changed a great deal, and there appears to be a race motive.

The report produced for the Detention Advice Service makes a number of proposals that give a great deal of support. It quotes from the reputable organisation, the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, on the support that should be given to detainees. Tragically, they are not given that support.

A survey of 125 asylum detainees between November 1993 and January 1994 shows that there were 122 males and three females, mostly aged under 30. The majority were Christian, although their nationalities varied, with the largest numbers being from Algeria, Angola, Nigeria and Zaire. In most cases, they spoke only the language of their own country.

Furthermore, 27 were in detention centres, 95 were in prisons, one was in a police station and the detention place of two others was not stated. A number of detainees had been moved several times, and nearly half had been moved at least twice. More than 25 had been detained for more than six months or up to a year. None of the detainees had a criminal record, had been to a court, or had a charge against him. They were imprisoned at the pleasure of the Home Office under the powers conferred upon it by the immigration Acts.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West and I asked a series of questions about what is going on at Campsfield, where the majority of those asylum seekers are held, we discovered that the Home Office was first informed of the hunger strike on 18 February—more than a month ago. No public statement has been issued by the Home Office on that issue. It has taken persistence by a number of hon. Members even to get answers to questions here.

According to an answer that I received on 18 March, guidance based on prison service procedures is issued to staff at Campsfield house. It says:

"An immigration detainee refusing food for more than three days is offered advice and treatment by the Campsfield House medical team and this is repeated on a daily basis as part of the detailed monitoring . . . Treatment would be administered only with the individual's consent."

It does not say whether detainees have a right to go to hospital, but I should have thought from the wording of the answer that they should have such a right.

On the same day, I asked about the origin of the detainees held at Campsfield house

"by (a) country of origin, (b) those held for less than one month, (c) one to six months and (d) more than six months."

The information given was that 139 of the 179 on hunger strike were held for one to six months and 11 for more than six months.

An answer that I received on the same day beggars belief. I had asked the Minister:

"how many detainees of Campsfield Detention Centre are (a) asylum seekers, (b) appellants against refusal and (c) awaiting deportation".

The answer was unbelievable. It said:

"The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost."— [*Official Report*, 18 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. *895, 894.*]

If the origins of those people are known, and if the Home Office knows where it put them, how on earth can it claim not to know their status?

A hunger strike is an extremely big step. Potentially, it ends in death. It is a cry for help and a cry of desperation. The Minister would do well to look at a report written by Ghada Karmi and others for the North-East and North-West Thames regional health authorities' ethnicity programme on "Suicide among Ethnic Minorities and Refugees". The number is not higher than the national average of suicides, but one must consider the question of asylum seekers in this country who commit suicide.

A letter sent by the Refugee Legal Group to the Home Secretary on 24 March said:

"Despite the Home Office's undertaking to speed up consideration of asylum claims, many of those on strike have no reply on their asylum claims for several months. Indeed, as at 21 January 1994, more than 80 people had been detained in excess of six months. Others have been refused asylum on grounds which, at times, range from the debatable to the patently unfair. To our knowledge, none has been given an adequate reason for their detention, and there is no effective right to appeal against those reasons before any sort of independent court or review body. This is . . . in breach of . . . Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights".

It also leads to despair and desperation among those on hunger strike.

I received a letter out of the blue on 17 March from Group 4 Security, which told me that it was not force-feeding people on hunger strike. I was glad to hear that claim. Nonetheless, an awful lot of psychological pressure is put on hunger strikers, including separations, moving to prisons and, I understand, offensive remarks made to individuals.

Two Algerian asylum seekers took part in a peaceful demonstration last Saturday outside Campsfield detention centre. When they signed on at the local police stations in Leyton and Islington yesterday, they were promptly arrested and taken back into custody, with no reason given. An answer I received on 24 March says that Group 4 has a contract to look after people at Campsfield detention centre. It says:

"All Group 4 Total Security Limited staff employed under contract to provide detention management services receive a minimum of 15 days initial training on all aspects of health and safety, race relations, domestic management and duty of care towards immigration detainees. A refresher course is provided after one year's service".—[*Official Report*, 24 March 1994; Vol. 240, c. *346-7*.]

It is alarming that they are given only 15 days training before being responsible for the health and welfare of a large number of people.

We have now discovered that those people have been moved to a series of prisons and police stations. When we asked the Secretary of State the cost of holding people in asylum, he said:

"The available information does not identify separately those detention costs which relate to people who have sought asylum."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1994; Vol.240, c.*442*.]

I find that surprising.

The BBC contacted me the other day saying that, of the 47,000 people in this country who have applied for asylum in the United Kingdom, only 645 are presently being detained. They asked me to admit that that was an insignificant number. I said that it sounded like 645 denials of justice.

If people seek asylum, they should be treated properly. If there is a case against them, it should be out in the open and examined in court. But it is not right that those who seek asylum end up in prison with no charges against them, and no right of appeal other than to bodies appointed by the Home Office in the first place. It is a scandal of the greatest proportions, and it is time that the lid was taken off it. We do not want more hunger strikes or deaths as a result of people seeking safety in this country from oppression in other parts of the world.

11.18 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on securing this debate. May I express my support for his views? It is significant that my hon. Friends the Members for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), for Leicestershire, East (Mr. Vaz) and for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) are here. If arrangements were easier, many more hon. Members on both sides of the House would be here, because of the growing concern about the extent of detention to which people, including those seeking asylum, are subject. Detention has now become a central part of the Government's immigration control.

The latest figures show that, during the past 12 months, about 9,000 people were placed in detention, from all immigration categories, including asylum seekers. At present, 645 asylum seekers are in detention; 70 of them are refusing to eat; and about 23 of the 70 are at Campsfield house, which I visited on Tuesday. Ten of those 23 men and women have been refusing food for 18 days, eight for 17 days, one for 16 days and one for 11 days.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North said, at the peak of the campaign to refuse food, which started in February, with a second phase starting in early March, about 120 people at Campsfield were refusing food. Their refusal to eat is not a protest against the building in which they are kept—facilities there are much better than those in any prison or detention centres that I have visited in this country and abroad—but a protest about the length of time for which they have been held in detention, and the Government's refusal to allow more applications for asylum to be considered while applicants are living in the community and reluctance to grant what is called "temporary admission".

Of the 180 people detained in Campsfield house when I visited it on Tuesday, 43 had been held for between three and six months, 44 for between six and nine months, three for between nine and 12 months and five for 12 months or more. About 55 men and women at Campsfield house have now been held there for between three and 12 months, which is disgraceful. There is no reason why people should be held in detention for that length of time.

I thank all the officials I met at Campsfield house on Tuesday for the time and attention they gave me when showing me the facilities and answering my many questions. A qualified doctor was brought to Campsfield house on a regular basis only as recently as 10 days ago to monitor the health of people refusing to eat. I was told on Tuesday that two detainees had been referred to hospital, one for refusing treatment and the other because the doctor felt that he was in need of psychiatric treatment.

It is clear that it was some weeks after the hunger strike campaign began before a qualified doctor and nurses were brought to Campsfield house to monitor their medical condition properly; that fact is reinforced by the chairman of the visiting panel and the doctor.

It is also clear that the Home Office had not envisaged the need for psychiatric help, counselling and support, which is required by asylum seekers, many of whom are fleeing from torture, violence and unknown horrors. It is wrong not to have made such arrangements for detainees at Campsfield house. I am also confident that they are not made at other detention centres.

The Government are wrong to propose additional detention places. A more appropriate use of Campsfield house would be as a detention centre for young offenders, which is what it used to be. Harmondsworth should be closed, and there is no case for the 500 additional detention places that the Government are planning.

The other urgent reform is to give detainees rights. A detainee, including an asylum seeker, has no rights. It is high time that they should have the right to apply for bail, that there should be independent scrutiny of the length of time that they are held in detention, and that they should have free access to qualified and proper legal advice and representation.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North on securing the debate, and on his extensive work to highlight the plight of asylum seekers, their conditions and the need for reforms in the way in which they are treated. I hope that the debate will play an important part in securing those important reforms.

11.25 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on securing this debate. The treatment of asylum seekers in this country is an important issue, which has recently been

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

the target of much misinformation and ill-informed comment—we have heard some examples of that this morning—within a narrow band of public opinion. I welcome the opportunity to explain Government thinking.

Before I expand my remarks, I shall mention some of the errors of fact. The hon. Member for Islington, North will recall from the Standing Committee on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill, in which we both participated not long ago, that a statutory obligation is placed on all local authorities to provide accommodation for people who have been issued with a standard acknowledgement letter after applying for asylum. He is aware of that fact.

I am sure that it was a slip of the tongue when the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) said that, altogether, 9,000 people are in detention—the figure that he had in mind was probably 900. About 940 people, and not 9,000, are in detention at any one time.

Mr. Madden: I was careful not to say, at any one time. I said that the latest figures for the past 12 months show that 9,000 people, in all immigration categories, were held in detention. I was also careful to say that 650 are being held in detention.

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman is correct, and I accept his point. There are 650 asylum applicants. The reason for the misunderstanding between us was that, including all immigration cases, there are a few more than 9,000. His statistic is right, but he did not say that many of those people are detained only overnight before leaving this country.

On the remarks that the hon. Member for Bradford, West made about medical care, I want to make it clear that, from the moment that Campsfield house opened, qualified medical attention was on hand, in the form of general practitioners. Any reference to hospital is based on medical advice.

The hon. Member for Islington, North concentrated his remarks on the use of detention, but he also mentioned the wider subject of asylum. I hope that the House will allow me to comment on the broader picture.

In recent years, every western European country has faced a steep increase in the number of people seeking asylum. The United Kingdom has been no exception. The number of asylum seekers entering the United Kingdom rose sharply from about 4,000 in 1988 to a peak of 45,000 in 1991. Following the introduction of new screening procedures, the number of applications fell to 25,000 in 1992, but that was still about five times higher than the figure for 1988. Last year, there were a further 23,000 new asylum applications.

As anyone who sat through the debates on the Bill that became the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 will know, only a small minority of those applications are made by people who are genuine refugees under the terms of the Geneva convention, which obliges signatories to consider asylum applications carefully and deliberately.

This country has a proud and consistent record in its treatment of refugees. We will take no lectures from anyone about our willingness to protect those people in real danger of persecution. Our humanitarian record is second to none.

Mr. Corbyn: If the Government are so proud of their record of caring for people in detention, will the Minister at least apologise for the deaths of Siho Igguven in Harmondsworth detention centre in 1989 and of Lamumba in Pentonville prison last year?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman knows that there have already been responses to those cases. I am talking about this country's humanitarian record; on reflection, I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me.

Asylum applications on the scale of those of recent years put a great strain on decision taking systems. Delays have occurred in most western countries. Delay is the friend of the unentitled and of the person who wants to spin out his or her stay for as long as possible. The large number of asylum applications that this country has received has put severe pressure on the system, but as a result of various measures that we have taken, the backlog at the end of 1993 stood at about 46,000, compared with about 70,000 at the end of 1991.

The great majority of asylum seekers are therefore people who would simply like to settle here and who have no reason to fear persecution if they return to their own countries. That is not just the British view; it is the experience of many other countries, including our European partners.

Fewer than 5 per cent. of applications in the United Kingdom are found to be justified under the Geneva convention—that is to say, that the people in question have a well founded fear of persecution. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees figures show that countries such as Belgium, Germany and Italy have broadly similar recognition rates.

We are determined to maintain a firm approach, to avoid encouraging opportunist applications from persons who have already reached a place of refuge. The 1951 convention does not confer any right on individuals to travel from country to country in order to reach their preferred destination. Asylum seekers are expected to claim asylum in the first safe country they reach. When they arrive here, having passed through a safe third country, they will usually be returned to that country for consideration of their application. Nevertheless, under the 1993 Act they have a right of appeal against such a decision.

The purpose of the Dublin convention is to combat the twin problems of asylum seekers shuttling from one country to another and "asylum shopping" within the member states of the European Union for a preferred place of residence. It does so by setting out clear criteria for establishing which country has the obligation to examine applications for asylum.

The 12 member states of the EU are committed to a work programme that leads towards harmonisation of asylum policies and procedures. Harmonisation, however, does not mean uniformity, and changes will not come overnight. That is because each member state's approach is embedded in national laws, procedural approaches and traditions. All discussions among the 12 take full account of member states' broader humanitarian traditions and obligations, including those under the European convention on human rights.

This is the essential background to our short debate; reading and listening to some recent commentary on detention, one could be forgiven for thinking that all asylum seekers were by definition refugees. In a recent

editorial in one national newspaper, those refusing food at Campsfield house were described throughout as refugees. In fact, three quarters of them were people who had already been refused asylum, and many had also had appeals refused. They were simply waiting for documentation from their home countries so that they could return to them.

As I have said, the widespread use of asylum seeking to secure entry to a country for which no such leave has been given represents a real threat to effective—firm but fair—immigration control. We have a responsibility to receive and care for those who are genuine refugees, but we also have a responsibility to deal firmly with those who are not.

Our experience is that, to have any chance of achieving this, it is necessary to maintain detention facilities for use in a small minority of cases. Neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor I relish that; but it is a fact of life that, without these facilities, some people who have no right to remain in this country would have every incentive to disappear into the community, to live here, and quite possibly to work or draw social security, and use local authority housing, the NHS and the state education system.

Decisions to detain, I can assure the House, are not taken lightly. It is the immigration service's policy to use detention only as a last resort. The initial decision is taken by a chief immigration officer. If it proves impossible to release or remove the detainee immediately, the decision to detain is reviewed within 24 hours by an immigration service inspector. Thereafter, all detention is reviewed locally at least every seven days. After one month, the case is reviewed at immigration service headquarters, monthly and at an increasingly senior level—so that all those detained for six months or more are reviewed by a director of the service.

The criteria applied are strict. Detention is used only when there is no alternative and when there are good grounds for believing that the person will not comply with the restrictions voluntarily. Staff taking these decisions are expected to take account of all the relevant factors, including a person's history and links, if any, with family and friends in this country.

The consequence is that detention is resorted to for any length of time in a tiny minority of asylum cases. On 17 March, there were 654 people in detention who at one stage or another had claimed asylum. That is less than 1.5 per cent. of the number of outstanding asylum applications. In fact, the true percentage is even lower, since most of the 654 had already had their asylum applications refused.

Opposition Members have today made much of the fact that the number of those in detention who at one stage or another have claimed asylum has increased significantly in the past year. It is true that there has been an increase in the number of those detained, but that is hardly surprising, as one of the purposes of the new asylum legislation was to streamline the process so that more cases could be brought to a conclusion more promptly.

Typically, detention is used towards the end of the process for short periods before a person is removed from the country—that accounts for the vast majority of those to whom the hon. Member for Bradford, West referred. Some are detained earlier, and for a few detainees overall periods of detention are still—the procedures introduced by the new Act last year notwithstanding—longer than I would wish.

It has been alleged that no detention decisions may be challenged. That is either a misrepresentation or a misunderstanding of the facts. In the great majority of asylum cases, detainees have an opportunity to apply for bail to the independent appellate authorities, appointed not by the Home Office but by the Lord Chancellor's Department. The exceptions are when they have been detained as illegal entrants and, having been apprehended, have claimed asylum. Other exceptions are when appeal rights have been exhausted and all that remains is to effect removal. But anyone refused asylum has a right of appeal under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Anyone who has an appeal pending may apply to the independent appellate authorities for bail. It follows that all people detained who have been refused asylum and who have appealed may apply to the appellate authorities for bail at any stage until the appeal has finally been dismissed. That includes people given notices of intention to deport them and illegal immigrants who have been refused asylum.

Mr. Corbyn: Our point is that people should be able to appeal against decisions in open court. They should also receive legal aid to have their cases properly heard. We object to this internal system which employs people appointed by the Government. Asylum seekers should enjoy the same rights as everyone else.

Mr. Wardle: I do not agree. I do not think that a separate detention review body would make sense. The independent immigration adjudicators, appointed by the Lord Chancellor's Department, are well respected experts. It goes with the grain of our system to place in their hands the power to grant bail on application in suitable cases. I see no reason to alter that arrangement. The picture that has been painted, of a system out of control in which detention is used on whim and indiscriminately, is thus very far from the truth.

The hon. Member for Islington, North also mentioned accommodation. I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Bradford, West, who visited Campsfield house earlier this week, say some complimentary things about the facilities there. Campsfield house is a well appointed, newly refurbished new centre, opened in December for this purpose. The difference between it and Haslar is that the latter has more educational facilities. Haslar is used almost exclusively for immigration detainees, and it operates on lines similar to the immigration detention centres at Harmondsworth and Campsfield house.

These apart, there are rather more than 200 immigration detainees in prisons. Some are so violent or disruptive that there is no alternative, but I should still like the numbers in prison to be reduced. What we can and do ensure, however, is that, where detainees are held in ordinary prisons, they have full access to their representatives and are, wherever possible, held separately from convicted prisoners. Anyone in those circumstances who chooses to leave the country can leave detention and leave the country straight away.

Partly in an effort to enable less reliance to be placed on the prison service, there is a programme in hand to create new purpose-built facilities, and Campsfield house is an example. We are planning a total of 350 additional places.

Ample arrangements exist at Campsfield and other detention centres for access by advisers, representatives and other visitors. Information is provided in a number of languages, and at Campsfield there is an introductory video for new arrivals.

One newspaper recently described Campsfield house as the Department's special isolation unit. Having seen it

[Mr. Wardle]

myself, as I know the hon. Member for Bradford, West has done, I know that it is nothing of the sort; it is a decent, well-managed environment in which to carry out a difficult but essential function.

That brings me to the refusal of food by detainees, which has attracted the attention of some of the media to the detention arrangements in recent weeks. This morning, just three detainees at Campsfield, and a total of 28 detainees across the country, are still refusing food. I regret that some people have decided to take this course. If they have done so in the belief that it would assist their cases or lead to generalised release of those taking part, they are sadly mistaken.

No one will alter the merits of his case by refusing meals. We cannot stop people abusing their health in this futile fashion, but it will do no good whatsoever. We cannot force them to eat, and I take the opportunity to state categorically again that there has not been and will not be any force feeding of detainees. It is mischievous to suggest otherwise.

Our main concern throughout has been to ensure that those who have been harming themselves by refusing food should have adequate medical attention. The procedures which have been followed are those adopted by the prison service in similar situations. These involve examination by a doctor after four days—doctors are there daily—after which there will be daily monitoring and 24-hour nursing care. After about eight days, the detainee is examined again by a consultant physician or psychiatrist. Food is made available throughout. There is the option of transfer to a hospital for medical examination or treatment, and this has been done in some cases.

The Government's aim has been and continues to be to handle a difficult problem in a measured and responsible way. Our ability to do so has not been helped by the often hysterical and, at times, aggressive behaviour of the rent-a-mob crowd who frequently gathered outside Campsfield house recently. It has been a motley coalition of the Oxford Trades Union Council, the Socialist Workers party, the Revolutionary Communist party and others of that ilk, including, last Saturday, the hon. Member for Islington, North. I understand that he was seen on television and was amongst a crowd who trespassed on Campsfield house property. Some people in that crowd —I am not suggesting that the hon. Gentleman was included in their number—were hurling lumps of concrete at Group 4 and immigration service staff. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will tell his constituents about that.

I am glad that the number of people refusing food is falling. I should like to congratulate the staff at Campsfield house, the board of visitors there and all those members of the immigration service who have demonstrated such professionalism and sensitivity in the face of this so-called hunger strike.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose—*

Mr. Wardle: I give way to the hon. Lady if her point is brief.

Ms Abbott: Briefly, the Minister has told the House that the fact that people are refusing food will not alter his decision making in any way whatsoever. Is he saying that he is willing to allow people to starve to death in Campsfield house?

Mr. Wardle: No. I am saying that I will not be subjected to blackmail by anyone who says, "I will put you under threat by endangering my health." We will not do so. It is an individual's own choice to refuse food. I bitterly regret that people should take that decision, but it will not alter the merits of their case in any way.

I hope that this short debate has helped shed light on what is an undoubtedly difficult issue. The Government's position is clear: the United Kingdom will continue to honour to the fullest extent its obligations to genuine refugees.

I strongly refute any allegation that our detention policy in any way puts us in breach of the 1951 UN convention on refugees. Nothing in that convention prevents the detention of asylum seekers. Our powers of detention are set in rules which flow from the Immigration Act 1971. It has been on the statute book for more than 20 years.

In the interests of the effective immigration control to which the Government are committed, the exploitation of the asylum process by those who have no conceivable claim to refugee status must be dealt with firmly. The limited use of detention is a necessary part of that process, but detention is used sparingly and administered in a professional and humane way.

I have no doubt that the vast majority of people in Britain of all ethnic origins agree with our firm but fair approach to immigration control. I have no doubt that they also accept that the Government are striking the right balance and discharging their responsibilities sensitively in a difficult and controversial area.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister referred to a demonstration outside Campsfield house last Saturday. It also included people from Churches and many political parties. He also claimed that I was there, and witnessed the throwing of lumps of concrete. I witnessed no throwing of any lumps of concrete. Indeed, I took part in an entirely peaceful demonstration. That is the point I made to the crowd and the television cameras. In view of what he said, perhaps the Minister will at last agree to meet Members of Parliament to discuss what is going on.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that he is making a point of substance, but not a point of order for the Chair.

Child Support Agency

11.45 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I am glad to have the opportunity to raise the problems created by the Child Support Agency.

Earlier this week, when I was called in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee of Selection to move a motion on the vexed question of the Select Committee on Northern Ireland, I had a much greater audience than I have this morning. Perhaps something I said did not appeal to the hon. Members who were present that day. There is one great satisfaction, however—in no speech that I have ever made in the House have I had so many interruptions as I did on Tuesday, and I am unlikely to have many interruptions this morning.

I make no apology for raising the issue again, although the vexed question of the Child Support Agency has had many airings this year. That demonstrates the misgivings about how the Child Support Agency is working.

When the legislation was introduced, I welcomed it. I believed that strenuous efforts would be made to ensure that absent husbands who were evading their responsibilities would be made to pay something towards their children's maintenance. I have been quickly disillusioned because the Child Support Agency has concentrated on the easy option and gone for ex-husbands who were paying what they could afford. I have now reached the stage when every advice bureau that I hold includes someone complaining about his treatment by the Child Support Agency. At one advice bureau earlier this year, I had to deal with four such cases.

My anger erupted when I received a reply dated 23 March to a letter that I had written on 29 January. My constituent's name was mentioned in the first line, after which there was no mention of his name and no answers to his problem. The letter was merely a statement of the aims of the Child Support Agency. The last line was:

"I hope this reply answers most, if not all, of your constituent's concerns".

It did not refer to any of my constituent's concerns. The man's take-home pay is between £150 and £180 a week. Yet he is being asked to pay £178.22 per month. How can he be expected to pay that much out of what most people would agree are modest earnings? The letter that I wrote on 29 January was a waste of time because my constituent's personal circumstances were never referred to in the reply.

I am not complaining only about ministerial replies. The agency takes ages to respond, and its replies do not address the problems put to it. My constituents complain that the CSA will not answer their questions by telephone or letter. It seems only to send out draconian assessments. I am told repeatedly of the difficulties of obtaining any response by telephone—the number rings and rings, but no one seems to be there. One constituent wrote that when he telephones the agency, the number is permanently engaged. When, after persevering, the number answers, the staff are invariably rude and aggressive.

One case involves a couple who were divorced in 1990. They have a 10-year-old son, and the ex-husband agreed to pay £150 a month maintenance for his son and to transfer the family home to his ex-wife. He also pays the capital element of the mortgage. Despite being unemployed for 12 months, he maintained those payments and remained in weekly contact with his son. He now makes debt repayments also because of a failed business. In October 1993, the Child Support Agency approached the ex-wife and asked for her ex-husband's whereabouts. She was told that if she failed to reveal them it would jeopardise her income support. The ex-husband, despite his loan repayments, was assessed to pay £95.40p per week. He has been drained dry by those payments and only survived by borrowing from his parents. What particularly enrages him is that not one penny of that money has gone to his ex-wife to support his son. On 10 February, I wrote to the CSA's chief executive about that problem. I wrote again on 10 March. As yet, I have received no reply. That falls a long way short of the improved services promised in the citizens charter.

I encountered another difficult case at my last advice bureau, involving a marriage that broke up in 1987. The ex-wife lives in Wales with the two children. No animosity existed between the couple. The ex-wife works full time and receives £4.3p per week family credit. The son is now aged 19 and working, and the daughter is seventeen and a half years old and still in full-time education. The ex-husband was paying £25 per week maintenance for his daughter. That was acceptable to the ex-wife because at the time of the divorce a substantial settlement was agreed under which the ex-husband bought a home for his ex-wife in Wales. However, because she is in receipt of family credit, the law demands that her ex-husband is assessed by the CSA—and his assessment is £201.50p a month. Because there was no animosity between that former couple and the ex-wife feels that her ex-husband has been fair to her, she asked to come off family credit but was told that she could not do so for six months, which is nonsense. In that case, all was amicable before the Child Support Agency intervened.

I will cite another case, of a young man who came to see me last Saturday. His weekly living costs, which comprise repayment of two bank loans and other liabilities and expenses, amount to £242.34p per week, and his housing costs are £112.80p plus council tax of £9.85p—a weekly total of £364.99p. That constituent wrote:

"The large number of debts that I have are the result of a failed business venture and from being out of work for eight months last year. During that period of unemployment, I did not claim the cost of the mortgage even though I was eligible to do so.

I originally left my ex-wife in August 1988. At that stage there were no children involved and we had been living in her mother's five-bedroomed house. I had left for a week when I was informed that my ex-wife was pregnant. It was totally unexpected and unplanned on my part. I decided to move back in to help with the pregnancy and the initial few months. I also agreed to buy a house for them to live in.

I left in February 1989. I made regular cash payments during the course of 1989 and 1990, and I also bought her a car at her request so that she would be able to take our son to her mother or to friends, thus allowing her to work. I also paid for a holiday for them both to go to Switzerland. In February 1991 my ex-wife took me to court in order that more maintenance could be obtained. I defended myself, with the judge ruling that the payments I was making were sufficient and that we were to continue in the same manner. I continued to make regular payments through 1991. In January 1992 I applied through my solicitor to standardise my payments through an official court order, to which she did not reply. I then offered her £35 per week, which was rejected. At the beginning of 1992 my business fell apart, with my ex-partner departing for Hong Kong, leaving behind a company in debt. I was then struggling financially and not in a position to make payments to my ex-wife on a regular basis.

Towards the end of 1992, whilst unemployed I once again made an offer of £30 per week to be enforced once I resumed working, to which she did not reply. The offer has been on the

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

table for the last one and a half years . . . I understand that my ex-wife has worked since the separation but do not know whether she is at present."

That constituent faces enormous financial difficulties. Yet all that he asks is that

"in the light of some of the horror stories you hear in the media . . . a fair assessment is made taking into account all the facts."

That letter raises the important point of how much notice the Child Support Agency takes of essential expenses. What is the logic of a scheme that takes vast sums of money from the ex-husband that he cannot afford, particularly in cases where husbands have been paying their dues and no dispute exists between the ex-partners? That is a recipe for bitterness.

One hon. Friend told me that when a CSA case arose in an advice bureau held, unusually, on a Friday afternoon, he imagined that the agency's office would be open and telephoned it. He was passed from one office to another, and was eventually put in touch with an office in Scotland, where he received an abusive reply from the man who answered the telephone. That is not good enough.

The CSA should make better use of the telephone when contacting fathers about their assessments. I give as an example of the proper way to behave the disability living allowance telephone unit in Blackpool, which is invariably helpful and deals efficiently with problems put to it. The Child Support Agency should also telephone at sensible times. If people are at work, there is not much use calling them at home during the day. Perhaps calls to ex-husbands, for example, should be made in the evening, when they will be at home.

I hope that the CSA can be made more sensitive, courteous and customer friendly. It must be aware of the ill feeling that it has engendered. There is a suspicion that its principal motive is to save income support money. It is strange that every constituent who has seen me about the agency has been a decent person who always paid maintenance. I have not come across one absent father who dodged maintenance—the sort of individual the legislation was designed to catch.

When my right hon. Friend the Minister replies it will be interesting if he can give an indication of the number of absent fathers who have been brought into the net. The CSA's workings must be closely examined. Taxpayers have borne the burden of missing fathers for many years. Agency arrangements are intended to reduce it, but the speed at which that burden is reduced must be governed by consideration of those who will be affected. I want to hear less about administrative convenience and more about fairness to all the parties involved.

The scheme started as a good idea. It was greeted with approval from both sides of the House and it was passed without a vote against, but it has not worked out as we envisaged. I was distressed when a hard-working father with a decent job told me that if the assessment that he had been given was not reduced he would be better off giving up his job and going on benefit. That surely is something that we must avoid at all costs. It cannot be right, and it was certainly not one of the aims of the legislation. It is essential that we get the balance right in determining how the burden should be distributed between the various parties involved. I believe that it is urgent, because we shall keep getting those cases at our advice bureaux until action is taken. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister can give some indication of what is being done.

12 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on securing this important debate. As ever, he has made a constructive speech, drawing my attention and that of the Government to several issues. He discussed the policies underlying the Child Support Agency, but the main thrust of his speech was about the impact of the new arrangements on a number of his constituents who have exercised their right to mention their worries to him. I can give my hon. Friend an absolute assurance that I will consider the details of those cases and take careful account of the arguments that he has made.

Whatever detailed reservations my hon. Friend may have—I will discuss some of those subjects later—I am sure that he still agrees with the underlying principle of the Child Support Act 1991, which is that it should be concerned with the welfare of the children in such cases. I hope that he will accept that we are all genuinely trying to find our way through some new and difficult issues so as to develop a satisfactory and sustainable system in the long term. As I believe that my hon. Friend will understand, these matters are normally the detailed responsibility of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), the Under-Secretary of State; due to a minor indisposition, he is unfortunately unable to take part in the debate, but he will read with great care the arguments that my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale has made.

As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has explained on several occasions, the principles that underpin the Child Support Agency are right. I believe that it is right that taxpayers' interests should be taken into account. I cannot understand why there should be circumstances in which taxpayers, who may be only marginally, if at all, better off than many absent fathers, should pick up the bill for the maintenance of children who are not their responsibility. We should not lose sight of that principle as we properly take account of the way in which the administrative and other arrangements are developing from the early days of the new policy. I believe that the taxpayers' interests should be taken into account.

A second immensely important part of the policy is that a parent with care—usually, but not always, a woman—should have the assurance of a guaranteed regular income, which she knows will be there regardless of whether she decides to work. It is an important underlying principle of the policy that that should be a part of the system. At present, if a parent with care is on benefit and decides to take work, even at a modest level, her income will reduce the amount of benefit and eventually eliminate the benefit to which she is entitled. That, manifestly, is not the best incentive to encourage lone parents to go out and earn their living, as many of them wish to do. If a woman has a guaranteed—and, in a sense, portable in terms of her circumstances—amount of money coming in week by week or month by month, it is an important underpinning of her standard of living, which she can improve if she wishes to add to her income by working.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale acknowledged, the 1991 Act was passed with the universal

approval of the House, responding to widespread anxiety about the lack of proper financial provision for children whose parents live apart. That in itself is a significant burden for those children and causes considerable anguish to many of the parents. We faced a situation in which nearly 1 million lone parents and their children depended on income support, yet only one quarter of those received any regular maintenance.

The old system of obtaining maintenance through the courts or Department of Social Security offices was obviously failing parents with care, and their children. It was slow, inaccessible, unpredictable, and often led to low and inconsistent settlements. The 1991 Act was designed to halt the significant decline in the payment of maintenance which had occurred during the previous decade as people increasingly realised that it was possible to turn to the state to support children for whom they ought to have accepted responsibility.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I hope that my right hon. Friend will answer the argument made by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) about the large number of parents who have not paid maintenance or who have paid maintenance very irregularly. Those surely should be the prime target of the Child Support Agency, as the House believed when it passed that legislation without controversy, as my hon. Friend said. There is a widespread suspicion, which I believe is borne out by the evidence, that the Child Support Agency is going for the easy target of people with reasonably high incomes who are already paying maintenance and are therefore easy to locate.

Mr. Scott: I will answer the point made by my hon. Friend when I discuss more detailed points. However, the House should acknowledge that to endorse the principle but to argue, as many Opposition Members tend to, against almost every detail of the implementation of the Child Support Act is not a very constructive way forward. I do not accuse my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) of that, and he properly draws my attention to what I believe to be a misunderstanding, although perhaps the pattern of cases that he receives has led him to that view. No doubt he will take that up with my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North, as he may have done already, and have that worry removed.

I believe that it was important to move in the direction of the 1991 Act. It is worth reminding the House that this week the National Council for One Parent Families published its report on the first year's work of the Child Support Agency. In introducing the report, Sue Slipman, who is director of the council, did her best—as someone who has not been afraid to be critical of Government policy in a number of different sectors—to put the criticisms of the Child Support Agency into context. It may be useful to read two or three sentences that Miss Slipman included in her report:

> "What has been forgotten in the uproar is that the Agency was set up to redress a great social wrong. The court system failed to deliver maintenance for children. Before the Child Support Agency, only 30 per cent. of lone parents got any maintenance for their children and, even those few who did, received woefully inadequate sums. As a result of this the growing experience of thousands of children was abandonment by one parent and a life in poverty with the other."

I have no doubt that it was right for us to tackle that situation, and that was a clear indication to us all of the reasons why we needed a Child Support Act.

The basic and unassailable principle behind the new system is that both parents should be responsible for maintaining their children when they can afford to do so. The role of the taxpayer should be limited to those cases in which parents do not have the means to meet that obligation. I believe that that principle has widespread support within the country. However, no one could have been in the Department of Social Security since the introduction of the scheme without recognising that there were genuine concerns about some of the ways in which the new system was working.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): This is an important matter and many people in my constituency have come under undue pressure from the Child Support Agency when we should be chasing absent fathers. Has my hon. Friend noticed that the Labour party, which has been huffing and puffing about the issue for some time, cannot be bothered to have a representative here to listen to this important debate?

Mr. Scott: That is a matter for the judgment of Labour Members. I can understand the temptation to be otherwise engaged on the last day of the Session, and I cannot say that the thought did not cross my own mind as to whether I might be better employed. However, in view of the important points put by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale, I am delighted to be able to play a small part in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale will recognise that we have made recent changes in the operation of the system to meet some of the concerns raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House during the early months of the Act's operation. Those changes included a substantial increase in the minimum amount of income that an absent parent will keep after meeting his maintenance liability, a reduction in the additional element where there is liability for only one or two children, a reduction in the amount included for the care needs of the children as they grow older and an extension of the arrangements for phasing in the new amounts.

It is early days for us to be judging how those easements, if I may so describe them, are working. As we have greater experience of their impact, I believe that they will represent a significant easing of some of the problems raised by my hon. Friend and by many others in correspondence with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in recent weeks. They are important reforms and they will have a substantial impact on the amount of maintenance that some absent parents will have to pay. The other side of the coin is that they will have an impact on the amount of maintenance received by some parents with care. No doubt there will be voices from both sides as to where the precise balance should lie. I believe that the changes will be of particular benefit to absent parents on low incomes or with responsibilities for second families.

I understand that the changes have not met all the criticisms of the scheme and it is understandable that some absent parents continue to be dissatisfied. However, I hope that my hon. Friend and other hon Members who have raised points in the debate will give the changes a fair wind to see how they settle down and the extent to which they meet the concerns that their constituents have rightly raised with them.

Mr. David Nicholson: I thought that my right hon. Friend was about to conclude. I hope that he will pursue or

[Mr. David Nicholson]

take note and communicate to our hon. Friend the Under-Secretary the concerns of which we are all aware about the way in which the Child Support Agency pursues the regulations. My right hon. Friend knows that there is controversy about the regulations laid down by Parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale talked about maladministration and I sit on the Select Committee which looks after the parliamentary ombudsman. The ombudsman is being encouraged to take up a number of cases in which maladministration has taken place, quite apart from the argument about the formula and the regulations.

Mr. Scott: I know that there is concern about this matter and it is shared by the chief executive of the Child Support Agency. The agency has devoted considerable resources to training its staff to provide prompt and courteous replies. In the early days there is no doubt that the agency was under considerable administrative pressure. However, the chief executive has deployed considerable resources and effort to seek to overcome those problems. There is now a customer service manager in each agency centre, as well as a national inquiry line for those who need particular help. The agency has recently restated its aim to provide a good service. I am always sorry when any part of what I call the social security family fails to deliver the quality of service to which people are entitled when they turn to it for one reason or another. I hope and believe that in the coming weeks and months we shall see a substantial reduction in the level of dissatisfaction expressed.

Points were made about the priorities that the agency had set itself. It is important to remember that in almost every case that the Child Support Agency will handle this year the parent with care and her children will be on benefit. In contrast, the vast majority of absent parents—I do not pretend that it is 100 per cent.—including many of those who have been in contact with the Government and have condemned the scheme, enjoy a much higher standard of living than the parent with care. It is right that their children, for whom they cannot brush aside their long-standing responsibility, should share in that prosperity.

The Government stand by their commitment to keep the child support scheme under review. The changes that we have made are proof of that commitment and of our determination to move swiftly in making adjustments as the need arises. The fact that we have already acted quickly shows that we intend to honour our pledges. The administrative shortcomings that have been mentioned are being tackled urgently. There is still too high a level of outstanding correspondence on this issue, but it is being tackled with great energy by those responsible within the agency system.

It has been said that the Child Support Agency has concentrated on the easy option—those already paying. However, at the end of January, 50 per cent. of assessments made were for absent parents who paid nothing at all. We believe that by now, the end of the financial year, that figure will have risen to about 60 per cent. So the agency is getting its priorities right.

I hope that I have dealt with the administrative problems. I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and the chief executive are anxious to be made aware of any shortcomings in that area and, as I have already said, we are determined to address that as a matter of urgency.

In general, we must allow the changes announced by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to bed down and we must allow absent parents and parents with care to feel the real effect of them. I believe that when that happens, criticisms of the scheme will begin to abate. I have no doubt that there will continue to be individual cases that hon. Members on both sides of the House will wish to raise with Ministers, and we shall take those seriously. I took the trouble to look at some of the letters that have been written by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale expressing particular worries and I can assure him that they are being considered with great care. He has had some replies already and I know that others will follow. We shall look at the individual cases responsibly and carefully and see whether there are patterns that need to be addressed in any future changes that we make to the agency.

I reaffirm my belief and the Government's corporate belief that the Child Support Act represents a major step forward in the provision of child maintenance in Britain. Details may still have to be fine-tuned, but a formula-based scheme producing consistent results is a much better guarantee for the future of our children than the inconsistent and unsatisfactory system that we left behind. I repeat my commitment and that of my colleagues in the Department to keep the matter thoroughly under review and to take careful account of any continuing concerns that hon. Members may have.

12.19 pm

Sitting suspended.

On resuming:—

Water Bills (South-West)

12.30 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I have sought a debate because residents in the South West Water area are being hit by a crisis. They are struggling to pay the highest water bills in England and Wales. This year average bills for the region are £340. The charges have more than doubled in the past five years, and they are set to double again.

The reason for that is simple. Less than 3 per cent. of the nation's population—the people of the south-west—are being forced to pay to fund the clean-up of 30 per cent. of the nation's beaches. South West Water predicts that, even without taking account of inflation, in the year 2000 a typical bill will be at least £450 a year. If we allow for inflation, average bills could be £700 a year by 2000. Without help for those on low incomes or living alone, already many people simply cannot afford the bills. Some bills facing pensioners and others on low incomes are already more than £600, yet no help is available.

The Government have repeatedly claimed that they were unaware of the huge problems and of the huge bills that would face South West Water rate payers. More recently, they have claimed that they are doing what they can to tackle the problems. However, ever since privatisation was proposed they have been repeatedly warned that the problem of water charges in the south-west had to be addressed and solved.

In the final stages of the water privatisation debate on 8 December 1988 I said:

"I represent an area where people are on low incomes, where some villages do not yet have their own sewerage systems, and where many beaches are polluted. It is they who will have to foot the bill for the improvements that are required".

I warned that both future British Government support and much of the European funding available to the public sector but not to the private sector could be cut off by privatisation, saying

"The work is essential to bring our beaches up to the European standard, and I hope that the Minister can assure the people of Cornwall that they will not be expected to meet all the costs of cleaning up the beaches, which are used by citizens of the United Kingdom and Europe, purely because the Government, by their ideological approach, are cutting off the potential to obtain money in other ways".—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 535-36.]

Yet Ministers now say that they did not see the problem coming. And so far as I recall, with the honourable exception of the then Member of Parliament for Falmouth and Camborne, David Mudd, no hon. Member representing the south-west joined me in opposing the Water Act.

In practice those worries were quickly confirmed. In February 1989 I wrote to the then Secretary of State for the Environment protesting at proposed increases of 13.1 per cent. for South West Water customers. Such was my concern that I then sought and won an Easter Adjournment debate on water and sewerage in the south-west, almost exactly five years ago, on 13 March 1989. I cited then the concerns of local people and again stressed the particular problems of the area and said:

"I am concerned that people in Cornwall will have to pay to clear up the mess after privatisation simply because successive Governments"—

this is true of Labour as well as of Conservative Governments—

"have failed to invest properly in clean water and proper sewerage systems.

Although only 1.5 million live in the South West Water area, at times there are up to 500,000 tourists supplementing that number. Local people therefore have to pay for the infrastructure to support a heavy influx of visitors. Those visitors are welcome, but I am sure that they expect the beaches to be cleaned up through national intervention and Government money, rather than depending on an over-stretched local private company."

I concluded:

"Prices are already rising from the privatisation burden and so falling on local populations. It is time that the Government started to think about the public good rather than private affluence. After all their words about the environment, they could not do better than to start by investing some of the Chancellor's surplus billions in tomorrow's Budget into cleaning up our water. They would be doing so by public demand."—[*Official Report*, 13 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 67 and 69.]

That was when the Government had money to spare for substantial tax cuts for the wealthy. They did not invest the money to help low-income families.

Ministers still say that they could not see the problem coming. Conservative Members of Parliament across the region had still not woken up to the scale of the problem that was to emerge. A little over a year later, on 16 July 1990, I won a further Adjournment debate on the subject of sewage pollution in Cornwall and the cost of treating it. It followed new Government announcements that they were bringing forward the clean-up programme dramatically, but not increasing the so-called green dowry allowed to water companies at the time of privatisation to meet the then environmental obligations placed on them. That is a crucial point for those Conservatives who have sought to blame Europe for the rising costs.

Not only is it a fact that European standards could be set only with the agreement of British Ministers, who had a right of veto, but the British Government took the decision to increase and accelerate the clean-up. In 1989, the EC had drafted the municipal waste water treatment directive, the precursor to what is now the urban waste water directive. In 1990, before it was agreed, the United Kingdom Government not only brought forward the beach clean-up, but jumped the gun on the municipal waste water treatment proposals by unilaterally adopting them for immediate application.

The Government responded to the fourth report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment published in December 1990. In the introduction to the response the Department stated:

"the Government decided to press its own review to a conclusion and not to await the results of the Committee's deliberations . . . In March the Government announced a major change of policy to require higher standards of treatment before sewage effluent is discharged to sea. The Secretary of State for the Environment said that in future all significant discharges of sewage to sea should first be treated at sewage treatment works: the additional cost associated with this change was put at around £1.5 billion".

That was a United Kingdom decision, not a European one. I do not disagree with the decision—the clean-up is welcome. But it is not possible for the Government to blame others for decisions that they took in advance of European decisions.

The introduction to the response to the Select Committee concluded:

"Government policies in this area are in advance of Community environmental policy developments as contained in a draft EC Directive on Municipal Waste Water Treatment which is currently the subject of negotiation. This Directive if adopted will establish uniform minimum standards throughout the European Community. The Government strongly supports this draft directive and is working towards its early adoption."

That confirms that the Government took those decisions in

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

advance of Europe and were instrumental in persuading Europe to adopt them. It is good that they did so, but the Government cannot now shift the blame on to others.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: No, I shall not give way now as I wish to make progress. I shall give way later if there is time.

Due to my concerns I sought an Adjournment debate on 16 July 1990. Referring to the privatisation of water I said—

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is supposed to be a debate. Is the hon. Gentleman allowed to make wild assertions when he is not even prepared to debate the issue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): That is a matter for the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Taylor: I said that if I had time I would give way later when I have made some progress.

Referring to the privatisation of water, I said:

"To show how powerful that problem is, South West Water has been unable to provide me with a figure for the cost of introducing secondary or tertiary treatment for sewage outfalls in Cornwall. It says that the implications of the Secretary of State's announcement are still being assessed, but will the Minister clarify that? By how much, and when, does he foresee charges rising to tackle these problems? Massive investment is needed. For such a policy to be introduced on the back of water ratepayers, pensioners and others who are struggling to pay their bills is unacceptable and the Government must seek an alternative route."

I concluded:

"Given all the sources of finance available to Government, they must make available the money to meet these costs."

It did not take long for the extra burden on the already rising water bills to be confirmed, together with the fact that the Government would not in any form help with the costs of the bills, which were set to fall so hard on South West Water rate payers. At the end of the Adjournment debate, the Minister, the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), concluded:

"It is much better for private companies to raise money from charges to customers. The Government apply that system generally and Cornwall will be no exception."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 836-42.]

The director general of water services was formally notified of the Government's decision on 14 November 1990 and he had, therefore, to raise the limit on South West Water price rises as the Government had not announced any funding or increase in the green dowry to help meet the costs of the new standard. He announced that South West Water's increase over and above inflation would be allowed, not at 6.5 per cent., as planned after privatisation, but at 11.5 per cent. plus inflation each year. In other words, prices have doubled in the past five years, which has everything to do with the Government's decision. Yet Ministers still say that they did not see the problem coming.

Looking through the relevant press cuttings throughout the period, I cannot find south-west Conservative Members arguing the same point. Perhaps some did. However, it was 1992, especially the general election campaign, that really seems to have woken them up. The Minister should realise that there is now a strong, cross-party case, echoed not only by Members of Parliament of all parties in the south-west, but by many independent organisations.

The first reaction about which we read was on 6 May 1992. Following substantial gains in the south-west by the Liberal Democrats, the *Western Morning News* reported:

"MPs returning to Westminster after the election campaign have spoken of widespread anger and concern on the doorstep over soaring water bills."

Mr.Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I shall give way in a minute.

Mr.Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way? He is not making any progress.

Mr. Taylor: I shall give way in a minute.

The article said that the Members of Parliament believed that it was unfair that local people were having to pay for the clean-up of the region's coastline when it was a national asset enjoyed by millions of holidaymakers every year. A separate article in the *West Briton* on 21 May reported the then chairperson of the west country Conservative Members committee, the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), as saying:

"'We all found that this was one of the main issues locally in the General Election . . . People are right to complain about the escalating charges'".

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For the hon. Gentleman to name Conservative Members and not to be prepared to give way, when he has actually quoted my words, is an abuse.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already ruled that it is up to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) to decide whether to give way or not. The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has been here long enough to know that.

Mr. Taylor: In a further Liberal Democrat-initiated Adjournment debate on 2 June 1992, my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), who was newly elected, again pressed the issue. He pointed out the low incomes of the area and told the Minister:

"There is therefore now a major affordability gap between what is expected of the water charge payers of the south-west and what they can afford . . . what can the Minister do, post privatisation, to reintroduce national Exchequer support, by way of a green dowry or by any other means, to ensure equalisation between the richer and less well-off parts of the country and to ensure adequate investment in national assets such as the south-west coastline?"

Despite echoes of our concerns from Conservative Members, the Minister was dismissive, describing South West Water's rising charges as

"good value to a household."—[*Official Report*, 2 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 798-808.]

Apparently the Government, although not Back-Bench Conservative Members, had still not realised the severity of the problem. When Cornish Conservatives met the then Secretary of State for the Environment on 9 July, the *Western Morning News* reported the Minister as saying:

"There is no question of water users elsewhere subsidising the clean up in the West country, nor of any Treasury help."

In August, the regional office of Ofwat called on the Government to give special cash to the region to ease the problem, but it was turned down straight by the Minister. In November, Ofwat released figures showing that South West Water prices were rising at almost twice the rate as those in other parts of the country and that by the year 2000

bills were likely to be twice as high as those in the affluent south-east. In January 1993, Liberal Democrat Members presented the Prime Minister with our document calling for a fair deal and some 30,000 signatures in support of the campaign to get water prices cut. The Government's position became increasingly confused.

On 4 March, at Prime Minister's Question Time, the Prime Minister wrongly argued that I would find that water prices were

"similar in other counties to those in the west country."—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 451.]

The following week, however—after an outcry throughout the west country—the Prime Minister gave a more positive response when I questioned him again on 11 March, saying:

"I am examining the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment."—[*Official Report*, 11 March 1994; Vol.220, c.1105.]

The news that the Prime Minister was acknowledging the scale of the problem was extremely welcome, and gained him positive coverage.

On 12 March, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) told the *Western Morning News*:

"Ultimately the Government is the only thing that can come to the rescue of the South West."

It seemed that the Government were taking action. At this point, the hon. Member for Teignbridge may wish to intervene.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman's generosity overwhelms me.

Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that a party that would apply qualified majority voting to everything, and then dispense with a national veto, would actually have used the Luxembourg compromise to defeat these directives?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has not been listening. I said that I agreed with them; I also said that the British Government introduced them, not the European Parliament. That is made absolutely clear in the Government's response to the Environment Select Committee's report in December 1990—and, in fact, this occurred before Europe had set those standards.

Mr. Nicholls: My point is that the directives that have inflicted this level of water charges on the south-west were imposed by Europe; they have never been imposed by the House of Commons. It is a disgrace, even by the hon. Gentleman's standards, that he has had the bare-faced, brazen cheek to pretend to the House that the Liberal party —which would give away our ability to veto—would have vetoed in our place.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. He is welcome to read the report now, if he cares to do so.

By April, the Prime Minister was writing to Conservative Members to tell them that there were now difficulties in lowering bills. That led the *Western Morning News*, correctly, to predict catastrophe for the Conservatives in the county elections. Meanwhile, the environment Minister disclaimed any responsibility, arguing in a letter to south-west Liberal Democrat Members on 27 April:

"Responsibility for water charges rests with the Director General of Water Services",

denying that the Government were considering a review of water prices and refusing even to attend a meeting to discuss the issue.

That confirmed comments made to the *Western Morning News* on 23 April, when a Department of the Environment spokesperson—named, unusually; I shall not name that person, as he or she is not present to answer —said:

"Why should we give South West Water any money? That was why they were privatised. It is up to them to get the money they need from their customers."

The news report continued:

"Mr. Howard's Department said yesterday there was no review, and stressed that curbing water prices was a matter for the industry watchdog, Ofwat."

Within two weeks, however, the Director General of Ofwat, Ian Byatt, was reported in the *Western Morning News* on 7 May as confirming that

"only the Government can stop South west Water bills spiralling".

He said that price limits were

"based on environmental obligations laid down by the Government, and he had little room for manoeuvre."

In September, the National Consumer Council published a report entitled "Paying the Price", arguing that water privatisation had produced a bonanza for shareholders but a raw deal for customers. People in the south-west would certainly agree with that. The sense of a Government in complete confusion over the issue was greatly increased in October, when the new water Minister told the *Western Morning News*:

"Ministers had no idea how much the coastal clean up would cost when they signed up".

According to the newspaper,

"he agreed that Ministers had to take some blame."

At the beginning of December, Downing street officials briefed Sunday newspapers that the Government had won "important concessions" on relaxing standards to cut the rise in bills, only to have to backtrack. On 14 December, *The Independent* reported:

"The Department of the Environment has admitted that nothing agreed at last week's summit would change the price of water or the rules governing its quality for several years to come."

The Government are apparently still examining ways in which to minimise the clean-up, although that would hurt the tourist industry and would only slow down the increase in bills—and would not even do that for several years. In 1993, the Secretary of State for the Environment wrote to my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), saying:

"The work is proceeding urgently but it may take some time."

The work now appears to hinge on redefining sensitive coastal waters as less sensitive waters, and therefore pollutable. Under EC rules, that process was due for completion by December 1993 but the Government have not even met that target. The Government have failed to meet the deadline by more than three months. It is rumoured that many projects in some of the most important tourist and environmental sites in the area, including St. Ives and Newquay, could be affected.

The Minister must take the opportunity today to stop making excuses and recounting the history lesson that he gives every time. He must answer a few straight questions: what is happening now about less sensitive waters? Has a list been drawn up? If so, when will it be published and approved, and what EC approval is required?

We have proposed solutions that would cut bills now. First, the Government should replace the outdated water rates system with a system based on council tax charges, which would help people living alone or on low incomes.

[Mr. Taylor]

Why did the Secretary of State, not only to us at a meeting but afterwards on the record to the media, say that he was looking at that proposal and then deny it later?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, this is in danger of becoming an abuse of the House. He has already taken 20 minutes and the Minister will not have much time to wind up.

Mr. Taylor: I was about to finish my last paragraph. I had understood that the convention is that the time is in the hands of the hon. Member proposing an Adjournment debate, some of whom speak for just one minute and leave the remaining time available to the Minister, and vice versa. I wanted to make some important points. On several Adjournment debates, Ministers have replied to me incorrectly on the history of this matter.

In addition, as to replacing water rates with the council tax system, we believe that the only solution is for national funds to tackle the problem. Otherwise, the problem of 30 per cent. of the clean-up being funded by 3 per cent. of the population cannot be tackled. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have argued that point. It will not do to blame Europe. It was not Europe but the Government who initiated this problem. And the Minister must answer that charge.

12.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): We have heard a monologue lasting more than 20 minutes from the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), without much substance. The rate of increase in water charges in the south-west in recent years has been a cause of concern to the Government. My hon. Friends have been vigorous in their representations to Ministers on that matter, as is clearly evidenced by the presence today of my hon. Friends the Members for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) and for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson). With other hon. Friends, they have been extremely conscientious in ensuring that Ministers appreciate the concerns of those living in the south-west. I appreciate the fact that some Opposition Members share their concerns.

Water and sewerage charges have been rising across the country as a whole in recent years. That has been necessary to help pay for the multi-billion pound investment programme in the water industry. How often do we hear calls from Opposition Members for more investment? "Spend more money" is practically the rallying call of the Labour and Liberal parties but they complain as soon as more money is invested in the industry. Such complaints are all the more perverse because the previous Labour Government, supported by the Liberals in the Lib-Lab pact, starved the water industry of the money it needed for investment.

When the water authorities were constituted in 1974, their investment stood at some £1.4 billion at current prices. The Labour Government, due to economic mismanagement, simply could not afford to keep up that rate of investment. That Labour Government was marked by rising inflation, economic mismanagement and poor public spending control so that, in December 1976, the Labour Government, propped up by the Liberals, had to announce overnight a moratorium on the letting of new construction contracts by water authorities. That moratorium signalled public spending cuts for the next two years. South West Water's capital expenditure was actually reduced by 6 per cent. in cash terms. So we do not need lectures from the Liberal Democrat or Labour parties on investing in the water industry.

We have reversed their neglect. To do so, increases in water bills would have been necessary even had the water industry remained in the public sector. But privatisation has allowed water companies access to the financial markets to enable them to obtain part of the funds that they need for their investment programmes, in the form of long-term private sector loans.

Overall, water companies are investing some £3 billion a year. If the companies are to continue to undertake the investment required of them, they must be profitable and able to reinvest those profits in the water infrastructure. We hear many cheap comments from Opposition Members about the water companies' profits. South West Water's last annual report, for the year ended March 1993, states that the company made a pre-tax profit of £92.7 million, but it reported capital spending of £203.7 million in the same period. South West Water's capital investment in the south-west was, therefore, more than double its pre-tax profit.

I acknowledge that in recent years water and sewerage charges have risen more rapidly in the south-west than in other parts of the country, but let us have some sense of proportion. The average South West Water bill for the coming year is £304, which is £40 more than the average bill in the Anglian region and £48 more than the average in Wales. So customers in the south-west are paying on average less than £1 a week more than customers in those regions and the average bill for the coming year will be 83p a day, for water delivered for all purposes and for taking waste water away. That shows that the cost of water in the south-west still represents good value for money.

South West Water's charges have increased more rapidly than those elsewhere because of the company's substantial capital investment programme. It is investing, and plans to continue to invest, between £200 million and £250 million a year, every year until 2000. Much of that spending programme is needed to clean up bathing waters and beaches in the south-west and to comply with the European Community bathing water directive. My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) made some telling remarks about that directive. People do not want dirty beaches and they should not have them. South West Water is spending millions of pounds to clean up the beaches and no one has ever suggested that schemes to clean up beaches that fail European Community mandatory standards should be deferred.

I am glad that South West Water's "Clean Sweep" coastal sewage treatment programme is well under way. That is good news for local people and for tourism. People welcome those environmental improvements, but there will also be important economic benefits because clean beaches and safe bathing waters are increasingly necessary to attract and retain a thriving tourist industry, on which many jobs in the south-west depend.

Last year, many people in the south-west became concerned about the scale of possible future price increases set out in South West Water's market plan. That plan was published in May last year and set out three possible options for typical household bills in 2000, which is six

years away. The options were: £400, £450 or £500, depending on assumptions made. The hon. Member for Truro suggested that those were actualities, but it is important to make it clear that they are hypothetical bills that are six years away.

South West Water argues that if it is to meet the higher standards that will be legally required by 2000 it will have to levy a typical charge of £450 in that year. It is important for us to recognise that those figures were the company's estimates only. We are not talking about charges this year, next year or in 2000. Charge increases from 1995 onwards will be subject to the new price limits, which the Director General of Water Services, Mr. Byatt, will announce in July, following his first periodic review of all water company prices.

The hon. Member for Truro suggested some ways in which the director general could reduce water bills in the south-west. Essentially the Liberal Democrats want some form of cross-subsidisation. They want other parts of the country to help to meet the costs of sewage treatment in the south-west. To put it bluntly, that would be a form of cross subsidy, but why should there be such cross-subsidisation from customers in other parts of the country? Such subsidies are not consistent with transparency or accountability. Nor is it desirable for water and sewerage services to be paid for out of general taxation rather than charges to consumers.

Doubtless the hon. Gentleman's colleagues in other parts of the country will explain to their voters the Liberal Democrat view that their bills should be increased and that they should pay twice in their bills to subsidise the south-west. I somehow doubt that they will do so because a consistent theme of the Liberal Democrat party is that its members can always be guaranteed to say different things in different parts of the country.

Some people have argued that it is unfair for the south-west, with only 3 per cent. of the nation's population, to have to pay to clean up 30 per cent. of its beaches. But that argument ignores the fact that other parts of the country have particular geographical problems—for instance, East Anglia has a problem with nitrates and the north-west has a problem with lead. Those problems also require additional investment, which has to be paid for by the customers in those areas.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton) *rose—*

Mr. Baldry: No, I cannot give way. The director general will announce in July the new annual price limits for South West Water and for other companies, for a ten-year period beginning 1 April 1995.

I was not given a proper opportunity to answer this important debate by the hon. Member for Truro, but I suspect that much of what I have to say I shall say by way of a press release in the south-west—because the hon. Gentleman abused our procedure. The director general and the Government are keen to ensure that future price rises are not a penny higher than necessary. That is the action that we are taking to ensure that we comply properly with the directives, and to ensure that bills in the south-west are kept as low as possible—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Commonwealth

1 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Our former highly respected colleague Sir Richard Luce, who was a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister for many successful years, had a letter published in *The Times* on 25 October last year. It began as follows:

"Having just returned from the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus I am absolutely clear that in recent years the British people have forgotten about the Commonwealth. Very few of the younger generation know about it. The British Government gives the impression that it has other preoccupations."

Although the Prime Minister played a full part in that meeting in Cyprus, being there for the five days, I too detected an unfortunate tone of indifference to the Commonwealth creeping into Government pronouncements of the time.

It has been brought to my attention by supporters of the Commonwealth that in the new national curriculum there is, alack, no reference to the Commonwealth—an omission that I find both surprising and wrong, although I appreciate that it may be mentioned under another heading, such as the nature of community.

The Government have failed to stir the imaginations of the younger generation or their interest in the Commonwealth; perhaps a reference in the national curriculum would be the right way forward. If the Minister has a better proposal, I should like to hear it.

When Her Majesty the Queen visited the Commonwealth Institute last May, she remarked:

"The institute brings the reality of the individual countries of the Commonwealth alive, and demonstrates the role the Commonwealth can play in the world and among its members."

Unfortunately, as the House will know, in September—owing, I believe, to an excessive Treasury squeeze on the FCO budget, and to a belief that the institute should raise more of its own money—the Government announced, without prior consultation, the decision to stop all future funding of the institute. That represented a massive blow to a popular and important institute.

Writing in *The Spectator* last October, John Simpson, the perceptive BBC diplomatic correspondent, likened Britain's approach to the Commonwealth these days to that of a father who has left home and is inclined to forget the birthdays of his children. He thought that Labour's interest in it had faded and that

"nowadays there is no political support for the Commonwealth at Westminster . . . For the Right wing of the Conservative party the Commonwealth represented little more than a large extended begging-bowl. There were no imperial echoes in Thatcherism . . . As for the left and centre of the party, they are concerned only with Europe; for them, there is no alternative."

He took a certain journalistic licence, but there was a kernel of truth in what he wrote.

The purpose of this brief Adjournment debate is to give the Under-Secretary of State, whose lighthearted steps to the golden beaches I have had reason to delay on several previous occasions, the opportunity to tell the House what role he sees for the Commonwealth—it hardly bears repeating that the Commonwealth is not the British Commonwealth—and what role the Government are to play in assisting, guiding and encouraging that future.

I want to spend a few minutes giving him some help with that task. I speak as an enthusiastic and committed supporter of the European Union, who has found in

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practice over the years that it is only on the rarest of occasions that the interests of the European Union and the Commonwealth are seriously divorced, let alone contrary.

Let the Government help the British people to reappraise the value of the Commonwealth at the end of this century, not just to the United Kingdom but to the world.

For many years, the Commonwealth was distorted by the vexed issue of South Africa, by tired and tedious references to a colonial past and by a false picture of Britain's role in the modern world. Times have changed; South Africa is about to have a crucial, historic election and I welcome in principle South Africa's return to the Commonwealth fold.

There are powerful advantages for Britain in being a member of this unique collection of 50 nations which together represent 1.5 billion people—a figure even greater than the population of China.

The Commonwealth has some of the fastest growing economies such as Singapore and Malaysia. In mentioning Malaysia, cordial relations should be speedily restored between our Commonwealth countries. The Minister will know that one of his colleagues had the opportunity to congratulate the Malaysian defence forces yesterday on the part that they played with great courage in rescuing the British Army mountaineers.

The Commonwealth has the world's most populist democracy—India—and such key regional players as Australia, Canada and Nigeria and 25 per cent. of United Nations members belong to it.

I visited New York last year with a parliamentary delegation and I was told that the Commonwealth delegates have regular co-ordinating meetings and work well together. I hope there is concerted effort to canvass the support of those delegates for Britain's continued seat on the United Nations Security Council and that it is partly regarded as a Commonwealth seat and not just a European Union seat.

Britain should be able to assist the Commonwealth also through its membership not only of the European Union, which is getting ever larger, but of the G7 countries and because of the important part Britain plays in the deliberations of the International Monetary Fund and the World bank.

I should like to think that Britain remains the Commonwealth psychological centre, helped by the presence here in London of the Commonwealth Secretariat in one of our historic old houses.

At the important Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting—I have the highest possible regard for the role of our royal family on such occasions—Britain had the opportunity to get its point of view across to 49 other members with their cross section of religion, culture and levels of development. But Britain also has the opportunity to gain a special insight into a vast and ever-changing range of world problems, including those concerning health, social issues and the environment.

We should never forget the occasions when Commonwealth countries have been able to help us when we were in trouble. The invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982 was one such moment in recent history.

As a former member of the executive committee of the British section of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and as a member of the House of Commons who has participated in a number of CPA visits to Commonwealth countries, including Australia and Zambia, I draw attention to the association's splendid work. Commonwealth Members of Parliament are frequently surprised, when they meet in different corners of the world, to learn how much they share in common. In our divided, turbulent and frequently violent world, greater understanding is vital. Its value is unquantifiable.

The CPA can help buttress Commonwealth Parliaments. I recall the encouragement a British delegation tried to give a Speaker in an African country who was under unwarranted pressure—in fact, he was receiving personal threats—from the head of state. After all, this House has a deep historical knowledge of such matters and a good record of putting the high and mighty, insensitive and arrogant in their proper places. New hon. Members do not have the international background that some of their predecessors had—particularly of those who served abroad during the last world war. Also, the last group of Conservative Members of Parliament elected did not include, for the first time in many years, someone from the diplomatic community. They welcome visits to Commonwealth countries.

The secretariat has played a useful part in building stronger democracies. Multi-party democracy is being restored in many Commonwealth countries. The Commonwealth is busily engaged putting its own house in order and that effort should be both sustained and acknowledged. Experts of the highest quality have been despatched to help strengthen democratic systems and the rule of law. Governments have been assisted in adopting international best practice in their administrative, judicial and regulatory functions. That work is immensely important and offers hope to future generations.

I will focus on the mounting of 11 election observer missions—a crucial and comparatively new activity involving this House. Such missions are undertaken only at the invitation of the Governments concerned and with the agreement of all major political parties. Independent observers closely examine all aspects of the conduct of the election and decide whether the result reflects the wishes of the people. Recently, elections have been held and observed in Zambia, the Seychelles, Ghana, Kenya and Lesotho.

Time allows only a brief reference to the Harare declaration at the 1991 Commonwealth summit, which takes forward the core Commonwealth beliefs and defines 10 key areas of action. They include the protection and promotion of fundamental political values, equality for women, access to education, promoting sustainable development, protecting the environment, and combatting drug trafficking. Britain is heavily committed to success in them all.

In his letter to *The Times* in support of the Commonwealth, Sir Richard Luce wrote of

"a vast and unique network of contact between the people of the Commonwealth fostered by the provision of scholarships and fellowships and the work of many Commonwealth professional organisations. Recently representatives from over 500 universities in the Commonwealth were able to meet in Swansea."

Britain fully supports such activities and gives £14 million for Commonwealth scholarships—50 per cent. of the total. We also pay 30 per cent. of the secretariat budget, and I am

told that we provide the building free. Like the European Union, the Commonwealth represents a highly successful club. As John Simpson put it, it is

"a matter of considerable prestige to be a member. Angola and Mozambique, though former Portugese possessions, are both seeking to join: it represents security for them, and a way back from the utter despair they have endured".

I am greatly encouraged by the number of Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians, as well as British people, that one can now find working in Commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia. The Commonwealth, under its superb Secretary-General, has built up a considerable life of its own, and we have every reason to be proud of it.

I end with some words that Chief Anyaoku used in his report last year to the Heads of Government:

"The very existence of the Commonwealth and its history in modern times give grounds for optimism in postulating future possibilities for international co-operation . . . The Commonwealth has grown out of the deepest and most enriching currents of its times: decolonisation and national freedom, individual liberty and democracy, racial equality, development and the struggle to alleviate poverty, international co-operation and understanding across historical divides, and the quest for world peace."

1.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): My hon. Friend should be congratulated for raising this subject. Members such as he ensure that we discuss matters which we would otherwise perhaps not discuss often enough. I know from his remarks that he has demonstrated that there is no lack of political support for the Commonwealth at Westminster when there are Members such as he in the House.

My hon. Friend mentioned the size of the Commonwealth. It represents a large cross-section of the world, with 1.5 billion people. I think that it is best described as an organisation with a membership which is one quarter of the human race. My hon. Friend mentioned the enormous powerful commercial interests and advantages which accrue to Britain through its membership of the Commonwealth. He mentioned Singapore and Malaysia. It would be right to add India to that list, as another burgeoning economy in the Commonwealth.

As in the case of most international organisations, the role and image of the Commonwealth has changed immeasurably in the past few years. It is, in spite of being one of the oldest and by no means the smallest, probably the least discussed and has the lowest profile. That lowness of profile is one of its strengths. It gets on with its business quietly and effectively behind the scenes. Of course it was an invention of the British, originally designed to make the transition from empire to independence as smooth as possible, but it has some notable advantages nowadays over other institutions. Perhaps its greatest advantage is that it has no fixed, unchangeable objective. Its strength is in its continuing vocation for informal co-operation and contact. It is not an organisation with voting rights or elaborate machinery for dealing procedurally with disagreements between members. All those features are its strengths.

My hon. Friend has expressed some disappointment that the word "Commonwealth" is not mentioned in the national curriculum. He is being a little unfair. If I were to challenge him to read the national curriculum in its entirety, and to list the number of subjects of interest about which he would like schoolchildren to be taught, he would find that the Commonwealth is not the only subject that is not mentioned in the national curriculum. Frankly, he is asking more of the national curriculum than is possible. I would have thought, like my hon. Friend, that all types of occasions provide opportunities to demonstrate to schoolchildren Britain's membership of the Commonwealth, and the interest in the Commonwealth of so many British subjects whose parents came from Commonwealth countries.

From what I have said, it is obvious that the great challenge facing the Commonwealth now is to consider how its future relevance and its flexible role will develop. I am happy to endorse my hon. Friend's comments about the present Commonwealth Secretary-General. He has been enormously successful and has built well upon the initiatives of his predecessors. He has done a particularly good job in promoting good government and on election monitoring. That is an area in which the Commonwealth is particularly well qualified and where it has a special contribution to make. I welcome that and see it as giving new life to the Commonwealth.

In 1991 at Harare the Heads of Government opened a new chapter in the Commonwealth's history. The declaration on good governance made at that meeting has since proved its worth. It gave the Commonwealth new unity and purpose in promoting good governance and democracy. It certainly demonstrates the Commonwealth's relevance today.

My hon. Friend touched on a number of the successful elections that have taken place since 1991 which led to democratic government in Commonwealth countries. There have been elections in Zambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho and the Seychelles. They were all undertaken with observer missions, to which my hon. Friend referred, and with Commonwealth assistance. The Secretary-General's good offices were instrumental in bringing to a peaceful end the recent troubles in Lesotho.

Last year's conference in Cyprus was able to concentrate on the practical and constructive work of the Commonwealth. As we know, its members have important shared economic interests and agreement was reached on a range of important subjects.

The Limassol statement on the Uruguay round expressed the Commonwealth's strong collective commitment to a comprehensive, equitable and balanced conclusion on the general agreement on tariffs and trade. Other important areas were covered. Additional measures were called for to reduce the debt burden of developing countries. A strengthening of co-operation in combating the international menace of financial crime, proposed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, was agreed by members. As a result, a financial crime workshop for Commonwealth small states, which are so vulnerable to sophisticated international financial crime, will be held in Port of Spain in May this year.

Mr. Cyril D.Townsend: While my hon. Friend is talking about smaller states, what is the Government's view on inviting into the Commonwealth countries such as Angola—by no means a small state in terms of size—which have not previously been part of the British empire?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It would be nice to think that my views would prevail just like that. I can give only a tentative opinion on what I believe is the Government's view. It is a matter for the Commonwealth, not the British

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

Government. We are an important part of the Commonwealth and we favour the accession of new states, provided that they meet the essential criteria that we expect of a civilised nation and have an interest in being a member of the Commonwealth by reason of geographical location and proximity to other Commonwealth countries. I am happy to say that I think that we would give that proposition a fair wind, but I can give my hon. Friend a more considered reply by letter if he so wishes.

There is no doubt that Britain's entry into the European Community, to which my hon. Friend referred—and our membership now of the European Union—has benefited Commonwealth countries. It has allowed them greater access than ever before to European markets. The Lomé convention offers to 69 developing countries, many of them Commonwealth members, the most favourable trading regime that the European Community gives to any of its trading partners. All industrial goods, except rum, can enter the Community market free from tariffs and quotas, and even rum should soon be exempt.

My hon. Friend mentioned the Commonwealth Institute. The Government emphatically do not want the institute to close. The decision to withdraw our grant in aid after March 1996 was taken with great reluctance against a very tight Foreign Office budget. We want the institute to use the fine building on Kensington High street, provided by the Government, to promote the Commonwealth but to draw after 1996 on non-Government funds to do so. I know that many of the institute's supporters believe that its facilities and programmes could still have a useful function. The Foreign Office is giving the institute a full grant for the current and the next two financial years to enable it to develop a relaunch programme. In addition, separate finance of up to £2.4 million was made available last month to meet redundancy costs. We do not for a moment underestimate the difficulty of the task facing the institute in the next two years but nor do we share the pessimism that has been expressed by a number of colleagues.

I now draw the House's attention to other aspects of our interests in the Commonwealth. Let us consider aid. Because of our shared tradition and common values, it is right that by far the largest part of Britain's official aid programme should go to Commonwealth countries. In recent years, that has amounted to 65 per cent. of the aid that we provide bilaterally. We have always contributed up to 30 per cent. of the secretariat's programme and running costs which, in 1993-94, amount to about £3 million. We have contributed equally towards the Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation since its birth in 1971.

We also provide substantial support each year for scholarships and training awards for students from Commonwealth countries. For instance, the British Chevening scholarships scheme funded 987 scholars and fellows from 49 different countries in 1992-93. A further £600,000 a year goes to the Commonwealth Foundation.

We should not forget the role that Britain has played in promoting the interests of our Commonwealth partners in the international financial institutions and through the European Union. Our aid, like that of other major donors, is closely linked to the drive in recipient countries to secure better government and improved respect for human rights.

My hon. Friend mentioned South Africa, and I wish I had a few more minutes to develop the argument slightly further than he took it. It is enormously important that the Commonwealth is playing such an active role there. For well over a year, the Commonwealth observer mission has been in South Africa, helping to bring an end to the cycle of violence and assisting in the transition to a non-racial democracy. The Commonwealth has helped in the training of mediators and marshals specialising in crowd control and provided assistance in the form of training to the proposed national peacekeeping force. As my hon. Friend knows, plans are currently being finalised to mount, in co-operation with the UN, the Organisation for African Unity and the European Union, the largest ever Commonwealth election observer mission to observe South Africa's first non-racial democratic elections on 27 April next.

I must bring my remarks to a halt in a moment or two. I conclude by saying that Commonwealth members have important shared political and economic interests. Britain's membership of the Commonwealth, as of so many other international organisations, presents and will, I hope, continue to present challenges and opportunities. We regard membership as a strength, bringing different perspectives to bear on mutual problems. Because of its population and geographical diversity, the Commonwealth brings a particular perspective that gives it a valuable and relevant role in the world today.

The living proof is there to see. The Commonwealth is standing the test of time extremely well. We have only to consider all the initiatives that it has produced. In October a number of Members of Parliament, including several of my right hon. Friends and myself, will attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association annual conference in Banff. Later in the year we have the Commonwealth Law and Education Ministers meetings. The Commonwealth Year of Sport is to be celebrated in Canada in August, with the Commonwealth Games. And of course, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting will take place in New Zealand in the autumn of next year.

Greenwich Mean Time

1.30 pm

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a case for the maintenance of Greenwich mean time. As our clocks have just moved forward, this is an especially appropriate time to debate the issue. And as I am discussing Greenwich mean time, I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) is here beside me.

It would be useful to start with a little description of the history and background. The subject goes back a long way. In 1844 an international convention opted for the world to consist of a number of time belts of one hour per 15 degrees of longitude. That world time order means that midday in the United Kingdom is midnight on the other side of the world. The United Kingdom is in the Greenwich mean time zone.

Greenwich mean time, then, is the system that applies to the United Kingdom and Ireland in winter. British summer time—BST—starts when the clocks go forward one hour, as has happened recently. Central European time is the system for Europe, but not for Greece. Europe remains one hour ahead of the United Kingdom and Ireland for 11 months a year—that is, it is on GMT plus one in winter and GMT plus two in summer. That is sometimes known as single double summer time.

Summer time means the practice of moving clocks forward one hour in summer. That ensures more daylight hours in the evening. In the summer months that works effectively because longer daylight hours mean that there is also light in the mornings. In winter there are fewer daylight hours, and the clocks go back one hour in October to create extra daylight in the mornings. That means that on the shortest day of the year day breaks at about 8.30 or 9 am in the south-east and after 10 am in the north of Scotland. In the most northern parts daylight can begin as late as 10.30 or 10.45 am.

Europe, but not Greece, adopts Greenwich mean time plus one hour—central European time—as its system for most of the year. In summer western Europe moves its clocks forward—in effect, that means Greenwich mean time plus two hours—at the same time as we move to Greenwich mean time plus one hour. That trend is reversed by Europe in September, with a move back to GMT plus one. That creates harmonisation with Great Britain for a month, until we move back to GMT in October. The European Commission is trying to regularise the September-October period. Greece is still different, and is on GMT plus two and GMT plus three respectively.

That says it all. The different time zones are part of nature in a sense: they are part of where we are. James Morgan, in a good and effective article in the *Financial Times*, said simply:

"The pressure to move the clock forward reflects the familiar vanity that reality is ours to change. But the earth turns on its axis, and Belfast is in a different time zone from Belgrade because it is in a different place."

There are many arguments both for and against change, but I believe that there is no argument for change strong enough to do away with the tradition and the advantages of keeping Greenwich mean time.

Today I want to find out whether the Government have made up their mind to come out of the somewhat neutral position, weighing up all the arguments, that they adopted in the document that they issued some time ago. That contained a little bit of this and a little bit of that, but came out with no strong case against change. I want to see whether the Minister can give me that information today.

One aspect has supposedly formed part of the strongest case for the attempted change: road accidents and safety. The most emotive issue is the safety of children. The current system means that children go to and leave school in daylight except in the very north of Scotland and parts of the northern part of Northern Ireland. Under central European time children would continue to leave school in daylight, but would go to school in darkness.

The House of Commons overwhelmingly rejected an extension of the British standard time experiment in the early 1970s. I am not sure whether the Minister was in the House then—I certainly was not—but a significant factor in that overwhelming rejection was the fact that during the experiment there was an increase in road accidents involving children in the mornings. There were many stories of children and school crossing patrols being killed or injured in the blackness of our English winter mornings between 7.30 and 9 a.m. That was when the practice of children wearing fluorescent armbands first started.

It seems to have been forgotten that mornings are darker than early evenings—as we all know, the darkest hour is the hour before dawn. In early evening, people often have their lights shining out from their house windows for a long time before they close their curtains. In the morning, curtains are often left closed until there is proper daylight. Many shop lights do not come on until about 8.45 am, by which time most children are in school, whereas shop lights shine out brightly late in the day until 5.30 or 6 pm.

On the crucial subject of young children travelling to school in darkness, the only argument that the supporters of central European time can advance is that children are more likely to be driven to school in the mornings than in the evenings. That is all very well if the family happens to have a car and there is a member of the family available to drive the child to school, but that does not happen for the vast majority of our children today and the argument provides no comfort for any family without a car.

The Policy Studies Institute and the daylight extra campaign brought out statistics to show that more than 100 lives could be saved by the change. But during the last experiment with continental time, in 1969-70, the number killed on British roads rose compared with the previous three-year period. Road deaths started to fall soon after Greenwich mean time was restored and have dropped steadily ever since.

Some of the arguments advanced have been economic. There are three sections of workers who would be greatly affected by a change from the status quo. The first sector is agriculture, which employs 253,000 workers, many of whom have to work in the dark in the mornings under great physical stress. The Green Paper produced by the Home Office showed that the National Farmers Union expressed great concern that many of the morning tasks on a farm would have to be delayed by one hour if a change were implemented, incurring great costs in terms of extra lights and energy.

The second sector is the building industry, which employs nearly 820,000 workers, who would suffer in a similar way. The Building Employers Confederation calculated the additional costs incurred by the 1960s experiment and brought the statistics up to 1989 figures to show an extra cost of about £7 billion.

[Ms Kate Hoey]

The sector of workers in which I have most interest is that of the postal workers. The postal and express sector employs more than 220,000 workers in the United Kingdom and the Union of Communication Workers strongly opposes the change. For many years, the union has expressed concern about the increased stress caused by postal workers working long periods in darkness. At present, a postal worker in a sorting and delivery office may work a shift that commences as early as 4.30 am. Outdoor deliveries begin as early as 7 am. In the winter months, up to the first three or four hours of a postal worker's shift may be spent without daylight. The period is, of course, much longer in Scotland. Despite that and the hazards it brings, Royal Mail employees are still not classed as night workers.

Postal work is already a difficult job. Increasingly in our inner-city areas, there are no-go areas for postal workers. In London, there are one or two estates where postal workers have not been able to deliver because of physical attacks and threats. Those will become far worse if more work is carried out in darkness. A serious problem for the Union of Communication Workers and its members is the number of postal workers who are attacked by dogs. That is not a laughing matter and anyone who thinks that it is has a strange sense of humour. At present a postal worker can at least see the dog coming to bite him or her, but if we go back to the earlier system, many postal workers will be bitten by dogs and will not even be able to identify the dogs. That is a serious point. Postal workers do not want to spend longer working in the dark.

Once again, we seem to be being pushed by Euro-bureaucrats who want us all to be standardised. The Confederation of British Industry says that its members are so frantically busy working to create economic activity that seven hours a day is not enough and that they need eight hours a day. Japan, which is not exactly a country that is not doing well economically, is seven hours ahead of Europe and 11 hours ahead of the Atlantic coast of North America. We cannot say that Japan's economic prosperity has been damaged by the differences in hours. The fact that there are a number of time zones within North America makes absolutely no difference. This is another absurdity resulting from the European Commission's wanting everything to be standardised. It is change for change's sake. There is no argument for changing the present system which cannot be counteracted by another argument. We should not allow the Eurocrats to change something that is widely accepted here.

I welcome differences. I quite enjoy the fact that when I travel on holiday I have to work out what time it is in the country I am visiting and whether it will be a different time. I do not want to be the same as everyone else in Europe and I do not believe that people in this country want to be the same. There is nothing wrong with diversity. I hope that the Minister can tell us what really lies behind the urge to change and to do away with something that everyone accepts.

We should celebrate the difference. We should celebrate the fact that with Greenwich mean time people do not have to go to work in darkness, as they would if there were a change. We can improve our safety record at whatever time of the morning or afternoon: we do not need to change the time to stop accidents on the road—there are other ways to do that. Because of the change in our drink-driving laws, the figures for accidents at the end of the day are less serious then they were.

Let us keep what we have. It works perfectly sensibly and there is no real move for change. I hope that the Government will not allow themselves to get into another mess with change for change's sake. A change from Greenwich mean time will arouse huge opposition. Anyone living north of Birmingham will be wholly opposed to any change. I hope that the Minister will give his views strongly today.

1.45 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich) *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Has the hon. Gentleman obtained the permission of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) and the Minister to speak?

Mr. Raynsford: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) on raising this important subject. I thank her and the Minister for making time for me to speak briefly.

My hon. Friend made a strong and persuasive case for retaining Greenwich mean time, and for burying the suggestion that it be abandoned in favour of central European time. This is not the first occasion on which that suggestion has been made. For a period during the late 1960s we experimented with British standard time, but the experiment was abandoned in 1970, when BST—the equivalent of central European time—was rejected on a free vote by a huge majority of 366 to 81. That was a clear and decisive result.

The report of that debate provides some interesting insights. Replying for the Government, the right hon. Reginald Maudling—then Home Secretary—tackled the issue of the safety of children travelling to school. He pointed out that there was no convincing evidence in favour of a change to British standard time for that reason, saying:

> "It is difficult to produce any convincing figures one way or the other. There has been a surprising and sad increase in the number of child casualties between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. which is not wholly explained and rather bedevils the figures on this point."

He ended by saying:

> "The figures are not clear enough to base a decision upon. I think that we should assume one way or the other that there is not a large margin either way."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1970; Vol. 807, c. 1335.]

That was practical evidence, as opposed to the theories and fanciful arguments advanced now by people who claim that changing to central European time will save children's lives. Such people should realise that the reality is much more complex, and that their case cannot be substantiated.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall pointed out, the simple geographical truth is that we are not on the same longitude as central Europe; we are on the western extremity of Europe, and GMT reflects that. Anyone who is uncertain about that should visit the excellent exhibition at the royal observatory in Greenwich, which clearly shows the remarkable British scientific advances made in the measurement of longitude and time in the 17th and 18th centuries. Those advances led to the establishment of an international framework based on the Greenwich meridian in the 19th century. The logic remains today, and provides a convincing reason for us to avoid the rather dangerous tendency towards Euro-federalism. I note from the record

of the 1970 debate that Baroness Thatcher was one of those who voted against the introduction of British standard time and in favour of retaining GMT—no doubt expressing her well-known views about Euro-federalism.

The case is strong, and I sincerely hope that the Minister will recognise that. I hope that he will also recognise the value of retaining an element of free voting on this important issue. When the House was free to make its own decision 24 years ago, it did so by firmly supporting Greenwich mean time. I hope that it will have the same freedom if the issue is ever put to the vote again.

1.48 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) on her success in the ballot, and on her choice of subject.

The question of which time zone we should adopt in relation to Greenwich mean time is certainly topical. As the hon. Lady pointed out, only last week the clocks were moved forward to put us on to summer time. According to the hon. Lady's definition and that of her hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), we have abandoned GMT until October.

Let me add to the hon. Lady's summary of what GMT means. For purposes including navigation, cartography and the calculation of time, it has for centuries been useful to employ the concept of the meridian—a circle of constant longitude passing through a given place, and through the north and south poles. As regards time, the significance of the Greenwich meridian is that the system of standard time zones is based on mean time on that meridian. The result is that, almost throughout the world, standard time in any particular country is either that at Greenwich, or differs from that at Greenwich by an integral number of hours, plus or minus.

I trouble the House with that explanation for two reasons. First, it puts beyond doubt that whatever future arrangements the United Kingdom adopts for the calculation of time will not, and by definition cannot, affect the existence and value of Greenwich mean time. The universal benefit of GMT, as the basis for calculating time zones, is immutable. I hope that that will bring some comfort to the hon. Member who has the honour to represent Greenwich, who I am glad intervened briefly in the debate. The hon. Member for Greenwich asked me whether a proposed change could be decided by a free vote in the House. Alas, that is not a matter for me. I am sure, however, that the House would want to reach its own considered conclusion on such a matter.

Secondly, the explanation of GMT helps me to comment on early-day motion 935, entitled "Central European Time Zone", which the hon. Member for Vauxhall has signed. That motion calls on the Government to recognise the natural laws of the solar system by keeping the link with Greenwich mean time. I give her an unequivocal assurance that the Government cannot but recognise the relevant natural laws. Those laws are that the sun rises and sets, and that there are fewer hours of daylight in winter than in summer. Those certainties are unalterable by Government, Parliament, or any other human agency. Furthermore, whatever future arrangements we decide on will be linked indissolubly with Greenwich time.

As the hon. Lady said, at present the United Kingdom's time in winter is Greenwich mean time, so that in the summer, from March to October, our time is GMT plus one hour. For shorthand, I shall refer to those arrangements as the status quo. When, in our 1989 Green Paper, we initiated consultation and consideration of the country's future arrangements for time, a majority of respondents favoured, instead of the status quo, a different linkage with GMT —single double summer time, otherwise known as central European time or CET. That sets time in winter at GMT plus one hour, and summer time at GMT plus two hours. The effect would be later sunrises—and so later sunsets —in both summer and winter.

While the responses overall favoured moving to that arrangement, the consultation also revealed strong feelings in favour of the status quo, particularly in Scotland but also in sectors of opinion elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That is among the major reasons why assessment of where the balance of national advantage lies is less than easy. As well as the hon. Lady, many other hon. Members have signed EDM 935, opposing a move to CET. Against that, numerous other Members have signed EDM 389, which strongly advocates such a move.

The main objections to moving to CET that we have received fall into two categories. First, there is concern about the prospect of darker winter mornings leading to general inconvenience and, in particular, fears of more difficult working environments, and of greater risks of accident for those, such as farmers, construction workers, postmen—to whom the hon. Lady referred—and milkmen, who start work outdoors early. Secondly, there is concern that any adverse consequences of moving to CET would have a disproportionate impact in the north, particularly in Scotland.

CET would certainly entail winter morning inconvenience, although that could be overcome in some sectors by changes in working hours. Examples of industry organisations nevertheless so far opposed to CET include the National Farmers Union, and construction industry representatives. The first see difficulties in darker mornings for both arable and livestock farmers. I shall not go into detail on those now, as time has become short. The construction industry focuses on the iciness as well as the darkness of morning work and the fear of entailing greater costs for artificial lighting or time lost waiting for the day to warm up and the possible greater risk of industrial accidents. We take those concerns seriously. It should also be noted, however, that no national increase in the number of accidents in the construction industry was notified under the Factories Acts during the experiment with British standard time between 1968 and 1970, when winter time was GMT plus one hour.

There are fears that the move to CET could be of disproportionate disadvantage to the north of the country and perhaps to Scotland in particular. There are two associated concerns. The first is the lateness of winter sunrise, as mornings would generally stay darker for longer in Scotland, even though the very late sunrises would be confined to the far north. I have some figures, but it is probably better that I set out the more general arguments as I have only a limited time. The second concern is that darker winter mornings in the north could lead to more traffic accidents. The hon. Member for Vauxhall stressed that aspect.

A further consideration, which carries substantial weight, is that people are fully accustomed to the status quo. That is a powerful argument. The advocates of CET need to show not only that its advantages could outweigh

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

its disadvantages, but that they would do so to such an extent that the change, which would affect every person in the country, would be well worth the making.

As I have summarised the case for the status quo, I must also report the main arguments that we have received for moving to CET. Those are that substantial net reductions in road traffic casualties are forecast, that there would be some reduction in the fear of crime, that opportunities for leisure pursuits would increase, that our tourism industries would be boosted, and that there would be benefits to business, travel and communications from sharing the same time arrangements as those adopted in most other western European countries.

Of those arguments, the one relating to road traffic casualties is the most clearly supported by statistical evidence, despite what the hon. Member for Vauxhall said. The Transport Research Laboratory, which did the calculations and analysed the statistics after the debate to which the hon. Member for Greenwich referred, estimates that a move to CET would achieve a United Kingdom-wide net total reduction in road traffic casualties of 140 deaths, 520 serious injuries and 2,000 other casualties each year. The TRL's estimate is that, of those totals, the annual reduction in Scotland would be by 12 deaths, 47 serious injuries and 270 other casualties. Proportionately, that would be a greater reduction than that forecast for elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

I should also explain what is stated in early-day motion 935. Whatever the value of the statistics—I understand that the hon. Member for Greenwich would like to argue, but so would many other people and they are not my statistics—they are not merely 20 years old, but take into account fresh circumstances, such as the welcome reduction in evening drink driving. TRL has taken relevant changed circumstances into account when revising the estimates derived from the 1968-70 experiment with BST.

The reduction in drink driving is not relevant, because the main period of drink driving is in the late evening—roughly 10 pm to 3 am—which is well outside the time that CET would affect.

As to fear of crime, I saw the hon. Member for Vauxhall shaking her head, but successive British crime survey reports show that fear of going out in the dark is especially common among women and the elderly, with fewer journeys made when darkness has fallen. Advocates of CET point out, therefore, that the extension of daylight hours into the late afternoons and early evenings would appreciably enhance the quality of life during the winter afternoons for the people in that category. The survey found that three in five female pensioners feel "very unsafe" walking alone in the dark and that, even among young men, one in 10 feels unsafe at that time. Although CET would mean later sunrises, fear of darkness in the mornings is not nearly so great.

The response to our initial consultation paper and subsequent representations shows that one of the greatest perceived advantages of CET is the enhanced opportunity that it would provide for people to engage in leisure pursuits. For instance, the Sports Council and the Central Council for Physical Recreation support CET for outdoor sports, in which the hon. Lady takes a particular interest.

Ms Hoey *rose—*

Mr. Lloyd: I have only one minute left. Not only must I fail to reply to whatever point the hon. Lady was about to make, but I must leave out a great many other things that I wanted to say. I want to take this chance to make it abundantly clear that the start and end dates, if they are decided, will be decided by this House, by the interest of this country. The Community is not putting pressure on us—at least, not in respect of what time we choose, although in respect of the end and start dates of the change, yes it is. I agree with the hon. Lady that the decision either to move to CET or to remain as we are needs to be made soon so that the uncertainty about what is to happen in the next two or three years can be dispelled.

Racism and Anti-semitism

2 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): When I applied for this debate I expected it to be the hors d'oeuvres before the debate on racial harassment during the debates on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill in April. Fate has now decreed that it be sandwiched between our debate last Monday and the debates that we shall have on our return.

The United Kingdom has a long history of tolerance. We welcomed the Huguenot refugees when they were the victims of religious persecution centuries ago. We welcomed the victims of pogroms at the turn of the century. In the 1930s, children came here on the Kindertransport from Germany to secure asylum. More recently, the Ugandan Asians, victims of Idi Amin, came here in the 1970s. That tolerance has been doubly blessed: it blessed those who received it and it blessed the United Kingdom, because those who came here made a major contribution to the life of our country.

That fine history is now threatened by a small minority. I am sure that everyone in the House was appalled by the election victory of the British National party in Millwall, but it was part of a wider worrying picture. In the past two years or so, there have been 14 racial murders, and there were about 9,000 reported racial attacks last year.

Anti-semitism is on the increase; there has been hate mail and anti-semitic leafleting in the universities. Our universities should be centres of tolerance and liberalism, but they are being used by a small group of Muslim fundamentalists who are waging a vicious campaign of anti-semitism. The HUT—no connection with UHT—has been condemned by most British Muslims and banned in many Arab countries, yet it is active on 50 campuses in this country.

The Hizb-ut-Tahir is an extremist organisation which has described Yasser Arafat as "filth". It has produced a leaflet, circulating in London university, which contains the following sentence:

"The last hour will not come until Muslims fight Jews and kill them . . . Peace with Israel, India and Serbia is a crime."

University College London cancelled a meeting due to be addressed by the HUT.

Those who perpetrate such offensive filth should be prosecuted. The Crown Prosecution Service, however, said about the leaflet:

"The Crown Prosecution Service have carefully considered the contents of this leaflet but have concluded it is not of such a nature that a prosecution for an offence contrary to part III of the Public Order Act 1986 could be brought in relation to its distribution. In the circumstances, the CPS have not passed the material on to the police."

If a leaflet calling for the murder of a religious group is not the sort of literature that the CPS believes should lead to a prosecution, one wonders how offensive a leaflet has to be —how nasty and filthy—before it warrants prosecution by the CPS.

We are faced with a small minority of mindless, militant Muslims who threaten violence on campuses; they are homophobic, anti-semitic and anti-Hindu. They claim the right to free speech, but they misuse that right to preach a doctrine of hate and violence. Surely those who persecute others should themselves be prosecuted by the forces of law and order. The HUT is a manifestation of poison and evil. It speaks for very few, but the doctrines it puts forward carry a threat which may incite others to violence.

Equally menacing is the flood of hate mail in north London. Many of my constituents, as I have reminded the House, were refugees from the Nazis. They fought for Britain in the last war and now, in the evening of their lives, they are experiencing a chilling echo of the 1930s. Why should they be disturbed by this evil hatred today?

We see cemeteries daubed with anti-semitic slogans and Nazi emblems. Surely the dead should have the right to rest in peace. Schools and synagogues need security staff to ensure that they will not be the victims of anti-semitic thugs. It is surely obscene that, in the last few years of the 20th century, places of worship should need to be protected and people should feel at risk when they are worshipping in a religious house.

Those attacks come from deranged, evil individuals who should be prosecuted. There are many who receive this hate mail and most of them will dismiss it as the product of a bitter, twisted mind. Others will obviously and rightly be concerned and ask themselves what will happen next. There is a danger that such anti-semitic literature will encourage others to commit acts of violence. That is why the Board of Deputies of British Jews is rightly concerned, and the Tabachnik report addresses the problem.

I hope that when my right hon. Friend replies to the debate he will be able to give the House some positive news about the Government's intentions on this matter. It is true that when we had the debate on Monday we still did not have the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), the Chairman of that Committee, is here this afternoon and I hope that he will say a few words and tell the House when he expects to produce that report. I also hope that, when the House returns on 12 April, my right hon. Friend will tell the House that the Government will consider moving amendments on this issue either before the Bill leaves the House or when it reaches another place.

Racism and anti-semitism are like cancer; they have to be eradicated at their source or they multiply their malignant growth. The first issue we have to examine is how we can more adequately enforce the law. I believe that we need to give the police additional powers. As I said on Monday night, if someone makes a racist speech at Hyde Park corner on a Sunday, he can be arrested but those delivering leaflets cannot be arrested. The police would welcome additional powers to prohibit or impose conditions on meetings and processions on the ground that racial hatred may be incited.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): Is my hon. Friend giving support and credence to the proposals in my Racial Hatred and Violence Bill?

Mr. Marshall: Yes. I am giving support to part of my hon. Friend's Bill.

Under sections 12, 13 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986, the police can impose conditions on, or prohibit, a march if it will cause serious public disorder or disruption to the life of the community and the Home Secretary can prohibit the march if the conditions are not an effective weapon. The police would like those conditions widened to include racial hatred. That would get rid of some of the unfortunate marches in London, which cause disruption, fear and anger to many people.

Additional resources are also required. Disorder in society is mushrooming and the police should be told that combating it has high priority and that additional resources

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will be devoted to that purpose. It would be helpful if my right hon. Friend the Minister would clarify the role of the Attorney-General in bringing prosecutions. How many land on his desk and how many are determined at a lower level in the prosecution system?

In defining new offences such as those outlined in the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth), the test must be whether it will be easier or more difficult to bring successful prosecutions. If we raise the hurdles before the prosecuting authorities, that would not be helpful.

I shall conclude, so that my two learned colleagues can contribute, by emphasising the need for speed. In the words of Lady Macbeth: –

"If it were done when 'tis done, then twere well–
It were done quickly".

My right hon. Friend the Minister may be tempted to say, "Let's wait until the next Criminal Justice Bill." We want quicker progress. Amendments should be made to the present Bill in the House or in the other place. The need is pressing and there must be immediate action.

2.11 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I thank the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for initiating this debate and for sparing me a little of his time. Above all, I thank him for being a champion of human rights causes—especially those affecting the Jewish community. We are all most grateful to him.

All six Conservative Members in the Chamber—most of whom are good personal friends of mine—are involved in the same fight against racism of all kinds and share extreme distaste for anti-semitism in all its aspects. The House is a very decent place. We have great disagreements, but on human rights issues we work together. As a Jewish leader, I thank those Conservative Members for all their work in that cause.

I greatly appreciated the remarks of the hon. Member for Hendon, South about the Tabachnik report. I do not know whether the particular suggestions made by Eldred Tabachnik are acceptable, but I would like the Minister to say whether he shares the view that change is essential.

We only have to look at the Italian elections to see what happens when people are not sufficiently aware of the past —the heirs to Mussolini's fascism start moving towards power; at events in what was the Soviet Union to smell the stench of anti-semitism in our nostrils; at what is happening in parts of Germany and the way in which the German Government and people are trying, often without success, to contest it, to know that the dangers of racism are not past.

I trust that the Minister will give us hope that in this country the dangers that confront not only Jewish people but all minority races are recognised by the Government, and that they will undertake to change the law on anti-racism to ensure that it will be enforceable and enforced.

2.13 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on being a great champion, as a Christian, of Jewish causes and a great source of pride and admiration for his many thousands of constituents—not only for those who are Jewish but for adherents to all kinds of other religions, who believe that this country is a haven of tolerance, decency and religious understanding.

There can be no doubt that racism, and the fear of racism, is growing in our society. Whether it is a result of the concentration in urban centres of ethnic minority groups or whether it is because the spread of fascism in Europe will inevitably have some effects here in Britain —there are already signs that that is happening—I do not know, but racism, unlike other kinds of "ism", is a cancer eating away at the fabric of free and decent societies. We realise how far that cancer can grow when we watch a film such as "Schindler's List" and witness how deep it went in a society which at the time was considered to be one of the most tolerant and reasonable in the world.

The Home Affairs Select Committee has tabled some amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. It has suggested that we should have an offence of racial attack, that there should be some strengthening of the Public Order Act 1986 to take account of racial harassment, and that more can be done to strengthen the courts' powers in connection with hate mail.

It is time for the defences against racism to be strengthened and it is time for a positive effort to be made by the House to lessen the fear of racism among ethnic minorities of whatever colour or creed.

I hope that the Government will view those amendments, which have been tabled by a majority of the Home Affairs Select Committee, with understanding and support. If they do, and if they show that they are able to take the challenge of the increase in racism and the fear of racism and strengthen our defences, I have no doubt that the ethnic minorities will take continued heart that multiracial Britain is, indeed, a haven of tolerance, understanding and decency. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South for giving me the opportunity to say those few words.

2.16 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for raising this subject. These important issues need extensive and thorough debate —rather more time, alas, than the 14 minutes that remain to me. At least the House has spent some time in recent weeks discussing new or amended legislation to tackle racial violence or harassment, and will do so again when we return after Easter.

Legislation is a very important tool, but it is not the only one, and it is vital that we do not lose sight of the wider picture of which my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South reminded us on a number of occasions, as did my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). Racism, discrimination and anti-semitism go much further than mere questions of legislation; legislation is crucial but legislation alone cannot provide the full solution to the problems of discrimination and prejudice. That is why the Government's policies seek to tackle the fundamental problems that lead to discrimination and disadvantage.

The Government's condemnation of all types of racial violence, harassment and discrimination is unequivocal. Such action harms not only individuals but the wider community. The trust and understanding built up over

years between communities can so rapidly be eroded by the climate of fear and anxiety that follows racial attacks or the distribution of nasty racist literature.The Government are firmly committed to the elimination of all types of discrimination and to the promotion of equality of opportunity.

Our commitment to eliminating the barriers to full participation is expressed in two ways. First, it is expressed in legislation. Britain has the most stringent and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in Europe. Those laws make racial discrimination in employment and in the provision of goods and services unlawful. The statutory organisation, the Commission for Racial Equality, promotes the law and offers advice and guidance on the way to avoid discrimination. The second leg of our policy manifests itself in the many programmes and initiatives that have been introduced to regenerate the economy, especially in the inner cities, the benefit of which is especially felt by ethnic minority communities.

Action to tackle disadvantage and to encourage economic recovery are only two elements of our policies that are actively helping to promote good race relations. We recognise the need to work together to build a truly open society in which all individuals, whatever their race, can feel safe, secure and able to contribute as well as to enjoy that society's benefits.

In stressing safety and security, I must deal with an issue which I know deeply concerns the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South, as it does the ethnic minority communities. There is not a decent person in the country who does not share with me and the House horror and outrage that young men like Quaddus Ali and Mukhtar Ahmed can be set upon by thugs and left critically ill. I take this opportunity to offer my sympathy to the victims and their families; I am sure that I speak for the whole House in doing so.

Investigation of racial crimes is a priority for the police and, where there are convictions, the sentences imposed by the courts can be and are exemplary. The appalling cases of the murders of Saddik Dada and Mohammed Sarwar and the taxi driver, Fiaz Mirza, show that to be so.

There has rightly been a great deal of discussion in recent months about how the law can contribute towards tackling racism and anti-semitism. The inquiry of the Select Committee on Home Affairs is close to reporting on this matter and it will be interesting to see its arguments and thoughts as well as some of its amendments, without any of the arguments and thoughts, down on the Order Paper.

We have been investigating the working of the Public Order Act 1986 in relation to racially motivated crimes. I have listened closely to the points my hon Friend the Member for Hendon, South has made today about the law as well as those he made on Monday. As he knows, there are a number of new clauses—rather more than there were last night—to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill currently before the House. That debate is not yet concluded, and will resume after Easter. These are important matters and they deserve a full response from the Government, which I will give when the House returns. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand, therefore, if I do not reply in detail to the points made today about those new clauses, instead confining myself to some general remarks.

When we have the arguments and views of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, as well as our own, I believe that its investigations will be seen to have underscored the complexities involved in considering changes to the law in this area. We need to be satisfied that any change would make the law more effective, promote good race relations and not have undesirable implications for the wider application of the criminal law. With those considerations in mind, I do not believe that it would be sensible to embark on legislative reform on the scale proposed recently by my hon Friend, the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth), at least certainly not before the outcome of the investigations has been fully exposed to public view. I want to assure my hon Friend that we will look sympathetically at any changes, in law or practice, that can give us more effective ways of dealing with racially motivated crimes.

One point that I want to make clear is that the Government do not believe that a specific offence, whether it be of racial harassment or racial violence, would be the right way forward. The need to prove racial motivation would make it much harder to achieve convictions and would undermine the declaratory or deterrent purpose behind such legislation. Although it would be temporarily encouraging to the ethnic minority communities, I believe that in the longer run it would undermine good race relations generally.

My hon. Friend specifically mentioned anti-semitism, as did my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton and the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner). That is only one facet of a more widespread racism, but the Jewish community does have specific concerns. Like the Jewish community, I am concerned about the continuing publication and distribution of racist and, in particular, anti-semitic literature, and I do not underestimate the hurt and apprehension felt by the Jewish community.

It has long been the position in this country that people have the right to express whatever views they may have, no matter how repugnant they may be, provided that they do so within the law. If it can be shown that racist literature is intended or likely to stir up racial hatred, the authors can be prosecuted under the Public Order Act and face a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment. The Malicious Communications Act 1988 can also catch anti-semitic literature if it is sent to someone whom the author expected and intended to be distressed by receiving such material. It seems to me that most of the literature —if that is the right word for it—that I have seen complained of falls foul of the law as it is. I am interested in the particular example cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South, which had been produced by an extremist Muslim organisation and which was circulating in universities.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I would rather not because I have only six minutes left. However, my hon. and learned Friend presses me, so I shall give way if he will be brief.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: If most of the literature falls foul of the law, why are there not more prosecutions?

Mr. Lloyd: I wish I had not given way to my hon. and learned Friend because I would have come to that point.

Mr. Janner: It is a good question.

Mr. Lloyd: It is a good question and one that requires close attention. The obvious problem is finding who has produced the literature and having sufficient evidence to prove it so that those responsible can be convicted. As I said, the law covers broadly the type of literature—if that is the right word for it—that is complained of but the problem is identifying the culprits.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West, who has taken a long and determined interest in these issues, intervened earlier to urge specifically the adoption of the recommendations of the Tabachnik report. Again, I hope that he will understand that I cannot go fully into those issues now. I will, however, make several remarks germane to the report.

We always need to strike a balance between freedom of speech, which includes the right to promulgate views and arguments that are silly and unpleasant, and the duty of the state to protect its citizens from abuse and publications that are conducive to strife and disorder. I am not yet convinced that the Public Order Act has that balance wrong, but I am acutely aware of the concern about the number of prosecutions since the Public Order Act came into force in 1987—a point raised by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton—and of the suspicion that there is a lack of interest in pursuing such offences. I can assure the House that the police and the prosecuting authorities take these matters very seriously.

We are examining the current law—to see whether it is not working as intended—as part of a wider study of the effectiveness of the law relating to racially motivated crimes. The police encounter great difficulty in identifying those responsible for producing and distributing the dreadful material that we all, unfortunately, see from time to time. We are paying particular attention to whether the police have the powers that they need to investigate effectively the sources of such material. The main issue is not the nature of the material itself and whether the existing law covers it; the major problem lies in identifying the offender so that a successful prosecution can be brought.

Of course, it is for the Attorney-General to decide whether to consent to prosecutions for Public Order Act offences involving material designed to incite racial strife. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend gives very careful consideration to all these cases referred to him by the Crown Prosecution Service. I believe that 19 cases have been referred to him, and I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton is worried that it is such a small number. Of those 19 cases, 14 have gone ahead with the Attorney-General's approval and five have not, the main reason being the unsatisfactory nature or inadequacy of the evidence. These are matters for the Attorney-General rather than me but I know that he is deeply concerned about them.

I regret that I do not have time to deal with all the matters raised, especially the organisations to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South referred. However, I stress that what we have achieved over the past 30 years or so is a tribute to the basic values of decency and tolerance to be found in the great majority of our people, whatever their background. We want to build on that foundation. Good race relations are about legislation but not only about legislation to penalise those who transgress; they are also about promotion, advice, information, health and education. Measures that build confidence and trust and create mutual understanding are needed to go alongside the law—to underpin it and improve relationships that have gone wrong before the law needs to be called in because an offence has been committed.

I am greatly encouraged by the discussions that I have had with many representatives of ethnic minority organisations. There are real problems, but there is also a great deal of good will in those communities upon which to build.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South on bringing the arguments before us. They are essential. I hope that I have given him some encouragement, and I believe that we shall find that changes in the law can be useful. However, my hon. Friend is shrewd and practical, and has said that there is no benefit to the Jewish community or to any other ethnic minority in our simply rewriting the law in a way that extends neither its scope nor its effectiveness. I am determined to avoid doing that.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Ministerial Accountability

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Lightbown.*]

2.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Since I was elected to the House nearly two years ago, one of my great pleasures has been showing the palace to more than 1,000 visitors. When I welcome them here I say that this is a royal palace, but it is also the people's palace. I take my visitors to the Chapel in the Crypt and show them the plaque placed there by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) in memory of the great suffragette Emily Wilding Davison. I also take them through Westminster hall and rehearse for them all the great events that occurred there.

Then we go to St. Stephen's hall, where I invite my visitors to pause, and I explain how Charles I stormed into the House of Commons to arrest five Members of Parliament. I paraphrase the words that Speaker Lenthall uttered on that very spot, and I pull myself up to my full height, as no doubt Speaker Lenthall did when he looked the king straight in the eye and said something like, "May it please your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak except with the permission of this House." I tell the schoolchildren who come to visit me that what Speaker Lenthall was really doing, in the polite way that Speakers have, was telling the king to go and take a long running jump off Southend pier.

I then tell my visitors that Speaker Lenthall was also asserting the rights and independence of the House of Commons against the Executive, and I add that in my view those rights and that independence need renewing, or reasserting.

Today the Executive is not in reality Her Majesty the Queen, although things are done in her name. The Executive today consists of the people who sit on the Treasury Bench—the Government. Over recent years—the characteristic is not exclusive to the present Administration—there has been a growth of arrogance and of the arbitrary use, and perhaps misuse, of power by Government. That needs to be curtailed. The rights and the capacity of this place to be independent of the Executive, and to be able to probe them, scrutinise them and call them to account, need to be reasserted.

A kicking-off point for a renewal of the capacity of Members of Parliament to question Ministers and to call them to account would be for the House of Commons to repatriate to itself the control of parliamentary business and of the legislative programme. I am told that it is a relatively recent development that the Leader of the House, as a member of the Government, says what we shall do and what business we shall consider in this place.

It is a long overdue reform that the business of this place should be controlled by a Select Committee of senior Back-Bench Members of Parliament, with whom the Government would negotiate about parliamentary slots for their legislation. Indeed, it would be within the power of those Back Benchers to say that there was not parliamentary time for particular forms of legislation. That would be an extremely healthy step towards reasserting our rights and our capacity to control the Executive and to call Ministers to account.

We have a problem with the volume of legislation. Too much of it goes through the House. No hon. Member can say with hand on heart that legislation is properly scrutinised here. As a consequence it is poor, deficient in many areas and contains errors. That is partly the fault of the 651 of us who form the House, but it is also due to the poor management of the legislative process by individual Ministers. We recently had an example of that when the Railways Act 1993 was found to be deficient. An amending piece of legislation had to be railroaded through the House just over a week ago to deal with British Transport police. That shows that we are not doing our job properly, and that Ministers are not advocating, and framing and piloting legislation through the House properly.

I want the House to exploit the provisions in our Standing Orders to ensure that primary legislation, including politically contentious legislation, is examined in special Standing Committees, as happens in most other legislatures around the world, such as the United States and other Westminster-style Parliaments as well. In those Parliaments, Bills do not simply pass through the traditional Standing Committees. Through the use of a Select Committee element, there is proper probing and examination of the content and intent of the Bills. Our Standing Orders include that provision, but it rarely triggered, except in relatively uncontentious legislation. That is a pity, and we should start to use that provision, particularly in relation to Government legislation.

I wholeheartedly defend our two-Chamber principle. I do not defend the way in which the other place is constituted, but its role and function are extremely important. It reviews legislation that has been badly handled by the House of Commons, and acts as a check and balance against the excessive use of power—what Lord Hailsham referred to as parliamentary dictatorship. If a party wins a general election and the arithmetic is correct, it can form a Government and railroad legislation through the House of Commons regardless of its merits and whether it has been fully examined. The second Chamber helps to prevent that, but I want to see a democratically elected chamber.

It seems nonsense that we cannot examine or scrutinise senior and important Ministers from another place in the Chamber of the House of Commons. I wish that Members of the House of Lords who are Ministers could be questioned in the House of Commons, and vice versa. If the architect of a piece of legislation is a Member of the other House, it would make sense for him to pilot the legislation through this House.

I should also consider it appropriate for Ministers who are Members of the House of Commons to pilot legislation, which they have framed and which bears their fingerprints, through the upper House. That practice would not be a major departure. It exists in other legislatures around the world, and it makes sense. I am not bothered about the rubrics—I would allow Ministers from the House of Lords to come and speak from the Dispatch Box. But, if people want to be fussy, parliamentary carpenters could be asked to erect another Dispatch Box at the Bar of the House. The appropriate Minister should be in the House to be probed by the elected representatives, regardless of whether he or she is a Member of the House of Commons or the House of Lords.

Lord Young of Graffham was, for a long time during the Thatcher Administration, a senior Minister holding a number of important portfolios. I was not a Member of Parliament then, but I would have been frustrated at not

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being able to get at him and subject him to parliamentary scrutiny. Baroness Chalker currently holds an important portfolio as Minister for Overseas Development, but we have no access to her here.

Perhaps the biggest example of the anomalous and undemocratic nature of the system, and the fact that elected Members of the House of Commons cannot directly probe all Ministers, is that of the office of the Lord Chancellor, and it is time for that office to go. It is a contradiction of the concept of the separation of powers. The Lord Chancellor is a member of the Government and the Cabinet —he is a politician. He is head of the judiciary—he is a judge. He is also the presiding officer of a Chamber of Parliament. That is nonsense. It is a schizophrenic role which needs to go because it is bad in principle and it frustrates parliamentary democracy and accountability.

I was concerned to read on the front page of the *Observer* on 6 March a report headed, "Judges outraged by Mackay". I have no intention of using this debate to go into the principle of that matter other than to say that I have tabled parliamentary questions to the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who sits in this place. I was unable to get at the Lord Chancellor. There is a need for the matter to be scrutinised because there are allegations that the Lord Chancellor has abused his power as head of the judiciary by mixing it with his role as a member of the Government—as a politician. We need an opportunity to call that Minister to account and I regret that that cannot be done face to face.

My comments about schizophrenic roles are also true of the role of Attorney-General. The present incumbent has clearly, on a number of occasions over the past two years, been substantially embarrassed and confused—I am being courteous and probably generous to him—by his mixed role as a politician and somebody who, as in other jurisdictions, should act independently of the Executive. It is time that the Attorney-General was not a Minister and fulfilled a role separate from the Executive so that he or she could be seen and understood to be acting impartially. That is not the situation at present—certainly not with the present incumbent.

One vehicle for scrutiny in the House, which I exploit in all its capacity, is the tabling of parliamentary questions to Ministers for written answer; long may that be so. However, it is a limited form of scrutiny which troubles me a great deal. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) has tried to table many questions relating to Matrix-Churchill and to issues that are the subject of the Scott inquiry. Under the rules of this House, those questions are blocked. There is a rule that if a Minister—in this case, the Prime Minister—says early on in a parliamentary reply that he will answer no further questions, no more questions on the issue can be accepted by the Table Office. I have no complaints about the Table Office or about Madam Speaker. I am saying that we need to review that rule because it is not conducive to parliamentary democracy or to a capacity to probe and scrutinise. I can understand my hon. Friend's frustration. Such a rule is wholly unacceptable in a modern parliamentary democracy.

One must ask about what happens during a parliamentary recess. Before some in this place go on about—

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mackinlay: As the hon. Gentleman is an Essex man and as we are last in to bat today, I give way to him.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if, for example, one tries to table a question asking about the size of food mountains, one does not get a reply because the Government have blocked it? That is despite £250 million being spent every week on dumping and destroying food surpluses.

Mr. Mackinlay: I totally accept what the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has said. Although he and I may differ on the principle of European membership, he is right to be jealous of his duty to scrutinise the matter. I am wholly with him.

The hon. Gentleman and I are frustrated in not being able to table questions during the long parliamentary recesses. It has to be said, of course, that this Parliament sits more than any other modern legislature; it sits more than the House of Representatives in the United States and more than the National Assembly in France. However, it is crazy that we do not have parliamentary Sessions more evenly distributed throughout the year. In the summer, the hon. Member for Southend, East and I are unable to table questions that we would table if the House were sitting. Some important issues can come up during the recess. Governments have rumbled the idea that the summer recess is the time to take action. Parliamentary journalists are away on their holidays and the House is not sitting. We must watch that. I want a more evenly distributed parliamentary programme and the capacity to table parliamentary questions for written answer during any recess.

Select Committee investigations do not take place during recesses either, and I think that that needs to be changed. Reforming the parliamentary timetable would help. I admire Lord St John of Fawsley, who, as a Conservative Minister, introduced the first significant parliamentary innovation promoting scrutiny of Ministers in the House for many a decade.

I am proud of this place, but Parliament is geared to probing the role of 19th-century Governments, who were not charged with taking us into the European Community, maintaining employment levels, promoting a health service and providing education, other than elementary education. I could go on. We have not amended our processes to meet the big expansion in the role of Government—apart from establishing Select Committees, the development of which still has a long way to go.

I believe that evidence should be given to Select Committees under oath. To lie to a House of Commons Select Committee should be to commit an act of perjury, and Select Committee procedures should be beefed up accordingly. I used to get up in the middle of the night to watch the Watergate hearings on television: I was very disappointed when the series ended. It was exciting to see Senator Sam Ervin and his colleagues probing the United States Executive. He did a very good job. That function —the function currently performed by Lord Justice Scott —should be performed by a Select Committee in the House along the same lines as those of the congressional Watergate hearings.

In that way, we could have avoided the unacceptable behaviour of some who have given evidence to Lord

Justice Scott—most recently Lord Trefgarne, a former Minister, who implied that the matter was of no great consequence. He said that it was "neither necessary nor desirable" to advise Parliament about changes in policy. If such matters were dealt with by a reformed parliamentary legislature, the Executive's deficiencies and abuses would be exposed; indeed, some of them might not have come about with the beefed-up parliamentary scrutiny to which I have alluded.

Ministers have enormous power in appointing the heads of quangos and agencies. I do not wish to trespass into political differences over numbers and so forth, but enormous patronage is available to Ministers. A House of Commons Select Committee needs to be able to scrutinise the nominations of agency heads, and to probe those nominations before they are confirmed by the House of Commons. It is perfectly correct for such people to be nominated by a Minister, but for them to be confirmed by Parliament would be a useful departure, which would enable us to scrutinise the role and decisions of Ministers in that important regard.

I promised the Minister that I would give him adequate time to respond, but I want to mention another matter, which I am sure will interest the hon. Member for Southend, East. I refer to the royal prerogative. I know that it will concern the hon. Gentleman that under our jurisdiction important treaties—including the Maastricht treaty—are approved by royal prerogative. The lengthy legislation that we had to examine last year on Maastricht was merely consequential, arising from the treaty approved under the royal prerogative.

Many other matters dealt with by royal prerogative would, in other countries, be subject to Acts of Parliament and scrutiny by the legislature, including the banning of trade unions at GCHQ and questions such as jury vetting and telephone tapping. The issue of the royal prerogative urgently needs examination by people who are proud to defend the concept of democracy, and wish to promote it in this land.

Sir Teddy Taylor: God save the Queen.

Mr. Mackinlay: The hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, refers to the monarch. Let me make it clear that I do not blame the monarch in any way. I am reminded of the words of Walter Bagehot, who described our constitution as having two parts. If I remember correctly, he said that the sovereign was the dignified part—indeed, the present sovereign and head of state is a most dignified lady, who commands universal respect—and the efficient part was the Administration, the law makers. That is where my views depart from those of Walter Bagehot. I note that he is dead, however, so perhaps he should be expunged from all the textbooks on British government and constitution as his views are now irrelevant and out of date. The Government and the Executive are inefficient and arrogant with power, but we cannot adequately bring them to account because of the arcane practices and rubrics of this place. It is time that those practices changed.

It will not have escaped your notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am working towards the election of a Labour Government at the next general election. Although I think that my party will win, I want more. I want it to deserve to win and its emergence to be welcomed by the people of this country. I hope that, between now and the general election, my party will see that the issues that I have canvassed this afternoon are highly attractive to a vast group of people who may have no natural affinity with or support for the Opposition but who want change and the promotion of democracy in our land.

Those who wish to take this country into the next millennium must consider how things are run and how the Executive is scrutinised. They must draw up a programme that will be attractive to people concerned with those issues. I hope that my speech will herald some consideration both by my party and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hesitate to intervene on the hon. Gentleman as I have already done so in a previous debate today, but the benefit of these debates is that the Minister is given an opportunity to reply to the points that are made. The Minister now has only nine minutes in which to reply, so the hon. Gentleman should finish his speech.

Mr. Mackinlay: I have finished my speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, I took the precaution of discussing the timing of the debate with the Minister and his office and we agreed that I could trespass until 2.50 pm.

2.51 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): Thank you for your tolerance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) warned my office about the length of his speech.

First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Thurrock on obtaining this Adjournment debate—irrespective of his timing—and choosing the subject of ministerial accountability to Parliament. The questions that have been raised are both important and wide ranging and it is right that the House should have an opportunity to debate them.

May I say a little about ministerial accountability itself? The concept of ministerial accountability to Parliament is, of course, fundamental to our unwritten constitution, but the hon. Gentleman has suggested that this and other Governments have somehow eroded that concept. That is definitely not the case.

Accountability is a word that must be used carefully. The word "accountable" is now used interchangeably with "responsible" and "answerable". While the words often overlap in ordinary language, the key importance of accountability is that it implies a two-way relationship. Ministers are accountable to the House for the policies, action and resources of their Departments. In our system of parliamentary democracy, the Government are formed by the party that has a majority in the House, and remain in office while they retain the confidence of the House.

Government Ministers are, therefore, accountable to Parliament and, ultimately, to the electorate for their policies and the actions of their Departments. Giving an account of what is done by their Departments is part of that concept of accountability. Civil servants can assist Ministers in giving an account to Parliament but, unlike Ministers, they are not directly accountable to Parliament. Parliament cannot give them directions or dismiss or discipline them. Ministers are accountable to Parliament; civil servants are accountable to Ministers.

I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Thurrock suggest that Parliament should have greater powers to check and scrutinise the Executive. He will not be surprised to hear me say that the view from my position is

[Mr. David Davis]

slightly different. It is clear to me that Parliament has the powers to call the Executive to account and I welcome that. It is right that it should be the case.

The hon. Gentleman was particularly concerned about the powers of Select Committees and their role in scrutinising the work of Ministers and Departments. The Government are always ready to consider seriously proposals for change, but I would remind the hon. Gentleman that the working of the Select Committee system was looked at in great detail by the Procedure Committee in 1990. It recommended some minor changes to the way in which the system operates—most of which the Government were happy to support and which have since been implemented.

The main conclusion of the Procedure Committee's report, which I commend to the House, was that the system of departmental Select Committees—as established, as the hon. Gentleman said, by Lord St. John of Fawsley—was working well and

"had achieved considerable success in working across a wide range of issues".

The Procedure Committee studied the powers of Select Committees as they are set out under Standing Order No. 130 and concluded:

"It will be clear from the tenor of our remarks that we do not detect any signs that the freedom of action of departmentally related Select Committees has been in any material way hampered or constrained by the wording of their existing remits."

Secondly, on their powers, the Procedure Committee said:

"There is little or no demand from Select Committees for any increase in their powers to send for persons, papers and records . . . We do not therefore consider that new or additional powers are necessary."

While we are always ready to consider suggestions, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has caused me to come to a different conclusion from that of the Procedure Committee.

One role for Select Committees that the hon. Gentleman suggested was that of involvement in public appointments and in the process of appointing chief executives of next steps agencies and other senior officers in Whitehall. I can understand the motives of those who make such a proposal, but I am not convinced that it would be right to adopt such an approach, since it would cut across ministerial accountability to Parliament.

Although public appointments are the responsibility of Ministers, they can be challenged at any time in the House, through parliamentary questions, Adjournment debates such as this, or even motions of confidence. For example, the hon. Gentleman may recall that a public appointment made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales was raised in points of order not long ago.

I would also be concerned that parliamentary scrutiny before public appointments were made would risk politicisation of the appointments procedure and might discourage people from putting their names forward for consideration—certainly those people who are outside the normal political circuit, who are very important to the efficient running of Government.

A direct interest on the part of Parliament in the appointment of chief executives might be taken to imply that those civil servants would have a direct link to Parliament. That would be a constitutional innovation of great magnitude and I am not sure that it could be accommodated in isolation. I would, therefore, find it difficult to agree with the implications of his proposals.

En passant, the hon. Gentleman mentioned a fixed-term Parliament. That idea has been raised before, but there are some practical problems. It is rare indeed for a Parliament to have no possibility of either extension or early dissolution. I have studied other Parliaments in the European Union and I understand that virtually all of them can be either dissolved early or extended if necessary.

If we had a fixed-term Parliament and a Government lost a vote of confidence, presumably the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that we would extend the life of that Parliament in spite of the vote. I do not imagine that he would support such a state of affairs. On the other side of the coin, the notion of a Government sitting for a full, fixed-term Parliament does not sit well with the continual calls from the Opposition for the Government to go to the country. I am pleased that, whenever we have given in to those calls in the past decade and a half, it has invariably been an unpleasant surprise for his party.

The hon. Member for Thurrock suggested that the recess disadvantaged the Opposition and scrutiny of the Executive. He was concerned that he should be able to table questions and use other parliamentary tools during the recess. I cannot see a regiment of supporters for the hon. Gentleman's case. Indeed, he is exercising an interesting example of ministerial accountability by having me here at 3 o'clock on Maundy Thursday. Those matters are for the House itself. The Opposition have a role in them and I am sure that his arguments will be noted. However, I can assure him that it is not my impression that scrutiny of ministerial actions disappears during the recess. Certainly Ministers—perhaps sadly—do not disappear.

Finally, as I am in my last minute, I shall deal with the royal prerogative and with its most obvious and—in some senses—its most controversial use, that of treaties, a matter on which my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) supported him. The House was much occupied with that question last year and I do not want to spend any of my last few seconds by going over old ground but, as last year's events made crystal clear, the House has an important role in relation to the exercise of the royal prerogative on treaties.

The treaty of Maastricht was considered in vast detail by the House—in more detail than by any other legislature in Europe. That demonstrates perfectly well that the scrutiny of—

The motion having been made at half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at Three o'clock till Tuesday 12 April, pursuant to the Resolution [17 March].

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 21 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report,* column *405,* if the 433 days mentioned as average waiting time between an appeal against a social security appeal tribunal's decision and its determination by a social security commissioner are working days; and what steps he is taking to reduce this waiting time.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of days referred to are calendar days. The chief commissioner is making full use of existing deputy social security commissioners to help reduce waiting times. He has also arranged for the transfer of some cases to commissioners in Scotland, where waiting times are shorter. A committee is also examining ways to improve the appeal procedures.

PRIME MINISTER

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Prime Minister what will be the implications for the operation of the Cabinet Office of the code of practice on open government.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, today.

Ministers (Legal Action)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list each occasion in the past five years when Ministers of the Crown have requested financial assistance in legal actions, on the grounds that these impinged upon their ministerial duties; and how each of these applications was determined.

The Prime Minister: No central record is kept of such requests.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him in February.

The Prime Minister: A considerable number.

Car Industries

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report,* column *581,* concerning the sale of indigenous car industries, what assessment he has made of the effect of the takeover of Rover on output and employment in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware of the assurances given by BMW to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 31 January. Nothing has happened since then to change our view that the acquisition offers good prospects for Rover and for output and employment in our vehicle industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report,* column *581,* concerning the sale of indigenous car industries, if he will publish the source of his information concerning the intentions of French Government, together with the timetable for the sale.

The Prime Minister: The French Government have stated publicly on several occasions that they intend to privatise Renault, and the company was one of 21 firms, banks and insurance companies listed in an annex to their privatisation Bill in July 1993. Mr. Longuet, French Minister of Industry and International Trade, has recently indicated to the press that, despite the breakdown of the planned merger of Renault and Volvo, it is still intended to privatise Renault, although this is understood to be unlikely to take place before the presidential elections in May 1995.

Trinidad Terms

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the progress to date on the implementation of the Trinidad terms; if he will raise this matter at the next G7 summit; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A total of 20 of the poorest and most indebted countries have benefited from Trinidad debt reschedulings by the Paris club. These are Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Republic, Guyana, Honduras, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia. Over $5·5 billion of debt has been restructured under the terms and over $2 billion of debt and debt servicing has been reduced.

We shall continue to work for full Trinidad terms, including increasing the level of debt reduction for the poorest and most indebted countries from 50 to 80 per cent. on a case-by-case basis, and for earlier action on reducing the whole stock of official debt. The summit of G7 Heads of Government later this year will provide such an opportunity.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information to answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 15 March 1994, *Official Report,* column *645.*

India

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he raised the matter of the proliferation consequences of India's nuclear capability with his Indian counterpart during his recent visit.

The Prime Minister: No. The Indian Government are well aware of our concerns about nuclear proliferation in south Asia, which were raised with the Indian Foreign Secretary during Mr. Narasimha Rao's visit.

Parliamentary Bills

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he would support a measure that would introduce a block on parliamentary Bills in the British Parliament if 27 per cent. of hon. Members opposed them.

The Prime Minister: No.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what rule applies to Ministers; and who is responsible for registering gifts received by *(a)* himself and *(b)* other Ministers.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* Gifts received by Ministers who are Members of the House of Commons have to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests if they exceed £125 in value and if they relate in any way to membership of the House. Registration is the responsibility of the individual Member.

"Questions of Procedure for Ministers" provides separately that all gifts accepted by Ministers in their official capacity should be reported to the permanent secretary of the Department. In addition, it provides that any gift exceeding £125 in value must be surrendered or purchased at its cash value abated by £125. Since such gifts accepted by Ministers in their official capacity must be either purchased or surrendered, there is no interest to register.

Orsett Hospital

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if, on his next visit to Basildon, he will meet officers of the Basildon and Thurrock community health council to discuss the possible closure of Orsett hospital.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* When I next visit Basildon, I look forward to meeting a wide range of people.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he will visit Orsett hospital, Thurrock in addition to his proposed visit to the maternity unit at Basildon hospital.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* I have no current plans to visit Thurrock.

Serious Crime Criteria

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out in a form which does not jeopardise national security the criteria used by the Secret Intelligence Service and the Security Service to assess what constitutes a serious crime.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* No. The term "serious crime" is widely understood and, in the context of the Intelligence Services Bill, does not require further definition.

Economic Well-being Criteria

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out in a form which does not jeopardise national security the financial criteria used by the Secret Intelligence Service and the Security Service to assess matters which relate to the economic well-being of the country.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The term

"economic well being of the United Kingdom"

is a well-known provision, used in the Intelligence Services Bill, the Security Service Act 1989 and the European Convention on Human Rights without definition.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave two examples of where the Secret Intelligence Service might act in this area in his speech introducing the Intelligence Services Bill on 22 February 1994 *Official Report,* column 157.

Shoot-to-kill Policy

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards a shoot-to-kill policy arising from terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* We have no such policy. What is normally implied by a "shoot-to-kill" policy would not be consistent with section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 or section 3 of the Criminal Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1967.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Information Technology Services Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many bridging and relocation loans are outstanding with the staff of the Information Technology Services Agency; what is the total sum of such loans outstanding; and what will be the status of such loans in the event of transfer to the private sector.

Mr. Hague: The information available as at 18 March 1994 is as follows:

	Number outstanding	*Total sum outstanding*
Bridging loans[1]	20	£1,008,144
Advances of Salary[2]	231	£840,112·84

[1]Bridging loans include all bridging and relocation loans as they are, essentially, the same thing—short term loans which are repaid when an individual's former property is sold.

[2]Advances of salary are long term loans used to purchase property and are repayable over a maximum of 15 years.

The status of these loans in the event of transfer to the private sector is still being considered.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the terms of reference guiding the competition to choose a strategic partner for the Information Technology Services Agency in his Department.

Mr. Hague: The ITSA plans to transfer its day-to-day computer and output handling operations to the private sector. A project team is taking forward the detailed work required in preparation for the tendering process. The objectives of the project team are as follows:

To improve IT service provision to ITSA.

To make recommendations to ministers.

To negotiate terms and conditions which will support the smooth transfer of civil servants to the private sector.
To ensure security of service supply whilst generating ongoing competition.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is contained in the magazine "Independent", a copy of which is in the Library.

Child Support Agency

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which changes recommended by the Social Security Select Committee in its first report of 1993-94, and agreed by the Government, have still to be implemented by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: All the recommendations made by the Select Committee that were accepted by the Government have now been introduced.

War Pensions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provisions exist to uprate war pensions for individuals whose circumstances have changed since their last assessment.

Mr. Hague: Any war pensioner who feels that his pensioned disablement has deteriorated since it was last assessed can request a review of that assessment at any time.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people claiming income support who are aged 25 years or under who are having deductions made from their benefit in respect of rent arrears because they failed timeously to renew their claim for housing benefit; and what is his estimate of the value of housing benefit thus unclaimed.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a full-time mature student in higher education is eligible for housing benefit for any part of the year.

Mr. Burt: Mature students in higher education are eligible to claim housing benefit throughout the year if they are within one of the specified vulnerable groups, which include single parents, student couples with dependent children and disabled students. Non-student partners can also claim on behalf of the couple if they satisfy the normal qualifying conditions.

Council House Sales

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the implications for his Department of right-to-buy legislation and increases in service charges for tenants who have taken advantage of such legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Former council tenants who buy their homes under right-to-buy legislation while receiving income support have the amount of housing costs included in their assessment restricted to the eligible rent payable immediately before the purchase of their properties.

In such cases, income support is adjusted to reflect subsequent changes in mortgage interest rates and in the amount of eligible service charges levied.

Social Security Expenditure

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current share of gross domestic product taken by social security expenditure in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each of the other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Hague: The customary measure used when making international comparisons is public social protection expenditure, which includes public health care costs, personal social services and compulsory occupational pensions as well as social security spending. The figures for social protection for the United Kingdom and OECD countries are in the table.

Social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP

Country	*1990* *Per cent.*
United Kingdom	23
Belgium	27
Denmark	30
France	28
Germany	27
Greece	[1]21
Ireland	20
Italy	24
Luxembourg	26
Netherlands	32
Portugal	17
Spain	21
Australia	13
Austria	25
Canada	[2]19
Finland	27
Japan	12
Norway	29
New Zealand	19
Sweden	34
United States	[2]15

[1] 1989.
[2] Estimate.
Source: Eurostat, OECD.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the totals of claimants receiving invalidity benefit in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* England in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the table.

Invalidity Benefit recipients[1]

Date	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*
2 June 1979[2]	465,000	76,000	69,000
31 May 1980	464,000	78,000	67,000
30 May 1981	468,000	88,000	71,000
29 May 1982	504,000	95,000	79,000
2 April 1983	542,000	102,000	87,000
31 March 1984	581,000	110,000	98,000
30 March 1985	618,000	116,000	108,000

Date	England	Scotland	Wales
5 April 1986	654,000	125,000	112,000
4 April 1987	704,000	135,000	122,000
2 April 1988	767,000	147,000	127,000
1 April 1989	829,000	158,000	132,000
31 March 1990	895,000	169,000	137,000
30 March 1991	971,000	181,000	147,000
4 April 1992	1,072,000	200,000	159,000

[1] Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.

[2] A breakdown of recipients by standard statistical region is only available from 1980. Figures for 1979 include a small number of people claiming but not receiving benefit.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received invalidity benefit following an award of non-contributory sickness benefit *(a)* between April 1992 and April 1993, *(b)* since April 1993 and *(c)* in total since April 1983.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 25 January 1994, c. 188-89]:* The figures of 4,000 in the period 2 April 1990 to 31 March 1991 and 1,000 in the period 1 April 1991 to 4 April 1992 should read 3,000 and 2,000 respectively.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total cost of market testing work carried out in his Department.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is published in the "Citizen's Charter White Paper: Second Report", a copy of which is in the Library.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people *(a)* claimed and *(b)* were awarded non-contributory sickness benefit (i) between April 1992 and April 1993, (ii) since April 1993 and (iii) in total since April 1983.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 25 January 1994, c. 187-88]:* The figure of 6,000 for the period 2 April 1990 to 31 March 1991 should have read 3,000.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The code of practice on Government information will reinforce and build the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's existing arrangements for the provision of information. I see it as an important element in our commitment to open government, which has been demonstrated during recent months by the release of unprecedented quantities of previously withheld material into the public domain.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Lady to the annual disability report contained in the 18 March issue of "Independent" magazine, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Students (Military Training)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries from which foreign students visited the United Kingdom for military training and the countries that United Kingdom military personnel visited to train military students, to which reference is made at paragraph 30 of his departmental annual report and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1997-98, Cm. 2502.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The countries from which foreign students visited the United Kingdom in 1992-93 for military training are:

Antigua
Bahamas
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Botswana
Brazil
Bulgaria
Chile
Colombia
Czech Republic
Egypt
Fiji
Gambia
Ghana
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Ireland
Jamaica
Jordan
Kenya
Lebanon
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Malta
Mauritius
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
Nepal
Nigeria
Pakistan
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Romania
Russia
Senegal
Seychelles
Singapore
South Korea
Sri Lanka
St. Lucia
Swaziland
Tanzania
Thailand
Trinidad
Uganda
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe

The countries that United Kingdom military personnel visited to train military students are:

Angola
Antigua
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Chile
Dominica
Gambia
Ghana
Grenada
Indonesia
Latvia
Lesotho
Malaysia
Maldives
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
Nigeria
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Swaziland
Uganda
Zimbabwe

Mr. Lorraine Osman

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Ministers signed public interest immunity certificates in the case of Lorraine Osman; and when they did so.

Mr. Goodlad: The then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the former hon. Member for Warwickshire North, on 12 June 1990; and the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the right hon. Earl of Caithness, on 21 February 1992.

Middle East

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in the Syria-Israel peace talks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The most recent bilateral talks between Syrian and Israeli delegations were held in Washington from 24 January. The Syrian delegation returned to Damascus after the Hebron massacre on 25 February. We and our European Union partners have encouraged all parties to the peace process to resume direct negotiations as soon as possible.

Iraq

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about military attacks by the Iraqi regime in the marshes in southern Iraq in the past two weeks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of increased Iraqi military activity in the southern marshes and condemn any violation of Security Council resolution 688. We are monitoring the situation closely with our coalition allies.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the use by Iraqi forces of napalm incendiary bombs in military attacks in the marshes in southern Iraq; what is the status of such devices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of increased Iraqi military activity in the southern marshes and condemn any violation of Security Council resolution 688. There is no evidence of napalm attacks against the marsh Arabs. We are monitoring the situation closely with our coalition allies.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the recent change in the level of Iraqi troop and militia deployment along the border of the Kurdish-controlled region of the country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received reports from the Kurdish administration in northern Iraq of increased Iraqi troop movements and deployments in the area. We are assessing these reports and are monitoring the situation closely with our coalition allies.

We require the Iraqi regime to comply with United Nations resolution 688 which called on Iraq to cease the repression of its civilian population.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take to extend the European Union arms embargo on Sudan into a comprehensive United Nations-led arms embargo.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A global arms embargo would require the passage of a United Nations Security Council resolution. We have not ruled out recourse to the United Nations Security Council, but would not want to pursue this option unless we were sure that this was the right tactic.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the European Union is making representations that there should be a strengthened and resident human rights presence in Sudan under the United Nations Commission on Human Rights' special rapporteur.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the recent meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights we and our European Union partners whole-heartedly supported the resolution on the human rights situation, commending the report of the United Nations special rapporteur, which recommended that the situation should be monitored by national and international non-governmental human rights organisations, who should enjoy free access throughout the country.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what precentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A part of one written parliamentary question was referred to the Wiston House Conference Centre, Wilton Park. The reply appeared with my answer in the *Official Report* of 18 February, at column *1034*. This represents less than 0·01 per cent. of the parliamentary questions dealt with by this Department over the last 12 months.

Overseas Students

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many scholarships are being awarded to overseas students; how much is being spent on those from the ODA budget during the current year; what was the number and cost in real terms *(a)* five, *(b)* 10 and *(c)* 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The 1993-94 expenditure figures are not yet complete. But we expect a total of 15,100 scholarships for overseas students funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to have been taken up this financial year. The ODA's provision—11,300 awards—is worth some £118 million, which includes an estimate of £10 million for other training activities for which an accurate forecast is not available.

The number and cost in real terms five, 10 and 15 years ago are as follows:

Cost in Real Terms—(1993-94 prices)

£ million

Year		*ODA component*		*ODA component*
1988-89	19,088	(13,882)	129·91	(112·17)
1983-84	9,081	(6,666)	84·76	(76·53)
1978-79	7,709	(7,643)	55·95	(55·12)

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *245*, on items agreed and adopted at the meeting of the European Community's Foreign Affairs Council held on 21 to 22 February, what formal votes were taken otherwise than on the United States' and European Community's mutual recognition on spirit designations; and if he will make it his practice to record automatically in future answers on all such votes, including those where no formal votes have been taken.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There were no votes on the other items discussed in the Council and recorded in my statement on 9 March.

The Council also formally approved a number of measures on which agreement had already been reached —known as A points—without further discussion. Details are given in the Council secretariat press releases issued after Council meetings. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 15 March in Brussels.

Mr. Hurd: I attended the Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels on 15 March.

The Council reached a satisfactory agreement on the fisheries aspect of Norway's accession negotiations. The common fisheries policy's rules applying within the waters of the Twelve generally, and the special rules applying to Spain and Portugal under the accession treaty, are unchanged. Reciprocal arrangements for access to Community and Norwegian resources, including the setting of total allowable catches and quotas, fully respect the principle of relative stability. Transitional arrangements have been agreed which enable Norway to continue its fisheries agreement with Russia until it expires at the end of June 1998, and to continue various features of its current management and control system north of 62 deg north for up to three years on a non-discriminatory basis. The Council also agreed arrangements to provide additional quotas of cod for the cohesion countries. On this basis, Norway settled its terms of accession to the European Union.

The Foreign Affairs Council also discussed the qualified majority voting arrangements which will apply once the EFTAn applicants have joined the European Union. With Spanish support, I emphasised the need to ensure the adequate protection of significant minorities in the Council. Other Ministers argued that the qualified majority should be kept constant as a proportion of the total number of votes after enlargement. The matter will be discussed again at a specially convened Foreign Affairs Council on 22 March.

There was a useful discussion on the new own resources decision and the budget discipline decision in which some progress was made towards securing United Kingdom objectives. Both issues will be discussed at ECOFIN on 21 March, where we hope for agreement on all outstanding points.

There were no formal votes.

Angola

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Angola, with particular reference to the number of villages being besieged by UNITA troops; and what representations he has made to the United Nations for action to bring to an end the civil war.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Fighting in Angola continues, mainly in the north and north-east. The principal towns currently besieged by UNITA are Menongue, Luena, Kuito and Malange.

We were actively involved in drawing up United Nations Security Council resolution 903 of 16 March, which maintained the sanctions against UNITA which brought them to the negotiating table. We continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to persuade both sides to reach a settlement.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communication he has received from Lord Owen in respect of the bomb explosion in Sarajevo market on 5 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Lord Owen is in regular communication with European Union Foreign Ministers. These communications are confidential.

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date he first became aware of the inclusion of reference to civil aid and arms sales contained in the March 1988 Malaysian protocol.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* In October 1993.

TREASURY

Taxation

Sir David Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *826*, if he will show tax-free incomes,

defined as personal income tax allowances plus child benefits, as percentages of average male manual earnings for single-wage families with *(a)* one, *(b)* two, *(c)* three and *(d)* four children in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Dorrell: These figures should be interpreted with care as a £1 increase in child benefit is worth four times as much to a taxpayer with a marginal rate of 25 per cent. as a £1 increase in the personal allowance. The figures given in my answer of 3 February therefore give a more reliable picture of the effect of income tax allowances and child benefit on the incomes of the relevant families.

Personal allowance plus married couple's allowance[1] plus child benefit expressed as a percentage of average male manual earnings[2]

Year	With 1 child	With 2 children	With 3 children	With 4 children
1979-80	39·0	43·0	47·0	51·1
1980-81	39·6	43·3	47·0	50·7
1981-82	36·4	40·3	44·2	48·1
1982-83	38·6	42·6	46·6	50·6
1983-84	40·8	45·0	49·1	53·3
1984-85	42·7	46·9	51·1	55·3
1985-86	43·7	47·8	51·9	56·0
1986-87	43·4	47·3	51·2	55·2
1987-88	41·7	45·5	49·3	53·1
1988-89	41·3	44·8	48·3	53·8
1989-90	40·5	43·1	46·9	50·1
1990-91	40·1	43·1	46·1	49·0
1991-92	40·4	43·3	46·1	48·9
1992-93	40·1	42·9	45·8	48·7
1993-94[3]	38·8	41·7	44·6	47·5

[1]Married man's allowance for years up to 1990-91.
[2]Full-time males paid at adult rates working a full week.
[3]Assuming that the husband receives the full married couple's allowance. Provisional.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the increase in the tax bill for a typical family in the next year compared with the current year; and what is the increase in earnings for the average family since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates of the impact of the main tax-related measures in the 1993 Budgets are in the table. Since 1978-79, average gross male earnings have increased by 40 per cent. in real terms. Over the same period, real net take-home pay—after tax and inflation—has increased by the same amount.

Average impact of 1993 budget measures on households[1]

	1994-95		1995-96	
	£ per week	Percentage of net income	£ per week	Percentage of net income
All households	5·75	1·9	8·75	2·8
Pensioners	1·00	0·7	1·90	1·3
Poorest 20 per cent.	1·40	1·2	2·55	2·1
Richest 20 per cent.	12·00	2·0	16·70	2·8

[1] Estimates based on the 1989-91 Family Expenditure Surveys, uprated to 1994-95 price and earnings levels on the basis of illustrative assumptions about price and earnings growth. The figures are relative to indexation and include the main tax measures directly affecting households. They are net of the increases in benefits to help meet higher fuel bills. The 1994-95 figure includes measures implemented between November 1993 and the November 1994 Budgets. The 1995-96 figures also includes other pre-announced measures to be implemented before the November 1995 Budget.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *635-41*, (1) if he will provide estimates in 1993-94 prices of the real disposable income after tax of similar family types across a similar range of incomes in 1993-94 and 1994-95;

(2) if he will provide estimates in 1993-94 prices of the real disposable income after tax of a married couple with two children on average earnings in 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* Estimates of disposable income in 1993-94 for the hypothetical families requested are in the table. Real disposable income in 1994-95 will depend on what happens to earnings and prices.

Income after income tax and National Insurance contributions, 1993-94

£ per week

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	75	100	150	200	300	400	500	700	1,000	2,000
Single	141·65	201·04	260·42	387·30	495·27	711·21	927·15	1,143·09	1,574·97	2,222·79	4,382·19
Married, one working, no children	149·92	209·31	268·69	398·24	508·50	724·44	940·38	1,156·32	1,588·20	2,236·02	4,395·42
Married, one working, two children	168·02	227·41	286·79	416·34	526·60	742·54	958·48	1,174·42	1,606·30	2,254·12	4,413·52
Married, both working, no children	168·72	231·87	291·58	410·34	530·18	774·31	1,003·77	1,219·71	1,651·59	2,299·41	4,458·81

Notes:
1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the household receives no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only has income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay class 1 National Insurance Contributions at the contracted-in-rate.
2. Child benefit is included in the income of the married couple with two children.
3. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are assumed to be £359·90 a week in 1993-94, based on the illustrative earnings growth assumption of 3·5 per cent. Where both partners are working, the husband and wife are assumed to share the relevant multiple of average male earnings in the ratio 60:40.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the real exchange rate for sterling, the deutschmark, the United States dollar and the French franc for each year since 1981;

(2) what is his estimate of the real exchange rate for sterling on *(a)* April 1992, *(b)* February 1993 and *(c)* March 1994;

(3) if he will make a statement on the reasons for the current trend in sterling's relative position against the ecu; and if he will set out the difference between sterling's actual position and its previous ERM value in *(a)* November 1992, *(b)* February 1993, *(c)* November 1993 and *(d)* February 1994;

(4) what was the nominal exchange rate against the ecu in *(a)* January 1993 and *(b)* December 1989; what was the corresponding change in the real exchange rate against the ecu based on (i) relative producer prices, (ii) relative export unit values and (iii) the terms of trade for manufactures; and what has been the effect on the output and employment in manufacturing industry;

(5) if he will give the devaluation since September 1992 in real and nominal terms up to February 1994 of *(a)* the pound sterling, *(b)* the Italian lira and *(c)* the Spanish peseta coupled with the changes in the national balance of trade and the rate of inflation of these countries over the same period;

(6) what is the Government's policy on the level to which sterling may fall against the deutschmark in relation to the level agreed when the United Kingdom entered the exchange rate mechanism in October 1990.

Mr. Nelson: Sterling's exchange rate against the Community currencies, the United States dollar and the ecu can be found in the monthly Central Statistical Office's "Financial Statistics" publication. The weighted composition of the ecu is set by the European Commission and can be found in the "Official Journal" No. L189, 4 July 1989. Export and import prices for all Community countries can be found in the monthly International Monetary Fund "International Financial Statistics" publication. Price and trade figures for all Community countries can be found in the monthly Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development "Main Economic Indicators" publication. Together these data can be used to calculate the information requested. "Main Economic Indicators" also provides output figures, including industrial production, and manufacturing employment data for the United Kingdom.

The real exchange rate is only one factor affecting output and employment in manufacturing industry. It is difficult to isolate the effect of changes in the real exchange rate from that of other factors, such as activity in the United Kingdom's trading partners and barriers to free trade. Manufacturing output in the three months to January was up 2·1 per cent. on the same period a year ago and manufacturing productivity in the three months to January was up 2·9 per cent. on the same period a year ago.

Movements in the exchange rate form part of our continuing assessment of monetary conditions but we have no specific targets for sterling's exchange rate. Since leaving the exchange rate mechanism, sterling's exchange rate has floated. Sterling's exchange rate against the ecu reflects day-to-day market trading in all the Community currencies.

Bank of England

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the regulatory functions of the Bank of England; how many staff are employed in each case and at what cost to the Exchequer directly or indirectly; and what consideration has been given to creating executive agencies to do the work or to privatisation.

Mr. Nelson: The Bank of England regulatory functions consist of banking supervision and the supervision of the wholesale market. About 300 staff are employed in banking supervision and about 30 more on wholesale market. The costs of these functions are in effect met by the Bank's income from non-interest bearing deposits placed with the Bank by the banking sector. There is no cost to the Exchequer.

A move to create executive agencies would not be appropriate since such agencies are parts of a Government Department, while the Bank of England is a public corporation. There are no plans to privatise these functions.

Unemployment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the change in the level of unemployment between 1979 and 1993 in each of the founder members of the EEC and in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: The relevant statistics can be found in the latest edition of "European Economy"—1993, No. 55,—published by the European Commission, in the statistical annexe table 3.

Economic Growth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rate of economic growth between 1979 and 1993 *(a)* in Britain and *(b)* in each other founder member of the EEC.

Mr. Nelson: The figures requested can be found in table 10 of the statistical annexe to the latest edition of "European Economy", published by the European Commission.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the average annual rate of United Kingdom economic growth in 1988-1993 and the average rate in 1968 to 1973, 1973 to 1979 and 1979 to 1988; and if he will include corresponding figures for the EEC Six collectively and for the United States of America.

Mr. Nelson: The figures requested can be calculated from section VI, table 7 of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development publication, "National Accounts", the table on gross domestic product in the appendix to the OECD publication "Main Economic Indicators", and table 10 of the statistical annexe to the latest edition of "European Economy", published by the European Commission.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average rate of growth of the United Kingdom and the six founder members of the EEC since 1979; and what conclusions he has drawn from these figures.

Mr. Nelson: The figures requested are published by the European Commission in table 10 of the statistical annexe to "European Economy".

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the change in the terms of trade for finished manufactures since the winter of 1986-87; and what has been the effect of the change on *(a)* imports and exports of finished manufactures and *(b)* output and employment in manufacturing industry;

(2) what was the change in the terms of trade for finished manufactures since the second half of 1973; and what has been the effect on *(a)* imports and exports of finished manufactures and *(b)* output and employment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Nelson: In the fourth quarter of 1993, it is estimated that the terms of trade of finished manufactures were 12 per cent. higher than in the two winter quarters of 1986-87 and 32 per cent. higher than in the second half of 1973. No estimates are available for the contribution of the terms of trade in finished manufactures to changes in exports and imports of finished manufactures or manufacturing output and employment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of semi-manufactures imported from non-EEC countries competes on price directly or indirectly with home-produced goods; whether the prices of such imports have risen or fallen in the last three years; and what effect the price changes have had on domestic production.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for the prices of imported semi-manufactures from non-EEC countries are available on the Central Statistical Office data base, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. The identifier is ENUK. All imported semi-manufactures potentially compete directly or indirectly with home-produced goods. No estimates are available of the effect of these import price changes on domestic production.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the reduction in imports and increase in exports of manufactures which the Treasury model of the economy shows would follow a reduction in the sterling exchange rate against the ecu to its average in February 1993 after 12 and 24 months.

Mr. Nelson: All hon. Members have access to the Treasury model through the House of Commons Library. It is Treasury practice not to provide the results of model simulations in answer to parliamentary questions. This is due both to the excessive cost involved and the difficulty in making appropriate assumptions without knowing the context in which the figures will be used.

Interest and Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) by whom the United Kingdom was represented at the recent meeting of the European Monetary Institute to co-ordinate interest rate policy; what was the purpose of that meeting; what proposals were made to co-ordinate interest rate policies or to use the leeway provided by 15 per cent. bands to achieve economic convergence; and what is the Government's policy on the proposals;

(2) who represents the United Kingdom in the discussions between the EEC central banks aimed at restoring the former currency parities within the exchange rate mechanism; what steps are taken to ensure the views expressed by the United Kingdom representative have had the prior approval of the Government; and what undertakings, assurances and understandings, express or implied, have been given concerning the future rate of exchange between sterling and the Ecu.

Mr. Nelson: The Governor of the Bank of England is a member of the council of the European Monetary Institute —EMI. Article 10 of the EMI statute states that the proceedings of the EMI council meetings shall be confidential, though the council may, acting unanimously, decide to make the outcome of its deliberations public.

Articles 3 of the EMI statute requires the EMI to carry out the tasks and functions conferred upon it by the Maastricht treaty and the statute without prejudice to the responsibility of the competent authorities for the conduct of monetary policy within the respective member states. In accordance with article 8 of the EMI statute, the Governor, representing the Bank of England, acts according to his own responsibilities. These include implementation of the Government's monetary policy.

Decisions concerning the parities of participating currencies in the ERM are taken by Ministers and central bank governors of the member states. No undertakings, assurances or understandings, express or implied, have been given concerning the future rate of exchange between sterling and the ecu.

Consumer Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in the output of consumer goods between 1985 and June 1993 for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the other member states of the EEC; and if he will make a statement on the changes.

Mr. Nelson: Statistics for the output of consumption goods in EC member states are shown in table 0408 of "Data for Short-term Economic Analysis", published monthly by Eurostat. This publication is available in the Library.

Semi-manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the unit value of semi-manufactures imported from non-EC countries in the three months to the end of January; how this has affected the change since 1990 of the nominal exchange rate against non-EEC currencies; what proportion of such imported semi-manufactures is used by United Kingdom manufacturers of goods other than food, drink and tobacco; what effect that value had on the input price of the materials used by such manufactures; and what was the corresponding change in the nominal exchange rate for sterling against those currencies.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for the prices of imported semi-manufactures from non-EC countries are available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. The identifier is ENUK. The proportion of imported semi-manufactures used by different United Kingdom manufacturers is not available for recent years.

Semi-manufactures are not included in the CSO's producer price index of inputs. No estimates are available for the effect of import prices of semi-manufactures on the exchange rate.

Japanese Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the Japanese trade surplus on the world economy.

Mr. Nelson: The Japanese trade surplus reflects, in the main, structural factors, such as the high domestic savings ratio, and Japan's relative cyclical position. Free trade is vital to maximise the opportunities for world growth; the world economy would benefit from any reduction in restrictions on access to the Japanese market.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1964 *(a)* Japanese imports and exports of (i) goods and services, (ii) goods less manufactures and (iii) manufactures, *(b)* the trade-weighted nominal exchange rate and *(c)* the relative export prices of manufactures.

Mr. Nelson: The relevant statistics are available from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development statistics directorate publication "Current Economic Indicators", the OECD publication "Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade" and the International Monetary Fund publication "International Financial Statistics", monthly and yearly editions.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in the volume of exports in the period 1985 to 1992 for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the other member states of the EEC; and if he will make a statement on the changes.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for United Kingdom export volumes are available on the Central Statistical Office data base, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. Figures for other member states of the EC are available in "OECD Economic Outlook", December 1993, available through the House of Commons Library.

Tourism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change since the second half of 1973 in the real exchange rate relative to that of the EC Six; what has been the effect of this on the prosperity of the south coast resorts; and if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1970 (i) imports of tourism from and exports to the EC Six in terms of 1993 prices and (ii) the net effect on output and employment in the United Kingdom tourist industry.

Mr. Nelson: Sterling's exchange rate against the currencies of the six original members of the Community can be found in the monthly Central Statistical Office's "Financial Statistics" publication. Price data for these countries can be found in the monthly Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development "Main Economic Indicators" publication. Together, these data can be used to calculate the change in the real exchange rate since 1973.

The real exchange rate is only one factor affecting prosperity of the south coast resorts and output and employment in the United Kingdom tourist industry as a whole. It is impossible to isolate the effect of changes in the real exchange rate from that of other factors, such as activity in the tourist industries of other regions and countries. Data on the number of tourists and their related expenditure in current prices from and to the six countries are available in the "Business Monitor MQ6", published by the CSO. The yearly CSO "United Kingdom Balance of Payments" publication contains a service industry deflator which can be used to convert to 1993 prices.

Intermediate Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in the output of intermediate goods between 1985 and June 1993 for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other member states of the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Statistics for the output of intermediate goods in EC member states are shown in table 0406 of "Data for Short-term Economic Analysis", published monthly by Eurostat. This publication is available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the relative position of the United Kingdom in table 0406 of the February issue of "Eurostat Data for Short term Economic Analysis" in terms the percentage change in output in intermediate goods between 1985 and the 1993 of the USA, Japan and the EC member countries.

Mr. Nelson: Total industrial production is a more important indicator than any of its market sector components. In the latest three months for which figures are available, compared to a year earlier, production rose 3¾ per cent. in the United Kingdom, while it fell in Japan, Germany, France and Italy.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in the volume of gross domestic product in the period 1985 to 1992 for the United Kingdom and the other member states of the EEC; and if he will make a statement on the changes.

Mr. Nelson: GDP statistics for the United Kingdom and other EC member states are published by Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Copies of their latest publications are available in the Library.

Company Directors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has as to the effect of the reduction in direct taxation on non-income benefits of directors of companies.

Mr. Dorrell: Directors pay tax on their total income. The cash equivalent of any benefits in kind is added to money income for tax purposes. There has been no significant change in the proportion of directors receiving taxable benefits in kind. Reductions in income tax rates have applied equally to benefits in kind and other income.

Low income tax rates, which apply equally to benefits in kind and other income, promote incentives and wealth creation. This has contributed to the 40 per cent. increase in the real take-home pay of a family on average earnings since 1978-79.

Intrastat

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about the quality of the statistics produced by Intrastat.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have little to add to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 8 February, *Official Report,* column *121.*

The investigations are proceeding well. Customs and Excise and the Central Statistical Office aim to publish a full report in the summer at around the same time as data from the 1994 edition of the Pink Book on the United Kingdom balance of payments are released. If the investigations point to substantial revisions these will be made at the earliest opportunity.

Uganda (Debt)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans Her Majesty's Government have to review the current position regarding the level of Ugandan debt, in the light of the forthcoming meeting of the Paris club.

Mr. Nelson: Uganda received a concessional rescheduling of her official bilateral debts from the Paris club creditors on 17 July 1992. The agreement was on Trinidad terms.

Under the terms of this agreement, creditors agreed to consider reducing the whole stock of official bilateral debt by up to 50 per cent. subject to Uganda maintaining a three to four-year track record of reform with the IMF.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions in the past five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I and my ministerial colleagues seek to provide parliamentary answers which are as complete and accurate as possible.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for the past 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Nelson: In the last 12 months, no parliamentary questions have been referred by Treasury Ministers to the chief executives of agencies for answer.

Drugs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the street value of drugs seized by Customs and Excise in each year for the past four years in South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Humberside.

Sir John Cope: HM Customs and Excise is divided into a number of geographically based collections, which do not coincide with county boundaries. The counties of South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Humberside are straddled by the collections of east midlands, Leeds and northern England. These collections also include areas of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland.

The street value of drugs seized in these three collections for the past four calendar years was as follows:

	East Midlands £	*Leeds* £	*Northern England* £
1990	181,110	2,894,723	406,422
1991	3,838,692	2,717,989	5,611
1992	92,162	1,195,476	86,196
1993	434,295	1,311,932	1,801,765
TOTAL	4,546,259	8,140,120	2,299,944

These values are for drugs seized within the boundaries of the collections and may include seizures made by officers based outside the collection area.

Arms Sales

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product was derived from the sale of armaments in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 at 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Nelson: The information is not available.

Cheque Presentation System

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account he has taken of the effect of technological advances on the requirement for the cheque presentation systems under the Bills of Exchange Act 1882.

Mr. Nelson: The Government are committed to introduce legislation, as soon as parliamentary time will permit, to enable a collecting bank to capture electronically the details of a cheque and to pass on to a paying bank those details instead of the cheque itself. The Government will need to consider carefully appropriate safeguards for consumers.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Sir John Cope: My ministerial colleagues and I received 1,606 from, and wrote 1,171 letters to, hon. Members in February.

Belize

Sir Thomass Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the total public indebtedness to the United Kingdom of Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Belize's outstanding public sector debts with the United Kingdom total £16·61 million, all of which are owed to the Overseas Development Administration.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the shortfall in VAT on fuel in 1994-95 due to the use of special companies created to receive advance payments.

Sir John Cope: Customs is not in a position to determine the extent to which "special" companies may be set up to receive advance payments for supplies of fuel and power made from 1 April 1994. Consequently it is not possible to provide an estimate of any shortfall in revenue there might be as a result.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The information requested is set out in the table and represents the position as at 1 January 1994.

Grade	*Total number employed (staff in post)*	*Percentage of women*
1	1	0
1a	3	0
2	6	0
Chief Accountancy Adviser	1	0
3	24	13
4	3	0
5	68	13
6	23	0
7	194	19
Senior Executive Officer	85	28
Senior Scientific Officer	1	0
Senior Information Officer	1	0
Senior Librarian	1	100
Higher Executive Officer (D)	13	39
Senior Economic Assistant	27	11
S/Assistant Statistician	5	0
Higher Scientific Officer	2	100
Higher Executive Officer	122	34
Librarian	4	100
Administrative Trainee	12	25
Economic Assistant	16	25
Assistant Statistician	4	25
Information Officer	1	100
Graduate Trainee	1	0
Executive Officer	163	34
Assistant Librarian	5	40
Administrative Officer	208	51
Administrative Assistant	94	61
Chief Typing Manager	2	100
Senior Personal Secretary	16	100
Typing Manager	3	100
Personal Secretary	111	98
Typist	49	92
Support Manager Band 1	1	0
Support Manager Band 2	4	50
Support Manager Band 3	7	29
Support Grade Band 1	53	28
Support Grade Band 2	113	32

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Kenya

45. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Her Majesty's Government are doing to assist drought-affected people in Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have pledged nearly £15 million in humanitarian assistance since the onset of the present drought in 1992. We were the first donor to respond to the Government of Kenya's appeal for food aid in December 1993, allocating 15,000 tonnes of food aid, worth about £3·8 million, since then for the immediate needs of drought victims in Kenya.

Aid and Trade Provision

46. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have to review the operation of aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government have recently reviewed the aid and trade provision. I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) on 17 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *679* which announced the conclusions of that wide-ranging review. The Government have no plans to conduct a further review.

Mozambique

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to help Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We expect to spend about £40 million in the current financial year.

Ukraine

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the International Monetary Fund and the World bank's lending policy towards the Ukraine.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As a member of both IMF and the World bank group, Ukraine is eligible for the full range of non-concessional facilities offered by those institutions, including the IMF's new systemic transformation facility, designed to assist former command economies in the early stages of transition. The fund is involved in discussion with the Ukrainian authorities on an economic adjustment programme, which would help to facilitate lending by both institutions.

Aid Budget

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the reason for the projected reduction in the overseas aid budget between 1994-95 and 1995-96, as set out at table 23 of his annual report 1994, Cm. 2502.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The budget for the Overseas Development Administration's total external assistance programmes, including non-voted expenditure, is planned to rise from £2,191 million in 1994-95 to £2,245 million in 1995-96, as shown in table 23 of the report.

The decline in voted expenditure between 1994-95 and 1995-96 reflects the rise in non-voted expenditure, the latter representing essentially the United Kingdom share of EC budgetary spending on aid for developing countries and assistance to central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the definition of *(a)* low income countries, *(b)* lower middle income countries, *(c)* upper middle income countries and *(d)* high income countries as used to define the allocations of overseas aid in figure 10 of his annual departmental report and expenditure plans, 1994-95 to 1997-98, Cm. 2502.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The classifications are those used by the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and are defined as follows:

Low income country: GNP per capita below $765 in 1991;
Lower middle income country: GNP per capita in 1991 of $765 or above but not exceeding $2,556;
Upper middle income country: GNP per capita in 1991 of $2,555 or above but not exceeding $7,380;
High income country: GNP per capita in 1991 above $7,380

Subsistence Farmers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will name the three most recent development projects whose objectives are to improve the income of subsistence farmers, which illustrate the programme and policies of Her Majesty's Government in pursuit of that objective.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Recently approved projects aimed at improving the livelihoods of subsistence farmers in pursuit of the Government's support for sustainable agriculture under the aid programme include the farming systems development and training project, Ghana; the Krishak Bharati co-operative rainfed farming project in India and the Khosi Hills seed and vegetable project, Nepal.

Global Environment Assistance

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the reason for the projected reduction on expenditure on global environment assistance between 1993-94 and 1994-95 as set out at table 23 of his departmental annual report and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1997-98 Cm. 2502.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The planned reduction reflects the scheduled drawdown agreements of the global environment facility and the Montreal protocol multilateral fund, and anticipates expenditure needs. This same expenditure profile leads to a sharp rise in subsequent years.

China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has that the involvement of agencies funded by his Department in the Chinese population control programme lessens the extent to which that programme breaches human rights.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations Population Fund—UNFPA—and the International Planned Parenthood Federation neither support nor condone coercive population programmes in China. Both agencies have a moderating effect on Chinese population policies. A recent example is the decision of the Chinese Government, following a recommendation by UNFPA, to seek advice from the World Health Organisation on the draft "natal and health care law", which had been widely criticised.

Cocoa

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much financial assistance has been given by the Government to *(a)* the international cocoa gene bank in Trinidad, *(b)* the CATIE cocoa genebank in Costa Rica, *(c)* the international cocoa germplasm database at Reading, Berkshire and *(d)* the international cocoa quarantine station at Reading, Berkshire in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Over the past five years, the ODA has not provided financial assistance to the international cocoa gene bank in Trinidad, the CATIE cocoa genebank in Costa Rica, or the international cocoa germplasm data bases in Reading.

The international cocoa quarantine station at Reading is funded by the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance and the EC. However, in 1993, the ODA provided £18,000 to support the participation of Ghana.

Aid Offers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the dates on which aid offers in principle were made to the Governments of countries overseas in each year since 1986.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* Our bilateral aid programme is managed in close consultation with aid recipient countries. This involves continuing liaison over programmes and individual projects. It is not possible to list the dates when individual aid offers were made.

Aid Grants

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the total amount of overseas aid grants made to *(a)* Indonesia and *(b)* Tanzania for each year since 1979 and in total for each country in constant 1993 prices.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* United Kingdom gross bilateral aid flows to Indonesia and Tanzania from 1979 to the end of the financial year 1992-93 in cash and constant 1992-93 prices were as follows:

£ thousands

Year	Indonesia		Tanzania	
	Gross bilateral aid	*1992-93 prices*	*Gross bilateral aid*	*1992-93 prices*
1979	11,720	27,899	23,559	56,082
1980	11,190	22,513	32,119	64,619
1981	15,350	28,158	30,040	55,106
1982	17,219	29,486	27,328	46,798
1983	12,358	20,225	30,384	49,725

Year	Indonesia Gross bilateral aid	Indonesia 1992-93 prices	Tanzania Gross bilateral aid	Tanzania 1992-93 prices
1984	28,292	44,086	33,033	51,474
1985	33,649	49,678	17,967	26,526
1986	8,898	12,763	12,715	18,238
1987	12,223	16,645	28,789	39,205
1987-88	14,660	19,964	33,617	45,780
1988-89	17,366	22,161	31,956	40,780
1989-90	21,616	25,791	20,060	23,935
1990-91	24,854	27,442	41,403	45,715
1991-92	34,425	35,747	32,454	33,700
1992-93	33,164	33,164	62,370	62,370

The basis on which these figures are recorded was changed from calendar to financial years with effect from 1992; the previous five financial years have been included above for ease of comparison.

The figures shown include disbursements of Commonwealth Development Corporation investments, and also bilateral concessional aid loans committed prior to 1979, but since forgiven under the retrospective terms adjustment policy.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Sproat: The code of practice will reinforce and build on my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information. Operational details will be announced nearer to the time of the launch.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress is being made in compiling the inventory of works of art in the royal palaces.

Mr. Sproat: The Lord Chamberlain has stated that the inventory of the works of art in the royal palaces is making good progress and is on target for completion by the end of 1997.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) pursuant to his answer of 14 March, *Official Report,* column *481,* what is the range of all actual rents paid at each of the royal places for all accommodation; how many heads of department in the royal household have furnishing costs paid by his Department; and how much has been spent in each of the last five years;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report,* column *612,* what in money terms is the range of all those actual rental payments for grace and favour accommodation in the occupied royal places; how many rents make up the £69,000; how much relates to each palace; how much of the rent is received by the Royal Household and how much by his Department; and by what criteria it is determined which rentals are paid to the Royal Household and which to the Department.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The rents in respect of each palace are as follows:

	£000
Buckingham Palace and Mews	8
St James's Palace	15
Kensington Palace	11
Windsor Castle and Home Park	35
	69

A total of £30,000 is received by the civil list and £39,000 by the grant in aid, according to which account pays the wages. The £69,000 relates to 47 occupants who pay rent. In addition to these 47 occupants, seven occupants pay rent through deductions from wages to the Crown estate and two through deductions of £3,000 from wages to the royal collection. It would not be appropriate to disclose rents paid by individuals.

Six heads of departments have furnished accommodation provided. Costs incurred in this respect during the last five years are: 1989-90, £112,000; 1990-91, none identified; 1991-92, £99,000; 1992-93, £88,000 and 1993-94, £26,000.

Archaeology

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consideration he has given to widening the terms of reference to his Department's review of the Museum of London archaeological service to include the provision of archaeology services for London as a whole.

Mr. Sproat: The terms of reference of the review being jointly financed by this Department, English Heritage, the corporation of London and the museum of London require the consultants to assess the demand of archaeological services in London as a whole, and to recommend how services of the nature at present provided by the museum of London archaeological service could be provided in future, taking into account services provided by other organisations. I therefore consider the terms of reference of the review to be satisfactory as they stand.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleague in February.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend and I received 300 letters from, and wrote 237 letters to, hon. Members during February.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on how many occasions he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Brooke: The Department of National Heritage is less than two years old, coming into being on April 13 1992. I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". I also seek to comply with the Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers to oral questions.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Bail Hostels

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for the latest date available, the current occupancy rate for each bail hostel in Humberside, and each of the three counties of Yorkshire; and what the corresponding figures were 12 months ago.

Mr. Maclean: The figures requested, based on total approved places, are as follows:

	Percentage occupancy rates	
	February 1993	*February 1994*
Humberside		
Queen's Road	32	47
Scunthorpe[1]	—	39
South Yorkshire		
Centre 45	91	45
Norfolk Park	60	62
Rookwood	37	78
Town Moor	79	85
West Yorkshire		
Howden House	71	61
Walmer Villas	76	84
Elm Bank	100	71
Albion Street[1]	—	84
Cardigan House	84	68
St. John's	90	92
Ripon House	84	93
North Yorkshire		
No hostels currently.		

[1] Both Scunthorpe and Albion Street opened subsequent to February 1993.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to the closure of bail hostels in Humberside and each of the three counties of Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The closure of 11 approved hostels was announced at the end of November last year. The South Yorkshire probation committee was asked to identify one hostel for closure; and it has now been agreed that the Centre 45 hostel in Sheffield should close. None of the approved hostels in Humberside or West Yorkshire is affected. There are currently no hostels in North Yorkshire, although a new hostel in York is expected to open shortly.

The Government continue to support the provision of approved hostels where these meet the needs of the courts in a cost-effective way and within the requirements of national standards.

Yorkshire and Humberside Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners from *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside are currently serving custodial sentences in prisons in Northern Ireland; and if he will give for each prisoner, the length of their sentence, when they were committed and the nature of their offence;

(2) how many prisoners from *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside are currently serving custodial sentences in prisons in Scotland; and if he will give for each prisoner, the length of their sentence, when they were committed and the nature of their offence.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not recorded centrally.

Television Licences

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to abolish custodial sentences as a punishment for the non-payment of fines imposed for not paying the television licence fee.

Mr. Maclean: Committal to prison is one of a range of measures available to courts for enforcing fines. We have no plans to remove this power in relation to fines imposed for any particular offence.

Amylnitrite

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make the sale of amylnitrite to children illegal.

Mr. Maclean: The substance amylnitrite belongs to the group of chemicals known as alkylnitrites. While it is not strictly speaking a solvent, it can be misused by inhalation of its vapours. Sales of intoxicating substances are already regulated by the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 which makes it an offence for people such as retailers to sell or supply intoxicating substances to persons under 18 whom they believe intend to misuse them. The Act has no specific list of chemicals; there is a wide range of everyday products which can be misused by inhalation.

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has considered the misuse of alkylnitrites and the possibility of controlling them under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 on three occasions—in 1984, 1987 and 1991. On each occasion, the council concluded that, although the misuse of those substances posed a limited health hazard, such misuse did not lead to dependency and did not give rise to social problems of a scale to justify use of the controls in the 1971 Act. The advisory council is, however, keeping the matter under review.

Police Firearms

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many guns are owned by the police for their use, setting out separately pistols, shotguns, rifles, semi-automatic and automatic weapons; how many policemen are qualified to use firearms; and how many armed response units are available on average at any one time *(a)* in each constabulary and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Figures for police firearms and average numbers of armed response vehicles are not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Certain other related information is provided each year by police forces in England and Wales. At 31 December 1992, the latest date for which information is available, there were 6,850 authorised firearms officers. There were 1,669 operations involving armed response vehicles during that year. Thirty one forces currently operate armed response vehicles.

Operation Barnard

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were arrested during Operation Barnard in Wanstead on 16 February on suspicion of having been involved in a riot at Welling last October; and of these who many were subsequently released without any charges being brought.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner that five people were arrested on suspicion of having been involved in disturbances at Welling. All were subsequently released without charge.

Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy on the proposed change to the European Court of Human Rights' treatment of human rights cases.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 24 February, *Official Report,* column *314,* the Government are contributing fully to work within the Council of Europe on the reform of the European Commission and Court of Human Rights by their replacement by a single court, with the aim of enabling the increasing number of cases to be dealt with more speedily while maintaining the highest standards of jurisprudence.

Traffic Videos

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidelines he has issued to police forces regarding the disposal of traffic videos to private companies;

(2) if he will make a statement regarding the sale and disposal of police videos;

(3) what representations he has received about the disposal of traffic videos to private companies and their subsequent resale.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No guidelines have been issued to police forces about the release of road traffic video footage to private companies. One hon. Member has made representations.

The supply of police video material is an operational matter for individual chief officers of police. I understand though that the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Policer Offices is to consider the matter.

Campsfield House Detention Centre

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many detainees at Campsfield House have been subjected to forced feeding; under what powers such action is taken; and what safeguards there are for the human rights of those concerned.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No person detained under immigration powers has been force fed at Campsfield House or elsewhere.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what factors were taken into account in determining the level of security measures installed at Campsfield House detention centre.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The security measures at Campsfield house are designed to allow as much freedom of movement as possible within the centre, but to take account also of the needs to maintain good order and prevent detainees from absconding.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list each prison where there have been no incidents of illegal drug use in each of the past seven years;

(2) in how many prisons there have been incidents of illegal drug use in each of the past seven years; and what proportion they are of the total numbers of prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 21 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General, Mr. Derek Lewis, from the office, to reply to your two Parliamentary Questions about incidents of illegal drug use in each of the past seven years in Prison Service establishments.

The available information is for the period up to 1992 and for charges proved at adjudication of the offence of possession or selling or delivering controlled drugs (including any proved charges of attempt, incite or assist). This information is published annually for each establishment in Statistics of Offences Against Prison Discipline and Punishments England and Wales. Copies are available in the library of the House of Commons. In each of the years 1986 to 1992 some 80 per cent. to 90 per cent. of establishments have had one or more cases of drugs offences.

Drugs Trafficking

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the numbers of people engaged full time in the trafficking of illegal drugs in each of the past seven years.

Mr. Maclean: As drug trafficking is a clandestine activity, it is not possible to estimate the numbers of people engaged full-time in the trafficking of illegal drugs. However, information on the number of persons convicted or cautioned for drugs trafficking offences is contained in table 3.3 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of drugs seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom, 1992" a copy of which is in the Library.

Immigration

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it the practice that when the hon. Member for Walsall, North is making written representations to a Minister in his Department on behalf of a constituent he will not be telephoned by a chief immigration officer to try to persuade him to drop the representation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Written representations submitted to Ministers which the Immigration Service has not had the opportunity to consider are sent first to the port concerned for consideration. It is not the practice of the Immigration Service to try to persuade an hon. Member not to pursue his representations.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* teaching and *(b)* non-teaching posts, by full-time equivalent, were funded by section 11 money in *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and *(c)* proposed for 1994-95, by each local education authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The available information is set out in the table. The figures relate to *(a)* posts designated to be filled by qualified teachers, and *(b)* other posts, eligible for funding under section 11.

Local education authority	*Posts as at 1 April 1992*		*Posts as at 1 April 1993*		*Posts as at 1 April 1994*	
	Teachers	*Others*	*Teachers*	*Others*	*Teachers*	*Others*
Avon	38·9	5	38·6	5	38·6	5
Barking and Dagenham*	13·6	4·2	13·6	4·2	13·6	3
Barnet*	47·54	32·16	47·54	11·756	47·54	11 765
Bedfordshire	165·9	63·7	165·4	59·2	165·4	58·5
Berkshire*	73·5	17·8	73·5	17	73·5	17
Bexley	7·04	3·61	6·327	1·08	6·327	1·08
Birmingham*	251	343	250·15	223	243·79	221·23
Bolton	40·2	23·0	40·2	23·2	40·2	23·2
Bradford	260·1	182·17	260·1	151·35	260·01	151·35
Brent	119·2	26·9	115	1·9	90·5	1·9
Buckinghamshire*	91	48·67	86·4	47·67	81·1	44·67
Bury	23·3	12·35	23·3	12·35	23·3	12·35
Calderdale	50·5	33·04	50·5	33·04	50·5	33·04
Cambridgeshire	64	29·1	64	16	64	16
Camden*	76·4	16·3	76·4	12·6	76·4	12·6
Cheshire	5	2	5	2	5	2
Cleveland	31	13·5	30	14·5	29·4	15·1
Coventry City**	114	56·46	141	44·22	141	44·22
Croydon*	63·4	23·55	63·4	17·75	63·2	18·5
Derbyshire**	96	12	96	12	96	12
Devon	1	0	1	0	1	0
Doncaster	8	5·2	8	2·95	8	2·95
Dudley	64	18	64	7	64	6·6
Ealing	172·4	64·1	172·4	57·6	172·4	57·6
East Sussex	10	1·6	10	1·6	10	1·6
Enfield*	64	24·25	64	5·5	64	5·5
Essex*	2	—	2	—	2	—
Gateshead	2	2·2	2	0	2	0
Greenwich**	86	34	86	32	86	32
Gwent	14	7	14	7	14	7
Hackney	226	25·5	226	2·5	226	2·5
Hammersmith	41	9·85	41	7	41	7
Hampshire	39	13·9	39	13·9	39	13·9
Haringey**	181·05	51·68	181·05	36·88	172·73	38·55
Harrow**	36	14·3	36	1	36	1
Havering	3	—	3	—	3	—
Hertfordshire	114·5	33·86	114·5	17·4	114·5	17·4
Hereford and Worcester	24	0	24	0	24	0
Hillingdon	12	15·95	12	11·35	12	11·35
Hounslow	91·4	8	91·4	8	91·4	8
Humberside	18·2	5·2	18·2	5·2	18·2	5·2
Islington	102	4·95	102	—	102	—
Kensington and Chelsea	58	3·3	58	1	58	1
Kent	59·16	31·59	57·79	30·72	57·79	30·72
Kingston	7·08	1	7·08	1	7·08	1
Kirklees	149·5	80·72	149·5	65·92	149·5	65·92
Lambeth	61·2	—	61·2	—	61·2	—
Lancashire	265·7	192·4	265·7	192·4	265·7	192·4
Leeds	8	180·46	7·03	153·98	5·03	151·01
Leicestershire	214·7	75·25	214·7	68·95	214·7	68·95
Lewisham	98·5	12·95	98·5	12·95	98·5	12·95
Lincolnshire	4·5	—	4·5	—	4·5	—
Liverpool	7·2	9·5	7·2	9·5	7·2	9·5
Manchester	110	78·42	110	68·38	110	68·38
Merton	28	6·28	28	6·28	28	6·28
Newcastle	19	5	19	2	19	2
Newham	130·8	37·6	127·8	14	127·8	14
Norfolk	4·9	0·75	4·9	0·75	4·9	0·75
Northamptonshire	45	24·01	43	7·91	43	7·91
North Tyneside	8·8	0·9	8·8	0·9	8·8	0·9
North Yorkshire	4	0	4	0	4	0
Nottinghamshire	93	22·1	91	8·9	91	8·9
Oldham	123·45	41·9	125·7	42·7	125·7	36·95
Oxfordshire	44·1	14·3	44·1	14·3	44·1	14·3
Redbridge	56·8	5·97	56·8	5·97	55·2	5·97

Local education authority	Posts as at 1 April 1992		Posts as at 1 April 1993		Posts as at 1 April 1994	
	Teachers	Others	Teachers	Others	Teachers	Others
Redditch	1	0·67	1	0·67	1	0·67
Richmond	4	0·5	4	0·5	4	0·5
Rochdale	69	27·7	68	25·7	67	25·7
Rotherham	19·5	16·15	19·5	13·4	19·5	13·4
Salford	2·0	4·5	2·0	4·5	2·0	4·5
Sandwell**	91·0	16·5	91·0	16·5	91·0	11·5
Sheffield	113·5	42·5	105·5	16·0	105·5	16·0
Shropshire	6·0	1·0	6·0	1·0	6·0	1·0
South Glamorgan	30·8	9·1	30·8	9·1	30·8	9·1
Southwark	108·5	37·75	108·5	37·75	108·5	37·75
Staffordshire**	53·0	12·0	53·0	12·0	53·0	12·0
St. Helens	0·7	1·0	0·7	1·0	0·7	1·0
Stockport	4·0	2·52	4·0	2·52	4·0	2·52
Suffolk	15·8	7·16	15·8	7·16	15·8	7·16
Sunderland	8·8	0·49	8·8	0·49	8·8	0·49
Surrey*	17·5	7·0	17·5	7·0	17·5	7·0
Sutton	2·0	1·5	2·0	1·5	2·0	1·5
Tameside	20·0	18·62	20·0	15·49	20·0	15·49
Tower Hamlets	426·5	79·7	426·5	50·0	425·5	52·0
Trafford	15·5	5·5	15·0	5·5	15·0	5·5
Wakefield	22·0	2·0	22·0	0·0	22·0	0·0
Waltham Forest	114·0	28·0	114·0	24·0	114·0	24·0
Walsall	101·0	32·25	101·0	30·0	101·0	30·0
Wandsworth	112·0	14·3	105·0	4·9	103·0	4·9
Warwickshire*	54·5	12·92	54·5	12·92	54·5	12·92
Westminster	95·5	3·56	95·5	0·9	95·5	0·9
West Sussex**	13·5	10·89	13·5	3·39	13·5	3·39
Wigan	3·5	0·0	3·5	0·0	3·5	0·0
Wiltshire	8·625	1·575	8·625	1·575	8·625	1·575
Wirral*	6·0	1·0	6·0	1·0	6·0	0·0
Wolverhampton	101·5	37·0	101·5	37·0	101·5	37·0

Notes:

1. The figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are as at 1 April 1992 and 1 April 1993 respectively.
2. As to 1994-95, the figures relate to posts eligible for funding from 1 April 1994. It is a matter for authorities to decide, within the overall financial provision, how they propose to proceed in the light of the reductions in section 11 funding. Authorities marked * have indicated that they propose to make no substantive change in 1994-95. In cases marked **, authorities' proposals for change are receiving attention. In other cases, responses are awaited from authorities.
3. Since currently approved projects came into effect on 1 April 1992, a number of schools which were previously covered by local authority projects but which have since opted for grant maintained status have chosen to set up their own project funded directly under section 11.
4. Since 1 April 1993, most further education colleges, and a small number of sixth form colleges, which previously benefited from section 11 funding paid to the local education authority have begun receiving grant direct.
5. Some projects approved with effect from 1 April 1992 were, in the light of their particular circumstances, approved for periods of 2 years or less.
6. Figures relate to posts in full-time equivalent terms.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received and from whom regarding the reductions in section 11 funding.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received a large number of representations from a wide range of organisations and individuals against the reductions in section 11 funding. These include local authorities, local authority associations, teaching unions, racial equality councils, ethnic minority voluntary organisations, school heads and other teachers, school governors and parents.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many teachers will be affected by the reductions in section 11 funding;

(2) what projects will be affected *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Coventry by reductions in section 11 funding;

(3) what advice he has issued to local authorities as how best to apply the reduced amount of section 11 funding in order that access by ethnic minorities to the national curriculum is maintained.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is for local authorities to decide how they propose to proceed in the light of the reductions in section 11 funding which we regret that it has been necessary to make. We have suggested that any local authority that may need to form judgments about the relative priorities of different projects and posts may wish to take into account a range of considerations, including in particular the importance to the targeted ethnic minority communities of a project's objectives and the effectiveness of a project in delivering the improvements or achievements sought.

We have been gratified by the number of authorities that have already notified us that they are planning to make good the shortfall in funding in order that projects can continue at their present level. We are currently considering proposals submitted by some authorities which are planning to reduce the level of activity under their approved projects from 1994-95. Other authorities have yet to notify us of their intentions.

I understand that Coventry city council intends to make no change to existing education projects before September, but has not yet finalised its plans thereafter. No advice has yet been received with regard to Coventry's non-education projects.

I also refer the hon. Member to my reply today to a question from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Indonesia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce a human rights clause into future trade agreements with Indonesia.

Mr. Needham: Trade agreements fall within the competence of the EU. It is standard practice for human rights clauses to appear in agreement between the EU and third countries.

Conflicts of Interest

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions in the last, and current, financial year, consultants to his Department have advised him of possible conflicts of interest; on how many occasions he has issued directions to consultants to avoid or overcome conflicts of interest; and if he will place in the Library copies of the standard contract clauses covering these issues.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested in respect of the first part of the question is not collected and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. There is a standard clause within all consultancy contracts which requests them to inform the Department should a conflict of interest arise. I have placed copies of the clause in the Library of the House.

Mechanical Engineering Products

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the change in the volume of United Kingdom sales of mechanical engineering products between 1990 and 1992; what were the corresponding figures for Germany, France and Italy; if he will publish a table showing the value and volume of United Kingdom output, imports, exports and consumption of mechanical engineering products in 1970, 1979, 1990 and 1992 together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to reach the 1990 levels.

Mr. Needham: Available information on the annual output of the mechanical engineering industry in United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy can be obtained from the Eurostat CRONOS database, which can be accessed in the Library of the House.

Figures of United Kingdom sales, exports and imports from which consumption can be derived, are publishing in the "Business Monitor" series covering the mechanical engineering industries. Compatible information on the volume of trade, and, therefore, consumption is not readily available. Employment figures are published in the "Annual Abstract of Statistics". Copies of these publications are in the Library of the House.

My Department does not forecast industrial production.

Cotton Cloth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the reasons for the relative amount of output of cotton cloth in the United Kingdom from 1989 to 1993 on *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Italy, Germany and France; if he will publish a table showing the corresponding figures for 1973 and 1979 together with, for each of those years (i) production, imports, exports and consumption of cotton cloth by each country and (ii) United Kingdom imports from and exports of cotton cloth to each of the other three countries.

Mr. Needham: The Department has not undertaken such an assessment. Information on cotton cloth production is regularly published by the UN in "Monthly Bulletin of Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Information on trade in cotton cloth for the United Kingdom, Italy, France, and Germany is regularly published by the United Nations in "Yearbook of International Trade Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Information for the United Kingdom's trade with the other countries in cotton cloth is published by the Central Stastical Office in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom" which can be obtained from the Library of the House. Information on consumption of cotton cloth is not collected.

Vehicle Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the change in the level of output of buses, coaches and minibuses between 1988 and 1992; what were the corresponding figures for Germany, France and Italy; if he will publish a table showing the value and volume of output, imports, exports and consumption of buses, coaches and minibuses in the four countries in 1970, 1979, 1988 and 1992 together with the numbers employed; and when he expects United Kingdom output to regain the 1990 level.

Mr. Needham: The available data can be found in publications in the Library of the House.

International data for the volume of production of buses are published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd. in table 12 of the 1993 edition of "Motor Industry of Great Britain, World Automotive Statistics". New registrations of buses and coaches can be found in table 36 of the same publication. Information regarding the value and volume of exports for the United Kingdom can be found in table 62, and imports in table 91. For the other countries, the volume of exports is in tables 81 to 83. The table numbers referred to may vary in earlier editions. The data from this source may not be strictly comparable between countries. Figures showing the value of trade are published by the United Nations in "International Trade Statistics Yearbook volume 2". Data for the value of output and the numbers employed in the production of buses, coaches and minibuses are not available. My Department does not forecast output.

Semi-manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish figures for British imports of semi-manufactures from *(a)* inside and *(b)* outside the EC for the three months ending in January and for the same period a year ago and in 1990; which import categories, which exporting countries, and which user industries account for the bulk of the change; what were the corresponding changes in the level of United Kingdom output of like goods over the same periods; and by how much the import content of goods produced in the United Kingdom has changed as a result.

Mr. Needham: Summary information regarding total United Kingdom imports of semi-manufactures, on a balance of payments basis, is available only up to December 1993 and was published by the Central Statistical Office in "First Release, Balance of United Kingdom visible trade-December 1993", CSO(94)47. The most recent figures for imports from non-EC countries only, for January 1994, were published in "First Release, Balance of trade with countries outside the EC-January 1994," CSO(94)38.

More detailed information, on an "Overseas Trade Statistics" basis, is published in the December 1993 issue of the Business Monitor MM20, "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with countries outside the European Community (Extra—EC Trade)" and the third quarter 1993 issue of Business Monitor MQ20, "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with countries within the European Community (Intra-EC Trade: Intrastat)". These are available in the Library of the House.

Figures for 1990, by country, are not available on the balance of payments basis. The 1990 figures for individual countries, on an "Overseas Trade Statistics" basis, are available from Business Monitor MA20, "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom". Copies of the publication are also available in the Library of the House.

Due to major differences between the industrial and trade classifications, it is not possible to provide comparable information on United Kingdom production and employment.

It is not possible to identify industries importing semi-manufactures. Figures for the import content of United Kingdom output of finished manufactures are not available.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the reasons for the comparative performance of British exports between 1980 and 1988; what were the corresponding figures for Germany, Italy, France, Belgium and the Netherlands on the same basis as table 6.3 of Eurostat's "Basic Statistics of the Community"; and if he will publish the corresponding figures for the period since 1988.

Mr. Needham: The Department has not undertaken such an assessment. The information requested is regularly published by Eurostat in "Basic Statistics of the Community", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Wool Yarn

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the *(a)* output, *(b)* level of exports, *(c)* level of imports and *(d)* consumption of wool yarn in (i) Italy and (ii) the United Kingdom in (1) 1973, (2) 1979 and (3) 1991; what was United Kingdom output as a percentage of the Italian output in each of these three years; and what were United Kingdom imports from and exports to Italy of wool yarn in each of the three years.

Mr. Needham: Information of wool yarn production is regularly published by the UN in "Monthly Bulletin of Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Information on the trade in wool yarn of the United Kingdom and Italy is regularly published by the UN in "Yearbook of International Trade Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Information on the United Kingdom's trade with Italy in wool yarn is published by the Central Statistical Office in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which can be obtained from the Library of the House.

Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the percentage change in the volume of imports in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Italy and *(c)* France between (i) 1975 to 1979 and (ii) 1979 to 1993.

Mr. Needham: Information on change in the volume of imports can readily be derived from the "Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade", published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Consistent information for 1993 is not currently available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the percentage change in imports between 1980 and 1989 into *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Italy, *(d)* the Netherlands, *(e)* Germany and *(f)* Belgium; and what were the corresponding percentage increases from 1988 in each case.

Mr. Needham: The information can be readily derived from the "Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade", published by the OECD, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

EC Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the implied degree of change in the United Kingdom share of world trade between the latest available three months and the same period in 1990; what were the corresponding changes in the level of exports to the rest of the EC and non-EC countries; what is the estimated change in the import content of United Kingdom exports since 1990; what is his assessment of the extent to which the change in both the nominal and real exchange rate for sterling against the ecu is responsible for that performance; and if he will publish a table showing the terms of trade and relative volume for United Kingdom trade in finished manufactures with the rest of the EC, non-EC and all countries in the latest three months, the third quarter of 1992, the third quarter of 1990, the first quarter of 1987, the second quarter of 1979 and the second half of 1973.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom share of world trade can be readily derived from information regularly published in "Direction of Trade Statistics", published by the International Monetary Fund, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. United Kingdom exports to the rest of the EC, non-EC and all countries, together with the associated terms of trade and volumes for United Kingdom trade in finished manufactures may be readily derived from data held on the Central Statistical Office data base, which can be accessed from the Library of the House. Estimates of the import content of United Kingdom exports since 1990 are not available.

United Kingdom exports are now around 20 per cent. more cost competitive than prior to exchange rate mechanism withdrawal. This is clearly of benefit to United Kingdom exporters. However, the United Kingdom export

performance must be viewed in the light of the weakness of the economies of our major EC trading partners. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that it is tight control over costs which determine the competitiveness of the United Kingdom economy in the long run.

Manufacturing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column 229, to what extent his Department monitors the effect of changes in terms of trade for finished manufactures on production and trade of industries other than the motor industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department has not conducted a study to isolate the effect of changes in the terms of trade for finished manufactures on industries other than the motor industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing for 1964, 1973, 1979, 1989 and the latest available date the number of manufacturing plants, their distribution by number of employees and the number of employees in each category; and what is his assessment of the factors which contributed to the changes over that period.

Mr. Sainsbury: Data for 1964 are not available. The quinquenniel census of production for 1963 contained structure data in summary tables, table 4. For 1973 and 1979, figures were published in the summary tables of the "Annual Census of Production", table 6. For 1989 and 1991, the latest available year, figures were published in the summary volumes of the "Annual Census of Production", table 6. Copies of these publications are available in the Library of the House.

There were changes in the standard industrial classification, on which these figures are based, in 1968 and 1980, but in the main the figures reflect the industry's response to changes in the marketplace in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Motor Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column 229, for what reasons he cannot provide detailed information concerning the effect of the change in the terms of trade for finished manufactures on United Kingdom production and trade in motor cars.

Mr. Sainsbury: The production and trade in motor cars in international markets are determined by market forces, including the competitiveness of individual car manufacturers.

Coal Mining

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his current estimate of the number of coal mining jobs lost since 1979 in the South Yorkshire area.

Mr. Eggar: Since March 1979, the number of coal mining jobs lost in the South Yorkshire area, including Barnsley and Doncaster, is 47,956.

Malaysian Airline

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985 including this year to date on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Needham: My Department does not keep central records of the airlines used by Ministers and officials carrying out official business.

Electricity Market

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the speech made by the Minister for Energy to the conference on the future electricity market held in London on 11 March.

Mr. Eggar: I have placed a copy of my speech of 11 March in the Library of the House.

Malaysia

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of whether the current actions of the Malaysian Government in relation to buying British are in breach of GATT regulations; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Needham: As long as any Malaysian action is limited to direct purchases by Government, there would be no breach of GATT rules, since Malaysia has not signed the GATT agreement on Government procurement. The Government will continue to monitor the position carefully, including by keeping in close touch with United Kingdom companies that may be affected.

Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received on future developments or changes in arrangements between Courage and Grand Metropolitan in respect of Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, have received any information about such matters. However, under section 88 of the Fair Trading Act, the Director General of Fair Trading—DGFT—has a duty to keep under review undertakings given to the Secretary of State under that section. From time to time, this may require the DGFT or his officials to meet with the parties to such undertakings. This would include Courage and Grand Metropolitan, two of the firms that gave undertakings following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the Elders IXL Ltd./Grand Metropolitan plc merger. The matters discussed at any such meetings are confidential to the parties.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the latest available figures for the percentages of United Kingdom energy production and consumption which are accounted for by renewable energy sources.

Mr. Eggar: Renewable energy sources accounted for 1·2 per cent. of the United Kingdom's energy production and consumption in 1992, the latest year for which figures are available.

Charles Barker

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *4*, if he will examine the speed of the sale of Charles Barker, the price involved, whether any other bidders were involved and the position of creditors of the original company.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: On the basis of the information presently before me, I am not persuaded that an investigation should be undertaken. If, however, the hon. Member is able to provide further relevant material, this will be considered.

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Duncan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will make a statement about the continuation of British Coal's health and safety research programme in the period up to and after privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: In the light of the advice we received from the Health and Safety Commission on the issue of heath and safety research, the Government have now approved further expenditure of £2·1 million between 1995 and 1998 to ensure the completion of British Coal's current health and safety research and development programme.

Coal Authority

Mr. Duncan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the setting up of the Coal Authority.

Mr. Eggar: The Coal Industry Bill currently before Parliament includes provisions for setting up the Coal Authority which, among other functions, will be responsible for licensing coal mining operations and granting interests in coal; and taking over British Coal's responsibilities for historic physical liabilities, including subsidence, where these are not transferred to the private sector.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the Coal Industry Bill and granting of Royal Assent, the aim is to establish the authority, and thus the new independent licensing regime, about two months after the Bill receives Royal Assent, though its members may be appointed shortly before that date. The Department has sought provision for the Coal Authority in the 1994-95 estimates. Urgent expenditure, estimated at £500,000, will be met by repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

Coal Reserves

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if coal reserves exist under all or part of *(a)* Dorset, *(b)* Wiltshire, *(c)* Oxfordshire, *(d)* Avon, *(e)* Herefordshire, *(f)* Worcestershire, *(g)* Buckinghamshire, *(h)* Berkshire, *(i)* Cheshire, *(j)* Lincolnshire, *(k)* Norfolk, *(l)* Kent, *(m)* Cambridgeshire, *(n)* Cumbria, *(o)* North Yorkshire and *(p)* Humberside; and at what depth the shallowest seam lies in respect of each.

Mr. Eggar: My Department does not hold the information requested. Information provided by the British Geological Survey suggests that coal either does not occur, or where it does occur, it is not economically recoverable at the present time in Dorset, Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Kent, Cambridgeshire and Humberside. There are deep mines in North Yorkshire where coal reserves occur at depths ranging from 300 m to 1,000 m.

Opencast coal mining and small-scale shallow underground mining currently takes place in Cumbria. Shallow coal occurs at or near the surface in localised areas in Cheshire, Worcestershire and Avon, extending slightly into west Wiltshire, but the potential is considered to be very limited in these counties.

Paramount Airways Court Case

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the implications of the Paramount court case; and what changes he plans to the law on receivership.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade made a statement to the House on this issue on 14 March, *Official Report*, columns 615-16.

Cuba

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the trade figures between the United Kingdom and Cuba over the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The United Kingdom continues to run a trade surplus with Cuba although total bilateral trade was significantly lower in 1993 than in 1992. This reflects the contraction of the Cuban economy following the loss of Cuba's subsidised trading arrangements with the Soviet Union and of the guaranteed markets for Cuba's exports in eastern Europe. The resulting shortage of foreign exchange has led to a significant drop in Cuba's import capacity during 1989-93.

Data on United Kingdom bilateral trade with Cuba are found in the Business Monitor MM20, available in the Library of the House.

Internal Market

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what matters were discussed and what decisions taken at the European council meeting on the workings of the internal market in Brussels on 10 March.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* I attended the first Internal Market Council—IMC—of the Greek presidency in Brussels on 10 March 1994.

Common positions on proposals on food additives other than colours and sweeteners; the application of open network provision to voice telephony; and extraction solvents used in the production of foodstuffs and food ingredients were agreed as A points.

An amendment to directive 83/189 on technical standards and a proposal on equipment for use in explosive atmospheres were finally adopted as A points.

This was a debate on the progress of follow-up work on the Commission's strategic programme for the internal

market including Commission proposals on administrative co-operation and the management of the mutual recognition of national rules. The Committee of Permanent Representatives—Coreper—was asked to prepare substantive conclusions for discussion at the IMC in June.

The proposed counterfeit goods regulation was remitted to Coreper for further discussion of the legal base.

There was an orientation debate on a proposed regulation to establish the free circulation of novel foods within the single market. The proposal was remitted to Coreper for further detailed work.

The next meeting of the Council is planned for 16 June 1994.

SCOTLAND

Arable Land Payments

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total paid to farmers in *(a)* arable aid scheme set-aside payments and *(b)* total arable area scheme payments in Scotland following the 1993-94 harvest; and how many farmers in Scotland have received arable area payments of £1 million or more.

Sir Hector Monro: Under the arable area payments scheme—AAPS—Scottish farmers have received the following aid to date in respect of their 1993 AAPS claims: *(a)* £15·47 million in set-aside payments; and *(b)* £79·09 million in total arable aid. A further £11·5 million in respect of the final oilseeds payment is being issued this week. No Scottish farmer has received more than £1 million of arable aid.

Gaelic

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the totals spent on promoting Scottish Gaelic in each of the last 15 years.

Sir Hector Monro: Government support for Gaelic centres on three areas, specific grants for Gaelic education, Gaelic organisations and Gaelic television. The totals spent in each of the last 15 financial years are given in the table.

Additional public sector financial support for Gaelic includes support by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, local enterprise companies, local authorities and the Scottish Arts Council. Information on the amounts spent by these bodies is not held centrally.

Scottish Office support for Gaelic

	Specific grants for Gaelic Education	*Gaelic Organisations*	*Gaelic Television*	*Total*
1979-80	0	60,996	0	60,996
1980-81	0	72,281	0	72,281
1981-82	0	87,517	0	87,517
1982-83	0	101,356	0	101,356
1983-84	0	77,190	0	77,190
1984-85	0	81,050	0	81,050
1985-86	0	121,000	0	121,000
1986-87	250,000	131,000	0	381,000
1987-88	300,000	179,723	0	479,723
1988-89	500,000	208,000	0	708,000
1989-90	850,000	298,000	0	1,148,000
1990-91	1,200,000	306,000	0	1,506,000
1991-92	1,500,000	362,800	100,000	1,962,800
1992-93	1,650,000	814,000	9,500,000	11,964,000
1993-94	1,716,000	879,558	9,500,000	12,095,558

Area Tourist Boards

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the reorganisation of area tourist boards in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am most grateful to the Scottish tourist board for the work it has done in developing a range of options for the reorganisation of area tourist boards—ATBs—in Scotland. After wide consultations, and within the framework of these options, I have concluded that the needs of Scotland's tourist industry will be best served by a 14-board structure, to be established on 1 April 1996. In order to ensure a smooth transition I intend to appoint the initial members of the new area tourist boards entirely on the basis of nominations from existing boards and from local authorities.

The Scottish tourist board will be responsible for advising me on the detailed arrangements for establishing this new network, including the individual schemes which will be required by each of the new boards. In carrying out this responsibility I will require it to collaborate closely with existing ATBs, with existing and shadow local authorities and with the tourist industry generally.

Many of those involved in the operation of area tourist boards have put it to me that, in order to meet local needs and retain local loyalties, it will be essential for the new boards to be locally accountable for their operational arrangements. I accept this advice and am asking the Scottish tourist board to pay particular attention to identifying suitable local arrangements in the schemes it works up for individual boards. Here again, it will be required to work in close collaboration with the tourist industry itself.

I am confident that the new 14-board structure will provide visitors to Scotland with a greatly improved service. Our tourist industry will be given a competitive edge by a network which is sensitive to local needs and which delivers the effective marketing called for in the tourism review. A map illustrating the new structure is being placed in the Library. Subject to parliamentary approval the composition of the new boards will be as follows:

Proposed area tourist board[1]	*Proposed new councils*[2]
1. Shetland	Shetland
2. Orkney	Orkney
3. Western Isles	Western Isles
4. Highland	Highland
5. Grampian	City of Aberdeen Aberdeenshire Moray
6. Tayside	Angus City of Dundee
7. Fife	Fife
8. Perthshire	Perthshire and Kinross
9. Loch Lomond, Stirling and Trossachs, Argyll and Bute	Argyll and Bute Stirling Clackmannan and Falkirk Dumbarton and Clydebank

Proposed area tourist board[1]	*Proposed new councils*[2]
10. Glasgow and the Clyde Valley	City of Glasgow Inverclyde Renfrewshire East Renfrewshire East Dunbartonshire North Lanarkshire South Lanarkshire
11. Edinburgh and Lothian	City of Edinburgh East and Midlothian West Lothian
12. Scottish Borders	The Borders
13. Ayrshire and Arran	North Ayrshire South Ayrshire East Ayrshire
14. Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries and Galloway

[1] The exact name of the Board will be a matter for local decision.
[2] Position following First Scottish Standing Committee's consideration of the Local Government, etc. (Scotland) Bill. Boundaries of local authorities lying within each ATB may be subject to change during the remaining stages of the Bill.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names, location and county of each of the outdoor education centres in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Health Care International

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give full details of all discretionary grants awarded to Health Care International for the building of its new hospital complex at Clydebank; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of Government subsidy has been provided towards the Health Care International hospital in Clydebank.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* Details of such assistance are generally treated as commercially confidential. However information about the offer of regional selective assistance made to the company under Section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 was published in the April 1992 edition of the "Employment Gazette", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Land reclamation work was also undertaken on the site by the Scottish Development Agency/Scottish Enterprise. This work was required to deal with the effects of industrial dereliction, primarily asbestos pollution, and to render the site capable of use and was largely undertaken prior to the sale of the site to Health Care International.

School Books

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the amount spent by each local education authority in Scotland on books in 1993 prices in *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1984-85, *(c)* 1989-90 and *(d)* 1992-93.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The available information on education authorities' spending on books and equipment is given in the table. The table shows combined figures for books and equipment in 1984-85 and later years because not all authorities' returns identify separately spending on books in those years.

Expenditure by education authorities on books and educational equipment adjusted to 1992-93 prices using the GDP deflator

£,000

	1979-80	*1984-85*	*1989-90*	*1992-93*
Borders	38	349	353	1,619
Central	726	3,107	4,392	4,438
Dumfries and Galloway	436	1,292	1,695	2,817
Fife	947	3,838	4,419	5,758
Grampian	3,878	4,538	7,320	9,043
Highland	528	2,479	3,294	3,860
Lothian	2,078	4,366	7,377	10,183
Strathclyde	8,344	19,932	26,629	33,133
Tayside	607	2,009	6,510	5,794
Orkney	186	265	142	166
Shetland	81	310	688	723
Western Isles	143	362	550	979

Note 1: The figures include expenditure on books and educational equipment in local authority schools, further education colleges and community education establishments.
Note 2: The figures for 1979-80 relate to expenditure on text and library books only.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The cost of receptions held by Ministers in my Department during 1993-94 was £23,973.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of state for Employment (1) if he will show for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, for the latest available period, for all leavers and separately for male and female, for each ethnic group, and for those with a disability or health problem, the number and proportion of employment training trainees who three months after leaving were *(a)* in a full-time job with their work experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another Government training programme, *(g)* on a full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* in a job club and *(k)* doing something else;

(2) what proportion of respondents to the youth training leavers survey were early leavers showing the reasons for early leaving by percentage; for each region; and for Great Britain as a whole, giving information separately for males, females and in total;

(3) how many people have participated in (i) training for work—employment training/employment action—(ii) the business start-up allowance and (iii) youth training in each year since 1987-88; and how many people are expected to participate in those programmes and *(a)* community action and *(b)* learning for work in 1993-94 and 1994-95 in (1) London, (2) each standard region and (3) Great Britain;

(4) if he will give the latest available results from the employment training leavers survey for each training and enterprise council area in respect of employment training leavers who *(a)* had been entered for a vocational qualification, *(b)* had obtained a vocational qualification, *(c)* had failed to obtain a vocational qualification and *(d)* were awaiting their results; and how many of the employment training leavers in the relevant period had completed the training agreed in their initial action plan;

(5) if he will show *(a)* for London, *(b)* for each standard region and *(c)* for Great Britain, the latest information he has on the characteristics of those who have entered training for work in respect of (i) the number of entrants covered, (ii) whether male or female, (iii) duration of unemployment, (iv) ethnic origin and (v) whether they have a disability;

(6) if he will give for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, the latest information he has on the number and level of national vocational qualifications and Scottish vocational qualifications gained by people leaving youth training in the past year, broken down by *(a)* ethnicity, *(b)* disability and *(c)* gender; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what *(a)* number and *(b)* proportion of employment training leavers had *(a)* been entered for a vocational qualification, *(b)* obtained a vocational qualification, *(c)* had failed to obtain a vocational qualification and *(d)* were awaiting their results; and how many of the employment training leavers in the relevant period had completed the training agreed in their initial action plan in the latest period for which figures are available, giving a breakdown between male and female, by ethnic group and for those with a disability;

(8) what number and proportion of respondents to the employment training/training for work leavers survey were early leavers showing the reasons for early leaving by percentage, and showing the figures separately for male, female and in total;

(9) if he will publish tables showing the latest available results from the youth training leavers survey for each training and enterprise council area broken down to show the number and proportion of youth training leavers who were *(a)* in full-time work with the same employer, *(b)* in full-time work with a different employer, *(c)* in part-time work, *(d)* on a full-time course at a college or training centre, *(e)* on another youth training scheme, *(f)* doing something else, *(g)* who were unemployed, *(h)* who had obtained a vocational qualification; and if he will also indicate (i) the number of questionnaires issued, (ii) the usable percentage response rate and (iii) the percentage of respondents who were early leavers;

(10) if he will give the latest available results from the employment training leavers survey for each training and enterprise council area in England and Wales broken down to show the number and proportion of employment training leavers who were *(a)* in a full-time job with their work experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another Government training programme, *(g)* on a full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, (i) unemployed and not claiming benefit, (j) in a job club and *(k)* doing something else;

(11) if he will show for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, for all trainees and separately for male and female, for the latest available period, the wages earned by employment training trainees who three months after leaving were *(a)* in a full-time job, *(b)* in a part-time job and *(c)* self-employed;

(12) if he will give for each region and for Great Britain as a whole the latest information he has on the characteristics of those who have entered employment training showing *(a)* the number of entrants covered, *(b)* whether male or female, *(c)* duration of unemployment, *(d)* ethnic origins and *(e)* whether they have a disability;

(13) what is the latest information he has on the number and level of national vocational qualifications and Scottish vocational qualifications gained by people leaving training for work in the past year in each region and for Great Britain as a whole, broken down by *(a)* ethnicity, *(b)* disabilty and *(c)* gender; and if he will make a statement;

(14) if he will give for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, the latest results of the youth training scheme/youth training leavers survey, to show for all trainees, for male and female trainees and for each separate ethnic group and for those with a disability, *(a)* those in full-time work with the same employer, *(b)* those in full-time work with a different employer, *(c)* those in part-time work, *(d)* those on a full time course at a college or training centre, *(e)* those on another youth training scheme, *(f)* those doing something else, *(g)* those who were unemployed and *(h)* those who had obtained a vocational qualification; and if he will also show (i) the number of questionnaires issued, (ii) the usable percentage response rate and (iii) the percentage of respondents who were early leavers.

Miss Widdecombe: As the information is contained in a large number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list separately for each region and for London the contractors who have been approved to deliver places in respect of *(a)* job clubs, *(b)* restart courses, *(c)* job plan workshops, *(d)* community action, *(e)* employment rehabilitation courses and *(f)* sheltered workshops and sheltered placements in 1993-94 and the number of places they have been contracted for;

(2) if he will outline for *(a)* job clubs, *(b)* restart courses, *(c)* job plan workshops, *(d)* community action, *(e)* employment rehabilitation courses and *(f)* sheltered workshops and sheltered placements, the process which is followed in inviting tenders to operate the scheme, the criteria by which successful bids are chosen, the length of contracts awarded and the element of contract funding which is determined by successful outcomes; how that performance element is assessed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated 21 March 1994:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions about the tendering process which apply to:

(a) Jobclub
(b) Restart Course
(c) Jobplan Workshops

(d) Community Action
(e) Employment Rehabilitation Course
(f) Sheltered Workshops and Sheltered Placements

This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

It is Employment Service policy that tenders are evaluated to ascertain the economically most advantageous tender taking into account quality, skills, experience, resources and price.

The arrangements which apply to *(a)*-*(c)* and *(e)* are set out in the Employment Service Programmes Contract and Tendering Guide and a copy is enclosed for your information. In addition, for Employment Rehabilitation, a copy of the information pack "Employment Rehabilitation—Information for Contractors" is enclosed.

Of these four programmes, only Jobclub relates funding to successful outcomes and the arrangements are outlined in Part Two of the Contracts Guide. One recent change has been made which does not appear in the Guide. The maximum length of a contract has been increased from two to three years to bring programmes in line with contracting arrangements which operate elsewhere in the Employment Service.

For Community Action the contracting process differs from our other programmes in that contracts are for one year and providers are paid a fixed rate of £40 per filled place per week. The contracting process is described in the Community Action Specification and standard contract (copy enclosed). This also lists the criteria used to select successful bids. The primary aim of Community Action is to help long-term unemployed people back into work. No extra funding is available to providers for successful outcomes, though each contract is monitored and we expect a reasonable proportion of participants to leave the programme for jobs, training or other positive outcomes, e.g. education or self-employment.

Turning to Sheltered Employment, the Secretary of State for Employment, approved on 10 March new arrangements which will come into force on 1 April for the funding of Supported Employment (formerly Sheltered Employment). ES officials are in the process of negotiating formal contracts with SE providers for the provision of places in sheltered workshops and in sheltered placements with host employers.

This change will be the first occasion that formal contracts operate within this programme and the contracts are being placed with existing providers of the service. The contracts will formalise existing arrangements and will not be subject to competitive tendering. Formal contracts will clearly spell out the respective responsibilities of the Employment Service and the contractors who provide this service and will enable the ES to negotiate several qualitative and quantitative targets which will form part of the contract.

In your second question about the same programmes and services, you asked for lists of contractors and numbers of places contracted for. The responsibility for contracting in the ES is decentralised and records are not held centrally at the moment. However, a contracts data base is currently being set up which will provide information on Restart Courses, Jobplan Workshops and Community Action providers. This information will be ready in the summer. Formal contracts do not exist for Supported Employment in 1993-94.

I hope this is helpful.

Open Government

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new detailed information his Department, the Employment Service and training and enterprise councils will be making available to the public under the code of practice on open government; how people will be able to obtain such information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department, Employment Service and training and enterprise councils already answer between them many hundreds of thousands of inquiries each year. The code of practice will reinforce and build on existing arrangements for providing information to the public.

Career Development Loans

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications for career development loans by unemployed people have been turned down by the banks; how many unemployed people awarded career development loans subsequently go into full-time employment after completing training; how many unemployed people have been served with career development loan default notices; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the number of rejected career development loan—CDL—applications from unemployed people is not available. The current approval rate for all CDL applicants is approximately 70 per cent.

Follow-up surveys on a 20 per cent. sample of CDL trainees are carried out three months after they have completed their training course. Information from responders to this survey indicates that over 60 per cent. of CDL trainees, who are registered unemployed at the time of taking out a CDL, have a positive outcome to their training at the three-month stage; 36 per cent. go into full-time employment, 5 per cent. into part-time employment and 10 per cent. into self employment. A further 5 per cent. are waiting to take up an unaccepted job offer and 5 per cent. go on to take further training.

Information on the number of unemployed CDL trainees who have defaulted on their loan repayments is not available. However, recent analysis undertaken by the banks of reasons for CDLs defaulting would suggest that of the 1,687 loans defaulted in the current financial year to February, approximately a third were due to unemployment at the end of the course.

Community Action

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have entered community action in total; and how many were participating in community action in each month since September 1993 *(a)* for London; *(b)* for each standard region; and *(c)* for Great Britain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms. Clare Short, dated 21 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Community Action.

To the end of February (the latest date for which figures are available) 14,476 people had participated in Community Action. The number of people participating on the last Friday of each month since September for each of our nine regions and for Great Britain as a whole are contained in the attached table.

I am unable to provide the information you request on participants in London as figures are collected regionally.

Early indications show that Community Action is proving to be effective in helping long-term unemployed people into jobs or training.

Table showing community action occupancy by region at the end of each month since September 1993

	September	October	November	December	January	February
Northern	—	33	66	118	207	503
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	73	286	436	730	1,189
East Midlands and Eastern	21	108	332	472	667	960
London and South East	86	296	702	1,239	2,380	4,330
South West	95	233	436	639	855	1,171
Wales	11	80	187	311	451	659
West Midlands	5	55	190	320	518	810
North West	36	215	440	633	909	1,412
Scotland	21	104	237	399	561	1,178
Total	275	1,197	2,876	4,567	7,278	12,162

Source: Employment Service Regional Offices.

Young Unemployed (Guidance and Support)

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give further details about the objectives, procedures, benefit penalties and location of the pilot schemes he recently announced to provide more guidance and support to unemployed 18 to 24-year-olds with poor work histories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated 21 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the pilot schemes to help unemployed 18-24 year olds back into work.

The Employment Service (ES) is developing two pilots designed to help 18-24 year olds unemployed for a year or more. Each pilot will consist of 10,000 places and will run for a year from April 1994. They are designed to test out new alternative approaches to helping young adults back to work.

One pilot is a four week course designed to provide advice, guidance and jobsearch through group activities. It will run in the following regions: London and the South East, South West, Norther, East Midlands and Eastern and in Scotland.

The second pilot involves placing people on to a caseload operated by an ES adviser. There will be a series of up to six interviews for each client over a six to 12 week period. It will run in London and the South East, the West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, Wales and the North West.

Participation in both programmes is a requirement for people aged 18-24 unemployed for a year or more who decline or fail to take up all other offers of help at their Restart interview.

If people fail to attend the course when asked they will be interviewed to establish the reason. If a satisfactory reason is not given their details will be passed to a Benefits Agency Adjudication Officer for a decision as to whether a reduction should be applied to their Income Support payment. Individuals can lose up to 40% of their personal allowance for each week they fail to attend. Similar procedures have been in place for some time in relation to Jobplan and Restart Courses.

If people fail to attend a caseloading interview a further invitation to interview letter will be issued. Should they fail to attend on the second occasion their benefit will be suspended and their case referred to adjudication. Normally their entitlement will be reinstated as soon as they do attend an interview. These are the same procedures which have applied for many years for all other interviews with ES advisers.

I hope this is helpful.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department answers questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Unemployment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the note on chart 4A in his booklet produced jointly with the Treasury, "The UK Approach" for distribution at the Detroit G7 jobs summit, that "Definition of unemployment changes slightly through period covered"; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The chart in question shows United Kingdom unemployment under two definitions. From 1948 onwards, the United Kingdom unemployment rate represented the number registering as unemployed at employment exchanges and youth employment service careers offices, as a percentage of these registered unemployed plus the total number of employees in employment. These are the rates shown in the chart between 1949 and 1970.

When, in 1982, the Rayner review led to registration becoming voluntary and thereby threatened the integrity of official statistics, the basis of the count was changed to become a count of those claiming unemployment-related benefits at Employment Service local offices.

In order to ensure that this series remains a valid economic indicator, Employment Department statisticians compile a seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment series with a coverage which is consistent with current eligibility criteria. The unemployment rate derived from this series, which goes back to 1971, represents the number of unemployed claimants as a percentage of the claimant unemployed plus employees in employment, self employed, HM forces, and people on work-related Government training programmes. These rates from the consistent seasonally adjusted series appear in the chart from 1971 onwards.

ABB

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, at column *636*, how many of the former ABB workers to

whom he refers have had their unemployment benefit suspended for any period since they were made redundant by ABB.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 21 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about people made redundant by ABB Transportation Ltd who have had their unemployment benefit suspended for any period.

For reasons explained in my letter of 24 November, I regret that this information is not available. No records are kept on the number of clients claiming benefit who have been made redundant by a particular company, or about the status of their claim. This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Claims are filed alphabetically by client's name, and it would not be cost effective to make a retrospective check seeking to match clients against redundancy from ABB Transportation Ltd.

I am sorry I cannot be of more help on this occasion.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the implications of the judgment of the House of Lords in Regina *v.* Secretary of State for Employment Ex-parte Equal Opportunities Commission and Another.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government are carefully considering this judgment and will take what action may be necessary to comply with its legal obligations.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what number of employed people have been counted *(a)* twice and *(b)* more than twice in employment figures in each of the last 15 years.

Miss Widdecombe: Precise information on the number of people with more than one job included in the published work force in employment estimates is not available. However, the labour force survey collects information on the number of people who have two or more paid jobs. A distinction cannot be made between the number of people counted twice or more than twice in the employment figures. Consistent information is available only from 1984 and is given in the table:

Numbers of people with a second job: Great Britain

	Thousands
Spring 1984	698
Spring 1985	778
Spring 1986	813
Spring 1987	834
Spring 1988	960
Spring 1989	1,054
Spring 1990	1,073
Spring 1991	1,074
Spring 1992	962
Spring 1993	1,029
Autumn 1993	1,127

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what are the totals of self-employed in the Government employment figures in each of the past 15 years; and what proportion they are of *(a)* the employed work force and *(b)* the population;

(2) what are the totals of part-time workers included in employment figures in each of the last 15 years; and what proportion they are of *(a)* the total employed work force and *(b)* the total of the population.

Miss Widdecombe: As the information requested is derived from a number of statistical tables, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Outdoor Adventure Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many commercial outdoor adventure centres are currently operating in England; and if he will list them by county.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not collected in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It is estimated that about 3,000 outdoor activity centres operate in Great Britain.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many outdoor adventure centres will be inspected by the Health and Safety Executive between 1 April 1994 and 31 March 1995; and if he will list them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This is a programme being run jointly by the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities, representatives of which will visit more than 100 activity centres. As an element of surprise is integral to this programme, it would not be helpful to alert the centres concerned to the intention to visit them.

Job Vacancies, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the current number of unfilled vacancies in the jobcentres in the Doncaster area; and what was the figure *(a)* five years and *(b)* 10 years ago;

(2) how many vacancies were listed in the Doncaster area jobcentres during *(a)* December, *(b)* January, *(c)* February and *(d)* at the latest date for which he has figures available; and if he will make a statement as to the nature of these vacancies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 14 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about vacancies in Jobcentres in the Doncaster area.

There are six Jobcentres in the Doncaster travel to work area, five in Doncaster and one in Thorne. The Doncaster Jobcentres have one central vacancy taking point.

Information about the current number of unfilled vacancies and the number five and ten years ago is shown in Table 1 attached.

The number of vacancies notified in the statistical period 6 December 1993 to 7 January 1994 is shown in Table 2. Information from 8 January is not yet available.

Information about the nature of vacancies is collected on a quarterly basis. During the period covered by your question the information was collected on 7 January and is shown on Table 3.

I hope this is helpful.

Table 1

	Unfilled vacancies	
	Doncaster jobcentres	*Thorne jobcentre*
7 January 1994	384	67
6 January 1989	338	42
6 January 1984	166	20

Table 2

	Vacancies notified 6 December 1993 to 7 January 1994
Doncaster jobcentres	316
Thorne jobcentre	60
Total	376

Vacancies notified 11 October 1993 to 7 January 1994	*Doncaster jobcentres*	*Thorne jobcentre*
Permanent full-time	568	172
Permanent part-time	417	60
Temporary full-time	168	2
Temporary part-time	76	0
Total	1,229	234

EDUCATION

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985 including this year to date on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not collected centrally.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Robin Squire: No such referrals have been made during the last 12 months.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Boswell: Nearly 1,200 letters were received from hon. Members and just over 1,300 replies were dispatched in February 1994.

Mandatory Awards

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the number of mandatory award holders, excluding European Community and sandwich students on their placement year, in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what are the projected numbers for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Boswell: The table shows the information requested.

Academic year	*Award-holders Thousands*
1991-92	553
1992-93	[1]636
1993-94	[2]719
1994-95	[2]761
1995-96	[2]767
1996-97	[2]763

[1] Provisional.
[2] Projected.

Discretionary Awards

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total amount spent in current prices on discretionary awards by local authorities in the last three academic years for which figures are available.

Mr. Boswell: Expenditure on discretionary awards by local authorities in England and Wales in 1992-93 constant prices was £231·1 million in 1990-91, £248·9 million in 1991-92 and £238·1 million—provisional—in 1992-93.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what additional help he is proposing to provide to local education authorities to assit them in their role of providing discretionary student awards.

Mr. Boswell: The provision of discretionary awards is a matter for local education authorities. A national survey of LEA discretionary awards—supported by the Department—is in progress. My right hon. Friend and I will wish to consider carefully the findings of the survey once they are available.

Drop-out Rates

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what details are kept on the number of students who leave college before the end of term or course for financial reasons; and if he will list them by area.

Mr. Boswell: Higher education drop-out rates are published in the departmental report. Table 14 in the latest report—Cm 2510—a copy of which is available in the Library, shows that drop-out rates have remained broadly steady over the period from 1982-83 to 1991-92. The Department does not collect information on the reasons why students leave courses prematurely, whether it is for financial reasons or otherwise; nor does it collect data by area.

Higher Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has about the numbers of applicants for places in higher education institutions who decline to give information about the occupation of parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: In 1991-92, of the 274,255 United Kingdom applicants to the polytechnics central admissions

system 37,277—13·6 per cent.—failed to answer the relevant question on the application form. The corresponding figures for applicants to the Universities Central Council on Admissions were 21,884—9·1 per cent.—out of 241,660 applicants.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if students applying for places in higher education have the right to see references given about them to the institutions.

Mr. Boswell: This is a matter for the institutions themselves and the individuals and bodies supplying the references, except where the references are held on computer, which are subject to the access provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for what purpose his Department uses local education authorities to transfer mandatory awards of maintenance grants and tuition and college fees to students and institutions of higher education.

Mr. Boswell: Local education authorities have been under a duty since 1962 to make mandatory awards to eligible students. Regulations made under the Education Act 1962 require LEAs to decide the eligibility of students; to assess and meet their maintenance requirements; and to pay specified fees in respect of their course. Since 1 April 1990 my right hon. Friend has paid specific grant to LEAs at 100 per cent. for this expenditure.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the numbers of full-time students in higher education institutions who are *(a)* home-based, *(b)* living away from the parents' home and studying in London or *(c)* living away from the parents' home and studying elsewhere.

Mr. Boswell: Information on term-time accommodation of all full-time higher education students is not held centrally. However, data for students in receipt of mandatory awards are shown in the table.

Mandatory awards held by students domiciled in England and Wales 1991-92

Rate received	*Numbers*
Parental home rate	49,800
London rate of grant	76,800
"Elsewhere" rate of grant	413,800

National Curriculum

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to safeguard access to the national curriculum for members of ethnic minorities who have English language difficulties *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Coventry.

Mr. Robin Squire: Provision for the education of pupils from minority ethnic groups who have English language difficulties is primarily a matter for schools and local education authorities. Authorities with high proportions of children with origins outside predominantly English-speaking countries generally receive within their education standard spending assessment higher allowances to spend per pupil than other authorities in otherwise comparable circumstances. Nationally, when undertaking the recent review of Education SSAs for the 1994-95 financial year, we took account of the reduction in the section 11 grant rate. But SSAs are not prescriptive and Coventry will remain responsible for determining its own spending priorities.

Fuel Bills

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has regarding special companies created by colleges and universities to accept advance payments for annual fuel bills for the next five years; and if the funding councils will be asked to take into account such payments.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend is not aware that any special companies have been established by colleges or universities for the purpose of accepting advance payments for fuel bills, but he understands that colleges in the further education sector have received advice from independent consultants on schemes for paying fuel bills in advance. Where any such schemes entailed borrowing by colleges above a certain level, the consent of the Further Education Funding Council would be required. It would be for individual colleges to determine how to meet the cost of borrowing.

Teaching Posts (Applications)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that local education authorities treat applications for teaching posts from both locally managed and grant-maintained schools equally on individual merits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: When a school has a delegated budget under the local management of schools scheme, it is the governing body that decides which teachers should be appointed to any vacant posts at the school. The local education authority may offer advice, but cannot insist on a school appointing only candidates of which it approves. The Department's publications for school governors stress that all applicants for posts must be judged on their merits.

Undergraduates (Personal Identifiers)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will bring forward proposals to allow the University and College Admissions Service and the Student Loans Company to make use of national insurance numbers as personal identifiers.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has no plans to bring forward such proposals.

Post-16 Courses

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will bring forward proposals to ensure that all school pupils have a right of access to information about all post-16 courses available in their locality.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Education Act 1993, maintained schools, and city technology colleges, are now required to distribute to their year 11 pupils information published and supplied to them by local colleges. This complemented by the guidance on the whole range of

post-16 options in the publication "It's Your Choice", and by information on school and college performance in the comparative tables published by the Department.

Cornish Language, History and Culture

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the totals of money spent from his Department on promoting Cornish language, history and culture in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend does not make specific provision for this purpose. Schools are free to teach the Cornish language if there is sufficient demand and they have the resources to do so. National curriculum geography requires that all pupils develop a knowledge and understanding of their local area and there is provision in national curriculum history to study local history.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many approaches his Department's territorial teams have received from parents who have failed to get their children admitted to the grant-maintained school of their choice; and what plans he has to begin keeping a central record of such approaches.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department does not keep detailed records of different categories of written and telephone inquiries from members of the public. There are no present plans to collect data on the number of approaches made to members of the Department's school territorial teams about the specific issue of admissions to grant-maintained schools. Both the Department and the Office for Standards in Education have however noted that when a school becomes grant-maintained there tends to be an increase in the number of applications for admission.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to monitor the effects of reductions in section 11 funding *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Coventry.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend will continue to monitor the standard of educational provision for all pupils including those for whom English is not their first language, through the Office for Standards in Education.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *737*, how many square yards of carpet woven with the NCC logo were purchased by the National Curriculum Council for its offices in York; and from whom it was purchased.

Mr. Robin Squire: Approximately 275 sq yds of the carpet is currently in place in the former NCC offices in York but information on how much carpet was purchased by the NCC and from whom is not held centrally and is not identifiable from published NCC documents.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when, and for what reasons, he or any other Minister has signed a public interest immunity cerificate in connection with the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Neither I nor any other Northern Ireland Office Minister has signed such a certificate since I became Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Interdepartmental Co-operation

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the steps he has taken to develop co-operation between Departments in the Northern Ireland Office and the Scottish Office on trade, industry and transport matters.

Mr. Tim Smith: Northern Ireland officials regularly meet their counterparts from the Scottish Office on areas of mutual interest in trade, industry and transport. Those include inward investment, electricity interconnection and transportation links. The permanent secretary of the Department of Economic Development and his senior colleagues will be meeting the secretary and top officials of the Scottish Office Industry Department in May in Belfast.

Community Care

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy that the moneys from both the people first budget and the transfer from protected rights are utilised solely for community care and not for capital projects.

Mr. Ancram: The people first community care allocation, which includes the social security transfer, is earmarked for community care services. To secure a comprehensive range of community services it will be necessary for health and social services boards to spend capital relevant to community care such as aids, equipment, transport and day care facilities.

Poultry

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many poultry birds were slaughtered in each year since 1988 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Total recorded poultry slaughterings in Northern Ireland in each year since 1988 were as follows:

Million birds

	Total slaughterings	*of which, broilers*
1988	39·12	37·37
1989	35·19	33·87
1990	41·71	39·82
1991	45·74	43·90
1992	52·03	49·63
1993	55·91	54·12

Eggs

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the figures for egg consumption in Northern Ireland for each year since 1988.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Sir John Wheeler: The code of practice will reinforce and build on existing arrangements for the provision of information by the Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office.

Operational arrangements within each Department will be announced in the near future.

Product and Process Development Scheme

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report,* columns *260-61,* what was the total number of applications for *(a)* the number of companies participating in and *(b)* the number of first-time users of the product and process development scheme so far in 1993-94; and what were the comparable figures in the previous year.

Mr. Tim Smith: So far in 1993-94, 113 companies —43 first-time users—have submitted 173 applications under the product and process development scheme compared to 65 companies—24 first-time users—and 153 applications in 1992-93.

Airports Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what procedures will exist for the Northern Ireland airport police to have access to information contained in the police computers operated by the RUC, Home Office forces and Scotland's constabularies, following the airports police privatisation.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Northern Ireland airports constabulary does not and will not have direct access to information held on computers operated by the RUC, Home Office forces or Scottish constabularies. Where the airport police require such information to carry out their duty, they will seek advice from the local RUC, as is the case at present.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to ensure that the Northern Ireland airport police will be subject to all existing criminal evidence procedure and legislation following their privatisation.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 has been amended for that purpose and will apply to all airport constabularies authorised under article 19 of the Airports (Northern Ireland) Order 1994.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements will be made to ensure that the Northern Ireland airport police continue to be subject to the existing police complaints procedures following their privatisation.

Mr. Tim Smith: The present arrangement between Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. and the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland will be extended to the successor company after privatisation of the airport.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will review the decision to privatise the Northern Ireland airport police following the decision to review security at United Kingdom's international airports.

Mr. Tim Smith: A detailed review of security at Belfast international airport has just been completed and Government security advisers are content with the proposed arrangements for policing after privatisation.

HMS Caroline

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will seek to retain HMS Caroline in Belfast, following its de-commission, as a floating maritime museum and tourist attraction.

Mr. Ancram: I understand that there are no plans to de-commission HMS Caroline.

Imperial War Museum

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements exist for the collection of the imperial war museum to be exhibited in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: There are no specific arrangements for the collection of the imperial war museum to be exhibited in Northern Ireland. It is however open to museums in Northern Ireland to borrow artefacts from other national museums by negotiation.

Arable Land Payments

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total paid to farmers in *(a)* arable aid scheme set-aside payments and *(b)* total arable area scheme payments in Northern Ireland following the 1993-94 harvest; and how many farmers in Northern Ireland have received arable area payments of £1 million or more.

Mr. Ancram: In Northern Ireland to date, the total amount paid to farmers for set-aside under the EC arable area aid scheme is £243,086. The amount paid under the arable area aid scheme for eligible crops harvested in 1993 is £3,727,725.

No farmer in Northern Ireland has received arable area payments of £1 million or more.

Housing

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Housing Executive dwellings, and of what types, have been demolished in each of the last five years and the current year to date; and what are the projections for the next three years in each council area in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I have been advised by the chief executive that the information is as follows:

District Council Area	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	Projection for three years
Antrim	—	6	323	13	17	13	56
Ards	14	—	50	45	—	—	70
Armagh	2	24	10	3	7	1	—
Ballymena	—	5	13	29	—	2	130
Ballymoney	—	4	—	—	—	—	47
Banbridge	36	21	41	2	1	—	3
Belfast	1,321	911	734	645	514	—	1,653
Carrickfergus	34	1	—	6	69	4	28
Castlereagh	—	—	1	2	—	11	—
Coleraine	6	3	2	8	—	—	80
Cookstown	3	—	—	—	17	—	4
Craigavon	117	139	145	16	54	—	29
Derry	38	123	52	14	3	63	84
Down	10	10	32	1	—	—	85
Dungannon	5	13	2	10	2	4	24
Fermanagh	13	—	—	—	—	2	16
Larne	1	—	4	—	59	—	19
Limavady	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	7	2	2	—	4	—	61
Magherafelt	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moyle	1	1	—	1	—	—	26
Newry and Moyle	60	61	31	8	—	10	—
Newtownabbey	3	43	16	95	152	15	335
North Down	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Omagh	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strabane	1	19	7	13	1	—	2

Information on types of dwellings demolished is available only for Northern Ireland as a whole, and is estimated as follows:

	Per cent.
Bungalows	7
Houses	67
Maisonettes	9
Flats	16
Rural cottages	1

The above figures include dwellings acquired or which the executive hope to acquire, for re-development or housing action area activity.

Illegal Fishing

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present position within the Fisheries Conservancy Board of the scientist alleged to have been involved in the unauthorised removal of salmon from the Grillagh river for the purpose of stripping salmon eggs from them in 1990.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* It would not be appropriate to disclose this information.

HEALTH

Family Health Centres

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family health centres per 1,000 population there are in *(a)* Inner London, *(b)* Greater London, *(c)* Birmingham, *(d)* Newcastle, *(e)* Liverpool, *(f)* Leeds and *(g)* Manchester.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health centres are furnished by district health authorities under the terms of section 21 of the National Health Service Act 1946, and provide community health care. Some general practitioners, about a quarter, practise from them, but may use them partly in conjunction with their own premises.

The number of health centres per 1,000 of the population for the areas in question at 1 April 1993 is shown in the table:

Family health services authority	Health centres	Population	Health centres per 1,000
Inner London	118	5,770,000	0·02
Greater London (inclusive of Inner London figures)	135	6,906,000	0·02
Newcastle	9	282,000	0·032
Leeds	19	722,000	0·026
Birmingham	28	1,009,000	0·028
Liverpool	12	479,000	0·025
Manchester	13	435,000	0·03

Amyl Nitrate

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research has been carried out into the effects of amyl nitrate on children; and if she will publish the results.

(2) what research her Department has carried out into the extent of the use of amyl nitrate among school children.

Mr. Bowis: The Department has not carried out any research directed specifically at the extent of the use of amyl nitrate among school children, nor are we aware of any research carried out specifically into the effects of amyl nitrate on children.

The Department gives financial support to St George's hospital medical school for its collection of statistics on deaths associated with abuse of volatile substances.

We are aware of concerns that alkyl nitrites are being misused by young people in the rave scene. Both the Government and the Advisory Council on the Misuse of

Drugs, an independent body of experts set up under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, are keeping the matter under review.

Dental Services

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what controls exist on the prices which may be charged for private dental treatment; and what plans she has to change them.

Dr. Mawhinney: Arrangements for private dental treatment, private dental charges and information about them are matters between the dentist and the patient.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the reason for drugs used to treat schizophrenia being excluded from the list of drugs exempted from prescription charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: The list of medical conditions that confer prescription charge exemption was drawn up in 1968, when prescription charges were reinstated. This was done with the full co-operation of medical practitioners, whose representatives made it clear that they could only agree to exemption for certain readily identifiable medical conditions, which called automatically for life-long medication.

The list has been reviewed on a number of occasions, but on each it has been concluded that no change should be made. There are extensive general arrangements for prescription charge exemption, which coupled with charge remission under the national health service low income scheme, protect vulnerable groups in the community. These arrangements ensure that no one need be deterred from obtaining necessary medication for financial reasons.

Mental Health

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce standardised forms for use in all aftercare cases, covered by section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Bowis: We are actively considering that proposal.

North Yorkshire Health Authority

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the reasons why North Yorkshire health authority has appointed a chief medical officer in addition to a director of public health; and if she will describe the responsibilities of each post.

Dr. Mawhinney: That is the responsibility of North Yorkshire health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mrs. Susan Wrigley, for details.

London Ambulance Service

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paramedics are employed by the London ambulance service; and how many have been transferred to work in stations in *(a)* south-east London and *(b)* Lewisham.

Mr. Sackville: The London ambulance service currently employs around 400 paramedics. It plans to train more than 750 further paramedics by the end of 1996.

Operational decisions on the deployment of staff are made by individual ambulance services in the light of local circumstances. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Martin Gorham, chief executive of the London ambulance service, for futher information.

NHS Trusts

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service trusts she expects to be operational on 1 April.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today approved a further eight applications from units wishing to become national health service trusts in the fourth wave. That will bring the total for the fourth wave to 143. There will now be 419 fully operational NHS trusts from 1 April 1994.

The eight new trusts are: Hammersmith hospitals—incorporating Charing Cross hospital, Hammersmith hospital, Queen Charlotte's hospital and Acton hospital —Chelsea and Westminter Healthcare; Mount Vernon and Watford hospitals; West Hertfordshire Community Health; Harrow and Hillingdon Healthcare; University College London hospitals; Royal Victoria infirmary and associated hospitals; and Newcastle City Health. I have not approved the application from Surrey Heartlands.

Eye, Ear and Throat Surgery, Shrewsbury

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received *(a)* for and *(b)* against retaining eye, ear and throat surgery in Shrewsbury; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received a number of representations all of which have been referred to Shropshire health authority, which is currently undertaking a public consultation exercise on the future provision of the service.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to public funds of the retirement dinner for the former chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority; and from which budget the function was funded.

Dr. Mawhinney: That is a matter for the Yorkshire regional health authority.

Prescribing Patterns

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about the prescribing patterns of *(a)* fundholding and *(b)* non-fundholding general practitioners; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fundholders are leading the way in improving the cost-effectiveness of prescribing while ensuring that patients receive all the medicines that they need. They prescribe drugs in generic form more often than non-fundholders—49 per cent. compared with 43 per cent.—and their prescribing costs are increasing by around 4 per cent. per year less than those of other GPs.

Hospital Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds there were in each year between 1978-79 and 1988-89 in the area covered by the London implementation group.

Dr. Mawhinney: The average daily number of available beds, wards open night and day—24 hours—1979 to 1988-89 in the area covered by the London implementation group is shown in the table:

Year	*Inner London district health authorities*	*Special health authorities*	*Outer London district health authorities*	*Inner, Outer London DHAs and SHAs*
1979	28,629	3,411	32,812	64,852
1980	27,396	3,357	31,910	62,663
1981	27,006	3,393	31,462	61,861
1982	26,476	3,346	30,877	60,699
1983	26,092	3,328	30,171	59,591
1984	25,222	3,236	28,922	57,380
1985	24,140	3,087	27,918	55,145
1986	23,024	3,025	26,660	52,709
1987-88	21,202	2,860	25,052	49,114
1988-89	20,454	2,780	23,543	46,777

Source: SH3 1979-1986.
KHO3 1987-88 to 1992-93.

In 1979 there were 1,061,064 in-patients treated in inner and outer London district health authorities and special health authorities. The figure for 1988-89 increased to 1,373,377—a 29 per cent. increase.

Pacemaker Leads

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been implanted with *(a)* Sorin S80049 bi-polar leads and *(b)* Medtronic 4012 leads since 1987; and how many in each case have since died.

Mr. Sackville: There is no S80049 pacemaker lead made by Sorin Biomedica.

Data returned on a voluntary basis to the national pacemaker database show that, since 1987, 611 patients were implanted with Sorin Biomedica lead model S80 0149, 25, of whom have since died, while 954 patients were implanted with Medtronic 4012 lead model, 140 of whom have since died.

In none of the above cases was the cause of death recorded as lead related.

Heart Valves

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people who have been implanted with heart valves since 1980 have died; and how many have died as a result of faulty valves.

Mr. Sackville: No figures are available for heart valve implants before 1986. However, according to the United Kingdom heart valve registry 31,271 patients were implanted with heart valves between 1 January 1986 and 31 December 1992. Of those, 5,841 have died. None of the deaths was related to faulty valves.

Of patients implanted prior to 1986, 43 deaths have been reported following failure of mechanical heart valves.

Thalidomide

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the product licence for the drug thalidomide was lapsed or was withdrawn; and how long it had been in force.

Mr. Sackville: Thalidomide was first made available to doctors in the United Kingdom in 1958 and withdrawn on 2 December 1961 before the introduction of the Medicines Act 1968. A product licence was therefore not necessary at the time.

Allergens

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the link between exposure to traffic fumes and susceptibility to allergens.

Mr. Sackville: The Department's advisory group on the medical aspects of air pollution episodes has concluded that there is evidence that certain but not all constituents of traffic fumes, or chemicals formed from them, such as ozone, may worsen the symptoms of some allergic conditions. The group was assisted in its considerations by a leading immuno-toxicologist, and is reviewing the evidence in its current assessment of the interaction of all traffic pollutants.

Further advice has been sought from the Department's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants. It has asked for information from two leading research workers currently undertaking studies into the relationship between levels of air pollutants in London and symptoms among hay fever sufferers.

The British Society for Clinical Allergy and Immunology has set up a working party to look at the possible relationship between pollutants and allergic disease. The Department is represented on that group.

Psychiatric Unit, Torbay

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have died within six months of being discharged from the Edith Morgan psychiatric unit, Torbay hospital in the latest convenient period.

Mr. Bowis: The information is not available centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had with the Edith Morgan psychiatric unit, Torbay hospital.

Mr. Bowis: The Department of Health consults national health service authorities and trusts on a wide variety of matters.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each of the five years, the number and causes of deaths at the Edith Morgan psychiatric Unit, Torbay hospital.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the chairman of the South Devon healthcare trust, for these details.

Air Pollution

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has regarding any correlation between levels of disease and of air pollution; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is advised on these matters by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants and by the advisory group on the medical aspects of air pollution episodes. The latter's three reports are in the Library; they are on ozone; on sulphur dioxide, acid aerosols and particulates; and on oxides of nitrogen. MAAPE is reviewing the evidence in its current assessment of the interaction of all traffic pollutants. Also, COMEAP has formed two sub-groups; one is to consider the relationship between air pollution and asthma and the other the medical effects of particulates in the air.

Advice and information for the public is provided on the freephone helpline: 0800 556677.

Management Costs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure on management and financial consultants by her Department, the National Health Service Management Executive and any centrally run patient care services, not including trusts and health authority direct spending.

Mr. Sackville: The Department spent £19,377,397 on all types of consultancy in 1992-93. It is not possible separately to identify expenditure on management and financial consultants.

Orthopaedic Services, Hampshire

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline her reasons for endorsing the proposal of the Basingstoke and North Hampshire district health authority to transfer orthopaedic services from Lord Mayor Treloar hospital to Basingstoke district hospital.

Mr. Sackville: The proposal arose following the decision of a local health authority to withdraw from 1993 its substantive contract for elective orthopaedic services from Lord Mayor Treloar hospital in order to purchase those same services locally. Without new work from other health authorities, the cost to Basingstoke and North Hampshire district health authority of obtaining the same level of service from Lord Mayor Treloar hospital would increase substantially at the expense of reduced services elsewhere. We gave very careful consideration to the proposal to transfer orthopaedic services from Lord Mayor Treloar hospital to Basingstoke district hospital and to the views of the organisations and individuals who had responded to consultation. In deciding to approve the proposal, we were satisfied that the proposal would enable the district health authority to make better use of its resources in meeting the overall health needs of the local population, that the consultation process had been adequate; and that the alternative proposals that had been suggested did not provide a more appropriate option.

Breast Screening

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure on public relations by her Department, the national health service management executive and the breast cancer screening programme that can be identified, excluding trusts and health authority direct spending, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Functions that are commonly associated with press and public relations are carried out by the Department's information division. The service also covers the national health service management executive. Manpower and running costs for 1992-93 were £1·749 million.

The breast cancer screening programme spent £42,400 on publicity in 1993-94. That included the production of an annual review, quarterly newsletters to those involved in breast screening and responses to press questions and articles about the screening programme. In addition, £18,000 was provided to part fund the production of an information leaflet for women and £25,000 on the production of videos specifically for ethnic groups on the benefits of breast screening.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those local authority areas where environmental health officers have prosecuted under food hygiene regulations restaurants and public houses engaged in the culinary practice of cooking and serving beef on hot stones.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not separately identifiable from the returns provide from local authorities. Such practices would not necessarily constitute an offence under the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970.

WALES

Library Services

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that the new local authorities he proposes for Wales will be able to fulfil the statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Local Government (Wales) Bill sets out the powers that it is proposed should be available to my right hon. Friend. The existing powers under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 remain unchanged.

Under the Bill, the new authorities will be required to produce service delivery plans for all services, including the public library service.

Poultry Slaughtering

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many poultry birds were slaughtered in each year since 1988 in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Information on poultry birds slaughtered in Great Britain because of salmonella infection has been collected by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food since 1989. Figures for Wales are given in the table.

Poultry slaughtered in Wales[1]

Year	*Birds slaughtered*
1989	381
1990	106,715
1991	64,790
1992	18,060
1993	22,896

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.
[1] There is wide variation in the number of birds slaughtered in each individual case of salmonella infection depending on the size of the flock that may have been affected or potentially affected.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Redwood: As at 1 January 1994, 39 staff—1·6 per cent. of the total in my Department—had registered as disabled. My Department also employs several unregistered disabled people.

Egg Consumption

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the figures for egg consumption in Wales for each year since 1988.

Mr. Redwood: Estimates of household consumption of eggs are provided from the national food survey which is carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The estimates, which are expressed in terms of average numbers of eggs consumed per person per week, exclude eggs used in manufacturing or catering and institutions. The figures are given in the table.

Egg consumption in Wales

Year	*Number per person per week*
1988	2·39
1989	2·09
1990	2·14
1991	2·23
1992	2·15

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to his Department's executive agency for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Redwood: The chief executive of Cadw has answered six parliamentary questions in the last 12 months from a total of 3,425 received by my Department.

Cwmcarn Grant-maintained School

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales under what regulations the former head teacher of Cwmcarn secondary grant-maintained school, Gwent, was given early retirement and sick leave, in the second year of grant-maintained status.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Teachers (Compensation for Redundancy and Premature Retirement) Regulations 1989 provide arrangements for the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools to compensate teachers who are prematurely retired. Decisions in respect of sick leave are the responsibility of the governing body as employer of staff at the school.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many schools in Wales voted during 1993 to adopt grant-maintained status;

(2) how many schools in Wales have voted to adopt grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Eighteen schools in Wales have voted in favour of applying for grant-maintained status. Six of the ballots were held in 1993.

Rent Forms

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statutory forms used by rent officers will be available in the Welsh language.

Sir Wyn Roberts: When the Rent Act 1977 (Forms, etc). (Welsh Forms and Particulars) (Amendment) Regulations 1994, laid before the house on 16 March, comes into force on 6 April 1994.

School Inspectors

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many reports were produced by Her Majesty's inspectors in Wales in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93;

(2) what percentage of Her Majesty's inspectors appointed after 1992 have *(a)* no teaching experience and *(b)* over five years' experience of teaching in primary or secondary schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: These are matters for the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector for schools in Wales. I have therefore asked the chief inspector, Mr. R. L. James, to write to the hon. Member.

A476

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when work will commence on the A476 Blaenau Ffestiniog to Betws-y-Coed road; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Full details of my right hon. Friend's forward programme will be set out in a revised edition of "Roads in Wales" to be published in the spring.

Arable Area Payments

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total paid to farmers in *(a)* arable aid scheme set-aside payments and *(b)* total arable area scheme

payments in Wales following the 1993-94 harvest; and how many farmers in Wales have received arable area payments of £1 million or more.

Mr. Redwood: Total payments to date in Wales under the arable area payments scheme amount to £5,257,009, including set-aside payments of £617,480. These figures do not include final oilseed payments, which are being made now.

No farmers in Wales received payments of £1 million or more.

House Prices

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes have taken place in the average prices of *(a)* council houses and *(b)* housing association houses in Wales during each of the past 14 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the changes in average market prices of council dwellings in Wales for each year since 1981 is shown in the following table. Information on average prices for housing association dwellings is not available centrally.

Average market prices of council dwellings in Wales[1]

Year	*Average price £*	*Percentage change on previous year*
1981	13,844	—
1982	13,602	−1·7
1983	14,258	4·8
1984	15,272	7·1
1985	16,346	7·0
1986	17,404	6·5
1987	18,844	8·3
1988	20,219	7·3
1989	25,233	24·8
1990	29,476	16·8
1991	29,161	—1·1
1992	32,078	10·0
1993	31,319	—2·4

[1] The data provided are based on the market prices of council dwellings sold in each year rather than the value of council stock. Information is only available for market prices of all council dwellings sold, no distinction being made between houses and flats. Consistent information is not available for 1980.

Nursery Education

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many three and four-year-old children are in receipt of nursery education in each education authority area; and what percentage this represents of the total number of children of that age group in each area.

Mr. Redwood: The number and percentage of three and four-year-old children receiving nursery education in each local education authority in Wales as at January 1993 are as follows:

	Number[1]	*Per cent.*[1]
Clwyd	8,809	83
Dyfed	5,529	64
Gwent	8,943	70
Gwynedd	2,775	46
Mid Glamorgan	11,112	71
Powys	1,582	55
South Glamorgan	7,163	61
West Glamorgan	7,925	84

[1] Ages as at 31 December 1992 (estimated)

Others receive some other form of pre-school education or nursery.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has about the prescribing patterns of *(a)* fundholding and *(b)* non-fundholding general practitioners.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is evidence that many GPs in Wales are taking positive steps to rationalise their prescribing, and to improve cost-effectiveness while ensuring that their patients receive all the medicines they need. Prescribing costs of GP fundholders are, on average, rising at present by about 7·6 per cent. a year, while those of other GPs are rising by an average of about 11·1 per cent. a year.

Jobs (Location)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of jobs that have *(a)* located in Wales from areas outside of Wales and *(b)* located from Wales to areas outside Wales in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Redwood: Comprehensive information is not available. However, the 1,120 inward investment projects from overseas and the rest of the United Kingdom recorded by Welsh Development International since April 1983 forecast almost 110,000 new and safeguarded jobs.

The figures are based on information provided by companies at the time of their decision to invest and take no account of subsequent developments.

Brynglas Tunnels and Malpas Road Scheme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the final cost and completion date of the Brynglas tunnels and Malpas road scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The recent departmental report by the Welsh Office shows the estimated gross cost of the scheme as £76 million. The current contract completion date is December 1994.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *634*, if he will list the dates of setting up of each of the executive non-departmental bodies under his sponsorship and if he will list the years in which each of them has their financial management and policy review or reviews.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The requirement that non-departmental public bodies should be subject to a financial management and policy review every five years was introduced in 1988. The dates of the establishment of each body and of the reviews carried out since 1988 are shown in the table:

Body	*Established*	*FMPR(S)*
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	1987	1993-94
Countryside Council for Wales	1991	1994-95
Curriculum Council for Wales	1988	[1]—

Body	Established	FMPR(S)
Development Board for Rural Wales	1977	1986-87 and 1991-92
Further Education Funding Council for Wales	[2]1993	scheduled for 1998-99
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales	[2]1993	scheduled for 1998-99
Housing for Wales	1989	1993-94
Land Authority for Wales	1975	1991-92
National Library of Wales	1907	1987-88 and 1993-94
National Museum of Wales	1907	1987-88 and 1993-94
Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments	1908	1988-89 and 1993-94
Sports Council for Wales	1972	1991-92
Wales Tourist Board	1969	1992-93
Wales Youth Agency	1992	scheduled for 1997-98
Welsh Development Agency	1976	1991-92
Welsh Language Board	1993	scheduled for 1999-2000
Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting	1983	1989-90

[1]The Curriculum Council for Wales is to be replaced by the new Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales from 1 April 1994.
[2]Began operations from April 1993.

Child Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the awarding of a contract for administering a child care creche and holiday play scheme for civil servants' children on behalf of the consortium of Cardiff Government Departments led by his Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The contract to manage the civil service nursery, which was awarded to Acorns Nurseries in September 1993, and the contract to provide holiday playcare, which has been awarded to South Glamorgan county council to run from 1 April 1994 were both awarded following fair and open competition.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fruit and Vegetables

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the latest European Commission estimate for the amount, in tonnes, of (i) apples, (ii) tomatoes, (iii) cauliflowers and (iv) peaches and nectarines withdrawn from the market per year as part of the European Community's market intervention and *(b)* the cost of this policy per taxpayer in the United Kingdom, breaking this figure down into (1) the running costs of the policy and (2) the amount which the policy adds on to food prices.

Mr. Jack: The following are the latest estimates from the European Commission of the amounts of produce withdrawn within the Community for the 1993-94 marketing year.

	Tonnes
Apples	616,758
Tomatoes	47,630
Cauliflowers	27,809
Peaches	686,903
Nectarines	153,040

The Exchequer cost of CAP support of fresh fruit and vegetables in the United Kingdom is estimated at £2·8 million for the 1993-94 financial year. This represents 1 per cent. of total United Kingdom Exchequer cost of CAP support. The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget as a whole, which funds the cost of withdrawals of fresh fruit and vegetables in other member states.

It is not possible to make precise estimates of the consumer costs of the fresh fruit and vegetables support without making a large number of assumptions.

Fish Testing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to the French Government about biological testing of third-party fish; what effect such testing has had on fish markets particularly as respects the United Kingdom; and what proposals she has to get such testing stopped.

Mr. Jack: The embassy in Paris has made representations to the French authorities about the unacceptable delays caused to fish imports of third country origin by the strict controls presently being imposed by the French authorities. Clearly these controls are likely to be adding to market disruption elsewhere by diverting goods from the French market. We have also written to the European Commission explaining that we consider the controls go further than is permitted by EU requirements and requesting the Commission urgently to consider their legality.

European Fishermen (Financial Support)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial aid and support, regional and national, is paid to *(a)* the French, *(b)* the Spanish and *(c)* the Danish fishing industry which is not available to British fishermen.

Mr. Jack: Member states are free to operate aids which benefit fishermen provided they comply with the conditions of article 92 of the treaty of Rome and the guidelines on the examination of state aids in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The European Commission has responsibility, under article 93 of the treaty, for keeping under constant review all systems of aid operating in each member state to ensure that they do not result in unfair competition. We are not ourselves in a position to construct a complete picture of the aids operated in other member states, or to analyse all the financial regimes of other member states to establish their relevance to fishermen. Indeed, it would be disproportionately costly to attempt this. We do, however, press the Commission to fulfil its responsibility when we suspect another member state is operating an unfair aid, and we have recently written to the Commission in relation to certain French and Spanish aids.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *384*, if she will set out the grounds for her assessment that the advice offered on animal welfare issues will contribute to a better understanding of animals' needs in circumstances where unnecessary suffering might otherwise occur.

Mr. Jack: The guidance is intended to help farmers and others in understanding legal requirements and in taking practical steps to ensure that animals do not suffer unnecessarily. In preparing this advice, a wide range of experts are consulted.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the policy of slaughtering broiler and laying poultry flocks was rescinded.

Mr. Soames: The compulsory slaughter of commercial egg laying poultry flocks found on investigation to be infected with salmonella enteritidis ceased on 25 February 1993. At no time has there been a compulsory slaughter policy in operation in respect of commercial broiler poultry flocks. Controls on layer breeder and broiler breeder flocks operate in accordance with directive 92/117/EEC on zoonoses.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many poultry birds were slaughtered in England in each year since 1988.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of poultry birds compulsorily slaughtered because of salmonella infection in England since the introduction of the policy in March 1989 are set out in the table.

Birds slaughtered

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*Total*
Layers	867,460	576,202	248,936	297,721	20,691	0	2,011,010
Layer breeders	6,043	17,573	43,320	13,614	22,535	3,036	106,121
Broiler breeders	0	164,390	290,800	148,542	149,685	58,050	811,467
Total	873,503	758,165	583,056	459,877	192,911	61,086	2,928,598

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many registered disabled people are employed in her Department; and what percentage this is of the total employed.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is available in the Cabinet Office publication of the "Independent", copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Small Producers of Food

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 10 March, *Official Report,* column *384,* how many people have commented on the "Small producers of Food" booklet; and of those how many gave positive responses.

Mr. Jack: Sixty-four people took the opportunity to comment, 90 per cent. of whom said they found it a useful reference guide for their business.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 18 February, *Official Report,* columns *1056-58,* what was the qualitative assessment of inquiries and the number of leaflets distributed following the plant health campaigns; how many environmentally sensitive area grants had been taken up by farmers before and after the advertising campaign; and how many inquiries have been received concerning the national agricultural exhibitions.

Mr. Jack: The plant health and seeds inspectorate is satisfied that publicity has significantly assisted in acquainting growers with the requirements of the new European single market in plant health, and has assisted in raising awareness among producers of plants particularly at risk from disease. Approximately 121,000 leaflets, posters and newsletters dealing with plant health have been distributed; the environmentally sensitive areas scheme has been publicised since it was first launched, the provisional number of current management agreements stands at 4,761; there are no central records of enquiries received as a result of the national exhibition programme. Any inquiries are directed to the appropriate policy areas or to regional service centres. To attempt to gather any statistics would involve disproportionate cost.

Blackdown Hills

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the launch of the Blackdown Hills environmentally sensitive area, indicating the consultation that has taken place, and the arrangements to ensure that farmers and other relevant organisations are aware of the opportunities arising from this environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Jack: The Blackdown Hills environmentally sensitive area—ESA—was launched on 16 March. We carried out full public consultation on this ESA last spring with interested bodies both locally and nationally. All farmers within the area have been notified of the launch of the ESA and have been invited to attend one of a series of evening information meetings.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the BSE maternal transmission experiment commenced; and when it is expected to be completed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Ministry's study into the occurrence of maternal transmission started in July 1989 and will continue until the cattle develop clinical BSE or reach seven years of age—the youngest animal in the study will not reach this age until late 1996.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make an interim statement on the results of the Ministry BSE maternal transmission experiment.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This experiment is incomplete so no conclusions can be drawn. All animals in the study will be killed and their brains examined, either when they

develop clinical signs of BSE, or when they are seven years old. The youngest animal in the study will not be seven years old until late 1996, and at the present time the experiment cannot be completed before that date.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many cases of BSE have been confirmed among the experimental animals involved in the BSE maternal transmission experiment;

(2) how many cattle involved in the experiment set up to investigate the possibility of maternal transmission of BSE have been confirmed as being infected by BSE to date; how many were among the offspring of cows confirmed to have BSE and how many were among the controls; and how many infected animals had access to contaminated feed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Of the 630 cattle involved in the study, 19 have been confirmed as BSE cases to date. For scientific reasons, the study is being conducted blind, and it is therefore not known whether these cases are offspring of confirmed BSE cases or control animals. All these animals were purchased and their feeding history before purchase is unknown, and irrelevant to the study.

Arable Aid Scheme

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total paid to farmers in *(a)* arable aid scheme set-aside payments and *(b)* total arable area scheme payments in England following the 1993-94 harvest; and how many farmers in England have received arable area payments of £1 million or more.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Total payments to date in England under the arable area payments scheme amount to £625 million, including set-aside payments of just under £125 million. These figures do not include final oilseeds payments, which are being made now. Since some applicants receive payments made up of a number of separate elements, the precise number who have received total payments of £1 million or more can currently only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many incidents of sheep scab there have been in each county of England in each year since 1988; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of outbreaks of sheep scab in each county of England from 1988 to 1992 are listed in the table. Figures are not available after June 1992, when the obligation to notify ended.

County	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*[1]1992*
Avon	—	1	1	1	1
Bedfordshire	—	—	2	—	—
Buckinghamshire	—	—	1	3	1
Cambridgeshire	—	1	1	—	—
Cheshire	4	1	2	2	2
Cornwall	2	15	11	13	6
Cumbria	—	—	—	—	1
Derbyshire	2	1	6	4	1
Devon	3	15	6	16	13
Dorset	3	4	1	2	1
East Sussex	—	—	—	2	—
Essex	—	1	—	2	—
Gloucestershire	1	—	4	11	—
Hereford and Worcester	1	3	2	1	1
Hertfordshire	—	—	1	—	—
Humberside	—	—	5	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	9	15	7
Leicestershire	—	—	1	5	4
Lincolnshire	2	—	1	1	3
Merseyside	—	1	—	—	
Norfolk	—	—	7	2	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	5
Northamptonshire	—	—	7	1	—
Northumberland	—	—	—	—	1
Nottinghamshire	—	—	1	—	1
Oxfordshire	—	—	1	1	—
Shropshire	3	2	2	1	3
Somerset	4	10	7	3	5
Staffordshire	—	3	1	2	3
Suffolk	—	—	1	2	—
Warwickshire	1	—	—	—	2
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	6	—
Wiltshire	—	3	—	—	2
Totals	26	60	82	96	63

[1]January-June only.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will make a statement on the European Community decision of 3 February giving certain derogations to Greece from directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport;

(2) what are the implications of the European Commission decision of 3 February giving derogations to Greece from directive 91/628/EEC for the export of United Kingdom animals to Greece; and what views were given by her representatives on the Standing Veterinary Committee when that committee considered the granting of derogations to Greece.

Mr. Soames: Article 16 of directive 91/628/EEC provides for measures to be adopted to take account of the natural constraints specific to certain territories. The Commission decision of 3 February applies to the transport of animals in certain areas of Greece which are remote from the Greek mainland. The decision provides that certain detailed requirements of the directive need not apply to such transport, provided that other specified conditions are met in order to safeguard animal welfare. When the Standing Veterinary Committee was asked to give its opinion, the United Kingdom delegation stressed the importance of proper safeguards and considered that the decision fell within the scope of the measures envisaged in article 16. It does not affect the conditions for the transport of animals to Greece from elsewhere in the Community.

Forestry Grants

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the take-up of forestry grants since EC regulation 2080/92 forestry measures in agriculture was introduced.

Sir Hector Monro: I have been asked to reply. Since European Council regulation No. 2080/92 came into force on 30 July 1992, the Forestry Commission has approved 10,162 applications under the woodland grant scheme, including those associated with the farm woodland

premium scheme. The grants paid by the Government under these schemes will be part-financed by the European Community. The approved applications are for establishing 41,000 hectares of new woodlands, restocking 25,000 hectares of felled woodlands, and managing 149,000 hectares of existing woodlands.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Waldegrave: The code of practice applies to all Departments, agencies and public bodies within the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. This includes the part of the Cabinet Office for which, with my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Civil Service—the Prime Minister—I am responsible—the Office of Public Service and Science; Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Central Office of Information. The code will reinforce and build on their existing arrangements for the provision of information. Operational details will be available nearer to the time of the launch.

Duchy Council Meetings

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will hold future meetings of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster in Lancashire.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no plans to hold meetings of the Duchy Council in Lancashire. Council members pay visits to Duchy surveys including the Lancashire survey, each year.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how long each of the last five meetings of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster took.

Mr. Waldegrave: The average length of the last five Duchy Council meetings was approximately two hours.

Science, Engineering and Technology Week

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contribution his Department will make to the science, engineering and technology week, beginning 18 March, in terms of speeches by Ministers, publications and financial support.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member in part to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) on 14 March 1994, *Official Report*, column 487. I and my ministerial colleagues will be attending as many events as possible during the week. In terms of financial support, the Office of Science and Technology—OST—has made around £150,000 available to the British Association for the Advancement of Science for the organisation of the week. The OST will also be publishing a booklet during the week entitled "Science Connections —a guide to leading organisations promoting science, engineering and technology." I will ensure that a copy is placed in the Library of the House.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to present an annual report on the citizens charter to Parliament.

Mr. Waldegrave: Citizens charter policy is to ensure that the individual public services publish performance against commitments and standards at regular intervals. Reports to Parliament on the initiative as a whole will be made when appropriate.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what factors led him not to make a statement when the second report on the citizens charter was published.

Mr. Waldegrave: "The Citizens Charter Second Report: 1994" was announced by means of a written parliamentary question. A statement was not thought appropriate since the publication of reports has now become established practice.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many months intervened between the publication of the first and second annual report of the citizens charter; and what factors underlay the length of the interval.

Mr. Waldegrave: Just under 16 months elapsed between the publication of the first report on 25 November 1992 and the publication of the second report on 16 March 1994. There is no commitment to publish an annual report.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the third report of the citizens charter will be published.

Mr. Waldegrave: No date has yet been set for publishing a further report on the citizens charter. The results of individual public services performance against the charter principles will continue to be published.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why he made a statement to the House when the first report on the citizens charter was published.

Mr. Waldegrave: It was considered appropriate to issue a statement to mark the first full-scale report on the Government's new policy initiative.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much compensation has been paid as a result of successful complaints under each of the citizens charters over the last 12 months.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are six charters for England, Scotland and Wales that contain provision for financial compensation. Information on the amount of compensation paid covering the most recent 12 month period currently available is as follows:

Department	Compensation paid (nearest £000)	From	To
British Rail Passenger's Charter	1,932	April 1992	March 1993
	2,495	April 1993	[1]November 1993
London Underground's Customer Charter	241	March 1993	February 1994
Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Traveller's Charter	10	January 1993	December 1993
Contributions Agency Contributors' Charter and Employers' Charter[2]	64	April 1992	March 1993
Benefits Agency Customer Charter	4,071	April 1992	March 1993

[1] Most recent figures available.
[2] Separate figures for the Contributions Agency contributors' charter and the Contribution Agency employers' charter are unavailable.

In addition to this, in the financial year 1992-93 the Employment Service paid £88,000 in special payments; in the same period the Inland Revenue paid £389,000 in compensation for "serious error" as defined in the code of practice "Mistakes by the Inland Revenue".

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the number of occasions since 1992 on which he has felt it necessary to restrict information provided in answer to parliamentary questions, other than on grounds of disproportionate cost.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 15 March, *Official Report*, column *645*.

Market Testing

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many meetings have been held of the private sector forum he has established; to what extent it is informing his Department over the market testing and contracting out of civil service work; and if he will publish the names of the members of the forum.

Mr. Waldegrave: The precise arrangements for the forum which I am setting up are still under consideration, and the names of those who might be invited have not been settled. I am eager to take account of the private sector's views on market testing and contracting out of civil service work and hold meetings from time to time with their representatives. Most recently, on 31 January my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary and I met representatives from a number of private sector companies to seek their views on these issues.

Government Information

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to publish the final version of the code of practice on Government information upon which he has been consulting and which is due to come into operation on 4 April.

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Diabetes

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much was spent on research into diabetes by the Medical Research Council for the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the last financial year, 1992-93, the Medical Research Council's expenditure on research into diabetes was £3 million. The council is always willing to consider soundly-based scientific proposals in competition with other applications for research funding.

Science Research Establishments

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish for *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* Northern Ireland and *(e)* the United Kingdom, and for each year since 1964, the total amount of expenditure and the percentage of overall science research spending by (i) the Natural Environment Research Council, (ii) the Science and Engineering Research Council, (iii) the Medical Research Council, (iv) the Economic and Social Research Council, (v) the Agriculture and Food Research Council, (vi) the Royal Society and (vii) other public body, in constant prices.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not held in the form requested. The table gives a breakdown of total research council expenditure by region for the period 1983-84 to 1989-90 together with a breakdown by research council for 1991-92 and 1992-93. The two sets of data were compiled on slightly different bases.

£ million at 1994-95 prices

	England	Wales	Scotland	N Ireland	UK Total
1992-93					
AFRC	105·6	8·6	12·5	0·7	127·4
Per cent.	82·9	6·8	9·8	0·5	100·0
ESRC	39·9	0·7	4·3	0·6	45·5
Per cent.	87·7	1·5	9·4	1·3	100·0
MRC	204·3	1·8	25·6	0·4	232·1
Per cent.	88·0	0·8	11·0	0·2	100·0

	England	Wales	Scotland	N Ireland	UK Total
NERC	107·7	14·7	13·9	0·5	136·8
Per cent.	78·7	10·7	10·2	0·4	100·0
SERC	389·7	10·5	43·9	3·3	447·4
Per cent.	87·1	2·3	9·8	0·7	100·0
Total	847·2	36·3	100·2	5·5	989·2
Per cent.	85·6	3·7	10·2	0·6	100·0
1991-92					
AFRC	91·0	7·7	9·1	0·2	108·0
Per cent.	84·2	7·1	8·5	0·2	100·0
ESRC	32·1	0·9	4·0	0·4	37·4
Per cent.	85·7	2·4	10·7	1·2	100·0
MRC	186·0	2·0	27·8	0·4	216·2
Per cent.	86·0	0·9	12·8	0·2	100·0
NERC	102·8	20·4	11·5	0·3	135·0
Per cent.	76·1	15·1	8·5	0·2	100·0
SERC	341·4	8·0	37·9	2·6	389·9
Per cent.	87·6	2·1	9·7	0·7	100·0
Total	753·3	39·0	90·3	4·0	886·6
Per cent.	85·0	4·4	10·2	0·5	100·0
1989-90					
Total	812·9	30·1	82·5	1·5	927·1
Per cent.	87·7	3·2	8·9	0·2	100·0
1988-89					
Total	727·7	25·6	72·8	0·8	826·4
Per cent.	88·0	3·1	8·8	0·1	100·0
1987-88					
Total	701·5	29·2	86·1	2·6	819·5
Per cent.	85·6	3·6	10·5	0·3	100·0
1986-87					
Total	685·5	25·9	77·8	2·6	791·7
Per cent.	86·6	3·3	9·8	0·3	100·0
1985-86					
Total	681·4	25·5	78·8	2·7	788·4
Per cent.	86·4	3·2	10·0	0·3	100·0
1984-85					
Total	682·5	25·4	78·0	2·5	788·4
Per cent.	86·6	3·2	9·9	0·3	100·0
1983-84					
Total	680·8	27·2	73·6	3·0	784·6
Per cent.	86·8	3·5	9·4	0·4	100·0

1990-91 No information is available.
Differences in totals are accounted for by rounding.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish for *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* Northern Ireland and *(e)* the United Kingdom, the total number and percentage of staff employed, and the total number of research establishments funded in whole or in part by (i) the NERC, (ii) the SERC, (iii) the AFRC, (iv) MRC, (v) the ESRC, (vi) the Royal Society or (vii) other public body, for each year since 1964.

Mr. David Davis: The information is not available in the form requested.

The tables give a regional analysis by research council for the years 1983 to 1993 and 1986 to 1993 for the Medical Research Council. The Royal Society does not fund any research establishments.

England

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
NERC											
Research establishments	14	14	14	14	13	14	14	15	14	14	15
Staffing											
Number	2,489	2,249	2,085	1,985	2,177	2,155	2,125	2,292	2,346	2,455	2,531
Per cent.	78	76	78	78	77	80	79	80	80	83	84
SERC											
Research establishments	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Staffing											

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Number	2,359	2,164	2,084	2,064	2,107	2,034	2,012	2,000	1,992	1,864	1,830
Per cent.	95	95	95	95	95	94	95	95	94	95	95
AFRC											
Research establishments	23	23	20	15	8	8	8	8	7	7	7
Staffing											
Number	5,374	5,259	4,739	4,555	3,728	3,665	3,517	3,517	2,772	2,872	2,839
Per cent.	89	89	89	89	79	80	79	80	78	82	82
MRC											
Research establishments	n/a	n/a	n/a	43	43	41	41	41	41	40	39
Staffing											
Number	—	—	—	2,309	2,274	2,405	2,322	2,422	2,432	2,429	2,226
Per cent.	—	—	—	85	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
ESRC											
Research establishments	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffing											
Estimated number	160	160	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Per cent.	100	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note: Staff numbers and percentages relate only to staff employed at the research establishments.

Wales

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
NERC											
Research establishments	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Staffing											
Number	273	268	173	210	202	202	198	183	185	184	185
Per cent.	10	9	7	8	7	8	7	7	7	6	6
AFRC											
Research establishments	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Staffing											
Number	272	266	245	224	638	630	609	527	483	321	300
Per cent.	5	5	5	4	14	14	14	12	14	9	9
MRC											
Research establishments	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Staffing											
Number	—	—	—	34	24	25	21	23	25	32	15
Per cent.	—	—	—	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Note:
Staff numbers and percentages relate only to staff employed at the research establishments.

Scotland

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
NERC											
Research establishments	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
Staffing											
Number	392	440	400	400	439	328	381	382	382	310	288
Per cent.	12	15	15	15	15	12	14	13	13	11	10
SERC											
Research establishments	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Staffing											
Number	114	108	106	105	117	122	111	112	119	106	102
Per cent.	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	5
AFRC											
Research establishments	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Staffing											
Number	388	364	343	337	327	292	330	339	308	321	314
Per cent.	6	6	6	7	7	6	7	8	8	9	9
MRC											
Research establishments	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	7	7	7	7	8	7	7
Staffing											
Number	—	—	—	363	404	422	412	439	444	446	389
Per cent.	—	—	—	13	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

Note:
Staff numbers and percentages relate only to staff employed at the research establishments.

Northern Ireland

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
NERC											
Research establishments funded	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Staffing (all less than 1 per cent.)											
Number	8	9	8	8	8	8	7	8	8	8	8

Note:
Staff numbers and percentages relate only to staff employed at the research establishments.

United Kingdom

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
NERC											
Research establishments	25	25	25	25	23	25	25	26	25	25	26
Staffing											
Number	3,156	2,966	2,646	2,608	2,826	2,693	2,711	2,805	2,921	2,957	3,012
SERC											
Research establishments	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Staffing											
Number	2,473	2,272	2,190	2,169	2,224	2,156	2,123	2,112	2,111	1,970	1,932
AFRC											
Research establishments	26	26	23	18	11	11	11	11	10	10	10
Staffing											
Number	6,034	5,889	5,327	5,116	4,693	4,587	4,456	4,383	3,563	3,514	3,453
MRC											
Research establishments	n/a	n/a	n/a	53	51	49	49	49	50	48	47
Staffing											
Number	—	—	—	2,706	2,702	2,852	2,755	2,884	2,901	2,907	2,630
ESRC											
Research establishments	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffing											
Estimated number	160	160	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note:
Staff numbers and percentages relate only to staff employed at the research establishments.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland, the names of all science research establishments which have been in operation at any time since 1964, together with the year of closure or removal if appropriate.

Mr. David Davis: The information is not available in the form requested.

The tables list establishments operated by the research councils since 1964—1986 for the Medical Research Council. Establishments are referred to by their most recent name.

England
Natural Environment Research Council

Establishment	*Year closed*
British Geological Survey	
Keyworth	
Exhibition Road, London	1984-85
Princes Gate, London	1981-82
Gorst Road, London	1985-86
Bashley Road, London	1985-86
Leeds	1985-86
Clerkenwell Road, London	1987-88
Grays Inn Road, London	1988-89
Sussex	1985-86
Newcastle	
Hartland, Devon	
Exeter	
Wallingford	
Institute of Oceanographic Sciences, Taunton	1986-87
Institute of Oceanographic Sciences, Deacon Laboratory	
Wormley	
The James Rennell Centre	
Robert Hooke Institute, Oxford	
	1991-92
Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory	
Plymouth Marine Laboratory	
West Hoe, Plymouth	
Citadel Hill, Plymouth	
Institute of Hydrology	
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology	
Merlewood, Cumbria	
Monks Wood, Huntingdon	
Furzebrook, Dorset	
Institute of Virology and Environmental Microbiology	
Fisheries Helminthology Unit	1971-72
Water Resource Systems Research Unit	1990-91
Centre for Population Biology	
Unit of Comparative Plant Biology	
Unit of Behavioural Ecology	
NERC/ESRC Land Use Programme	
NERC Unit for Thematic Information Systems	
Experimental Cartography Unit	1981-82
Institute of Freshwater Ecology	
Windermere	
East Stoke, Dorset	
Coastal Ecology Research Unit	1978-79
British Antarctic Survey	
Sea Mammal Research Unit	

Medical Research Council
(INFORMATION FROM 1986 ONLY)

	Year closed
Anatomical Neuropharmacology Unit	
Applied Psychology Unit	
Biochemical and Clinical Magnetic Resonance Unit	
Biochemical Parasitology Unit	1987
Biostatistics Unit	
Blood Group Unit	
Cell Biophysics Unit	1990
Cell Mutation Unit	
Cellular Immunology Unit	
Child Psychiatry Unit	
Clinical Oncology and Radiotherapy Unit	
Clinical Pharmacology Unit	
Clinical Research Centre	
Cognitive Development Unit	
Common Cold Unit	1990
Cyclotron Unit	
Dental Research Unit	
Development and Integration of Behaviour Unit	1991
Development Neurobiology Unit	1988
Dunn Nutrition Unit	
Environmental Epidemiology Unit	
Epidemiology and Medical Care Unit	
Experimental Embryology and Teratology Unit	
Human Biochemical Genetics Unit	
Human Movement and Balance Unit	
Immunochemistry Unit	
Institute of Hearing Research	
Institute of Molecular Medicine	
Laboratory of Molecular Biology	
Leukaemia Unit	
Mammalian Development Unit	1992
Mineral Metabolism Unit	1988
Molecular Genetics Unit	1991
Molecular Haematology Unit	
Molecular Immunopathology Unit	
Molecular Neurobiology Unit	1992
MRC/ESRC Unit of Social and Applied Psychology	
Muscle and Cell Motility Unit	
Neural Mechanisms of Behaviour Unit	1987
Neuro-otology Unit	1989
Neurochemical Pathology Unit	
Neurological Prostheses Unit	1992
National Institute of Medical Research	
Perceptual and Cognitive Performance Unit	1988
Protein Function and Design Unit	
Radiobiology Unit	
Social and Community Psychiatry Unit	
Social Psychiatry Unit	1989
Tuberculosis and Related Infections Unit	
Tuberculosis and Chest Diseases Unit	1986
Toxicology Unit	
Trauma Unit	1986

Agricultural and Food Research Council

	Year closed
Institute of Animal Health	
Compton	
Pirbright	
Houghton	1993
Babraham Institute	
Institute of Food Research	
Lanford	
Norwich	
Reading	1990
Letcombe Laboratory	1987
Wood Research Organisation	1987
Commonwealth Bureau	1987
Horticulture Research International	
East Malling	
Littlehampton	
Wellesborough	—
Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research Hurley	1992
Institute of Plant Science Research	
Norwich (John Innes Institute)	
Brighton	—
Institute of Arable Crops Research	
Long Ashton	
Rothamstead	—
Silsoe Research Institute	—
Plant Breeding Institute	1987
Wye College, Hops Research Department	1987
Reproductive Physiology Unit, Cambridge	1985
Experimental Agronomy Unit, Oxford	1973
Plant Physiology Unit, Imperial College	1973
Systematic Fungicides Unit, Wye	1976
Flower Crop Physiology Unit, Shinfield	1973
Soil Physics Unit, Cambridge	1979
Structural Chemistry Unit, London	1978
Muscle Mechanisms Unit, Oxford	1979
Invertebrate Chemistry Unit	1987
Developmental Botany Unit	1979

Economic and Social Research Council

	Year closed
Survey Research Unit, LSE	1976
Race Relations Research Unit, Bristol	1976
Ethnic Relations Research Unit, Aston[1]	1983
Industrial Relations Research Unit, Warwick[1]	1984
Centre for Socio-legal Studies, Oxford[1]	1984
Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure	1984

Science and Engineering Research Council

	Year closed
Royal Greenwich Observatory	
Cambridge	
Herstmonceux	1988
Daresbury Laboratory	
Rutherford Appleton Laboratory	
Chilton	
Astrophyics Research, Culham	1973
Appleton Laboratory, Ditton	1981
Atlas Computer Laboratory	1975

[1] Units marked [1] converted to designated research centres within host universities.

Wales

Natural Environment Research Council

	Year closed
British Geological Survey Aberystwyth	—
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology Bangor	—
Institute of Hydrology Plynlimon	—
NERC Research Vessels Service Barry	—
Unit of Marine Inverterate Biology Menai Bridge	1981-82

Medical Research Council (information from 1986 only)

	Year closed
Epidemiology Unit	—
Pneumoconiosis Unit	—

Agricultural and Food Research Council

	Year closed
Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research, Aberystwyth	—

Scotland

Natural Environment Research Council

	Year closed
British Geological Survey	
Murchison House, Edinburgh	—
Grange Terrace, Edinburgh	1993-94
Newbattle Abbey, Edinburgh	1993-94
Peffermill, Edinburgh	1993-94
Gilmerton Road, Edinburgh	1993-94
Eskdalemuir, Dumfries	—
Loanhead, Edinburgh	—
Institue of Hydrology	
Balquidder	—
Stirling	—
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology	
Banchory	—
Bush	—
Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratory	—
Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory	—
Institute for Marine Environmental Research	1977-78
Institute of Marine Biochemistry	1986-87
Unit of Aquatic Biochemistry	—

Medical Research Council

INFORMATION FROM 1986 ONLY

	Year closed
Blood Pressure Unit	—
Brain Metabolism Unit	—
Epidemiological Studies in Psychiatry Unit	1991
Human Genetics Unit	—
Mammalian Genome Unit	1986
Medical Sociology Unit	—
Protein Phosphorylation Unit	—
Reproductive Biology Unit	—
Virology Unit	—

Agriculture and Food Research Council

	Year closed
Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics Research, Edinburgh	—
Edinburgh Computing Centre	1986
Statistics Unit, Edinburgh	1986
Institute for Animal Health, Edinburgh	—
Roslin Institute	—

Science and Engineering Research Council

	Year closed
Royal Observatory, Edinburgh	—

Northern Ireland

Natural Environment Research Council

	Year closed
British Geological Survey, Belfast	—

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

34. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the use of public interest immunity certificates.

The Attorney-General: I shall be giving evidence to Lord Justice Scott on 24 March.

37. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish in a White Paper clarification as to the purpose of public interest immunity certificates and when they should be used along with any proposals for reform of the procedure.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to review the procedures on the use of public interest immunity as a reason for the non-publication of documents.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

38. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Attorney-General when judges in court have recently pronounced on the public interest immunity certificate process.

The Attorney-General: Decisions of the court are a matter of public record.

Lenient Sentences

36. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Attorney-General how many sentences he has referred to the Court of Appeal as being unduly lenient in the last year; and what the outcome has been in these cases.

The Solicitor-General: For the period 1 March 1993 to 28 February 1994, the Attorney-General applied for leave to refer a total of 32 sentences to the Court of Appeal of which one was to the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland. Two cases were later withdrawn. Twenty-one cases have so far been considered by the court. In each case, leave was granted and in 16 the court substituted a higher sentence. Nine cases await hearing.

Mr. Paul Haley

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the conclusions to be drawn from the prosecution of Mr. Paul Haley of 28 Woodlands Park road, London SE10, following a motor vehicle accident on 12 January 1993.

The Attorney-General: The case was dealt with at all stages on its own merits and having regard to its particular circumstances in accordance with the general principles set out in the "Code for Crown Prosecutors". The outcome has no general implications.

TRANSPORT

Red Routes

17. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what benefits have been derived from the pilot red route project.

Mr. Norris: The red route in north and east London has resulted in quicker and more reliable journey times, particularly for buses, and improved conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, bus patronage has increased, accidents have been reduced, and there has been less rat running through unsuitable residential areas.

Regional Airports

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of additional long-haul flights using regional airports.

Mr. Norris: We are continuing to seek to agree liberal air services agreements which give equal access to all United Kingdom airports for carriers of both sides. Since last February, we have reached agreements with seven countries allowing access to all United Kingdom airports and with a further two offering more access to some regional airports.

"Paying For Better Motorways"

24. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what responses he has had from motoring organisations to his Green Paper "Paying for Better Motorways".

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what responses he has had from motoring organisations to his Green Paper "Paying for Better Motorways".

Mr. MacGregor: The AA and RAC have publicly recognised the potential benefits that motorway charging could bring. Both organisations favoured electronic technology as the means by which charging should be implemented.

United Kingdom Vessels (Safety)

20. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to improve the rules and regulations governing the safety of officers and crews of United Kingdom-registered merchant vessels and the skippers and crews of United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels.

Mr. Norris: My Department has just completed the development of a system of vocational qualifications—VOs—for all seafarers, including those on fishing vessels, in conjunction with the industry and trade unions. The VOs are designed to produce a better trained and therefore more safety conscious work force. My Department is also playing a leading role in the revision of the standards of training certification and watchkeeping convention at the International Maritime Organisation.

Motorway Use Surveys

21. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further plans he has for surveys of the proportion of car owners who regularly use motorways.

Mr. Key: Independent surveys last year broadly confirmed surveys carried out for the Department in 1992 and recorded in the Green Paper "Paying for Better Motorways". All show that about half of drivers regularly use motorways. We have no plans for further surveys.

Channel Tunnel Rail Links

22. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to ensure the provision of a direct rail link between Liverpool and the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: The provision of rail services through the channel tunnel is a commercial matter for British Rail and its successors. I understand that freight services through the tunnel will operate from Royal Seaforth and passengers from Liverpool will be able to join day and overnight services to the continent from Crewe.

M65-M6 Link

23. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the traffic implications for Colne of the decision to link the M65 to the M6.

Mr. Key: None. However, our studies have shown that the opening of the link from the M65 to the M6 could increase traffic on the M65 east of Blackburn by some 11 per cent. There could be between 9,000 and 11,000 vehicles per day on the A56 east of Colne in 1997.

Rail Users, Harborough

25. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assistance his Department is providing to rail users in the Harborough constituency.

Mr. Freeman: In the financial year 1993-94, the Government are providing £930 million through the public service obligation grant to assist British Rail to provide rail passenger services. The grant is not yet broken down by service or constituency. In due course, the total level of grant will be disaggregated by franchise.

Thames Passenger Traffic

26. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of passenger traffic within the Greater London area he estimates is carried by the River Thames.

Mr. Norris: Less than one tenth of 1 per cent. The River Thames working group is examining the potential for greater use of the river.

Motorways, Eastern England

27. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of motorways by length are in eastern England.

Mr. MacGregor: The Department's eastern region covers Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. The length of motorway in these counties is 316 km over 11 per cent. of the national motorway network in England.

London Transport

28. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about investment in London Transport.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from a variety of organisations and individual members of the public about investment in London Transport.

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish a table showing the number of road traffic accidents involving injury to *(a)* vehicle users and *(b)* pedestrians in the Doncaster town centre area in each year for the past four years;

(2) what was the average volume of commuter car traffic entering the central areas of *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Sheffield per day for each of the past 10 years; and what are his Department's predictions for the next four years.

Mr. Key: The information requested in the questions is only available from the local authorities concerned.

Exhaust Fumes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends to take to reduce PM10 particulate emissions from exhaust fumes.

Mr. Key: The Government are supporting EC measures to cut particulate emissions from road transport which are produced mainly by diesel-engined vehicles. Limits were introduced in December 1992 for new cars and in October 1993 for new heavy trucks and buses. These will be reduced by over 40 per cent. for passenger cars from January 1997 under EC proposals, and by 50 per cent. for heavy vehicles from October 1996, under a directive already adopted. We are participating in discussions in the EC on further tightening of heavy diesel limits for the year 2000.

The limits apply to the total mass of particulates emitted and not just to PM10 in isolation. Evidence indicates however that this method is a reliable way of limiting PM10 levels.

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals the United Kingdom representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency's Sagstram special committee on nuclear materials transport plans to put to the Sagstram meeting on 21 to 25 March in Vienna; and if he will place a copy of the United Kingdom submission in the Library.

Mr. Key: None.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimates were given to him by British Rail for the costs of reorganisation for rail privatisation in *(a)* the current financial year and *(b)* the forthcoming financial year;

(2) if he will list the percentage of public funding to British Rail that has been used for restructuring of British Rail in preparation for privatisation in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; what is his estimate for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what funds he has made available to British Rail for reorganisation in preparation for privatisation;

(4) what funds he has made available to Railtrack to implement privatisation in 1993-94; and what is his estimate for 1994-95.

Mr. Freeman: These costs are primarily a matter for British Rail and, after April, Railtrack. In 1992-93 British Rail reported that around £10 million was spent on reorganisation. In 1993-94, we understand that British Rail expects to spend around £56 million. In 1994-95 British Rail and Railtrack have estimated that they will require an additional £50 million for running costs and up to £30 million for expenditure on new equipment and systems in support of reorganisation.

Reorganisation costs will facilitate the biggest railway reorganisation for half a century that will bring substantial benefits to the travelling public. Reorganisation costs in 1992-93 represented around 0·5 per cent. of public funding to British Rail; the comparable percentages in 1993-94 and 1994-95 are estimated to be 3·7 and 6·5 per cent. respectively.

Additional funds to meet the full costs of reorganisation have been provided within the public expenditure provision for the railway industry was set out in the transport report published on 10 March.

Lorry Ban, London

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the Metropolitan and City of London police on the enforcement of the London night-time and weekend lorry ban.

Mr. Norris: Enforcement of the ban is a matter for the London borough councils and the police. There have been informal discussions with the Metropolitan police concerning the proposal to amend the London-wide ban. They foresee no particular difficulty with the changes we propose. We have no reason to believe that the City of London police take a different view.

Taxis, London

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in response to his consultation on the future of taxi services in London.

Mr. Norris: The consultation covered England and Wales, including London; the consultation period ended on 1 March 1994.

My Department issued about 4,500 copies of the consultation paper to organisations and individuals who have an interest in the subject. These include local authority associations and all individual county and district councils, local and national taxi and private hire vehicle organisations, the licensing officers organisation, the police, organisations concerned with people who have mobility problems and vulnerable members of society, consumer groups, transport interests, the press, car, taxi and taximeter manufacturers and those concerned with tourists. We have received some 700 responses.

Disabled People

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Norris: On 1 June 1993, the Department employed 186·5 registered disabled staff, which was 1·3 per cent. of its total staff. This information, together with information on other Departments is given in the Cabinet Office magazine, the "Independent" which was published on 18 March. A copy of the magazine is in the Libraries of the House.

Staff Reporting Practices

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list which parts of his Department's guide for staff reporting officers are mandatory; in cases where reporting officers do not comply with all the notes, whether his Department's personnel management officers must make a judgment as to whether or not compliance with the notes would have led to a different marking or other comments; and whether the individual concerned is informed of judgments.

Mr. Norris: The Department required all reporting and countersigning officers to study the staff appraisal and reporting notes for guidance before completing any staff reports. The notes, which are advisory, aim to achieve the greatest possible consistency of approach across a wide ranging and diverse group of staff.

Personnel officers review all completed staff reports, and where necessary, return completed reports to the reporting officers for clarification or amendment. Personnel officers would query a report which had been completed in a way which conflicts with the guidance. However, judgments on standards are for reporting and countersigning officers. Personnel officers may draw attention to marks which appear inconsistent, but, except in a few cases where officers are on secondment to other organisations and reports are being completed by non-civil servants, decisions or marks awarded are for reporting and countersigning officers, who have had the opportunity to observe and oversee an officer's work.

Vocational Drivers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, by traffic area office, the number of vocational drivers called to disciplinary hearings over the last 12 months; and how many of these drivers would not have been called under the arrangements he intends to introduce shortly.

Mr. Key: Approximately 9,000 driver disciplinary hearings took place nationally in the last 12 months, but the figures for individual traffic area officers are not readily available. We estimate that under the new arrangements. the total will fall to about 3,000 disciplinary hearings a year.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the impact on the staffing levels of *(a)* the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and *(b)* the traffic area offices of the changes to the criteria for calling vocational drivers to disciplinary hearings.

Mr. Key: We estimate that staffing requirements in each of the traffic area offices will be reduced by about one post. There are no staffing implications for the DVLA.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the financial savings he estimates will be made by his Department following the changes to the criteria for calling vocational drivers to disciplinary hearings.

Mr. Key: We estimate that the changes to the criteria for calling vocational drivers to disciplinary hearings will achieve savings of about £160,000.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations with which he had consultations before announcing the introduction of the guidelines for calling vocational drivers to disciplinary hearings.

Mr. Key: The Department's consultation document on proposals for passenger and goods vehicle operator licensing, circulated in May 1993, also sought views on the necessity for a separate disciplinary regime for drivers of lorries and coaches. The majority of organisations consulted were in favour of maintaining a separate conduct regime. The guidelines for calling drivers to disciplinary hearings are an administrative matter and there was no outside consultation.

Agency Chief Executives (Pay)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the chief executives covered by his Department, their salaries, dates of appointment and when their contracts expire; and whether they will be eligible to apply for re-appointment to the posts when their contracts expire.

Mr. Norris: There are currently five agencies in the Department of Transport. They are:

(1) Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency
(2) Vehicle Certification Agency
(3) Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
(4) Transport Research Laboratory
(5) Driving Standards Agency

Mr. R. J. Oliver, chief executive VI, first took up his post on 1 August 1988 and was re-appointed in April 1991. His current appointment expires on 31 March 1993. His salary is currently £52,286 per annum.

Mr. D. W. Harvey, chief executive VCA, took up his post on 2 April 1990. His initial appointment expired on 1 April 1993 but has been extended. His salary is currently £43,836 per annum.

Mr. S. R. Curtis, chief executive DVLA, took up his post on 12 March 1990. His appointment expires on 1 April 1995. His salary is currently £51,360 per annum.

Mr. H. J. Wootton, chief executive TRL, took up his post on 11 November 1991. His appointment expires on 16 November 1996. His salary is £66,503 per annum.

Dr. S. J. Ford, chief executive DSA, took up his post on 1 September 1993. His appointment expires 22 August 1996. His salary is £47,900 per annum.

They will all be eligible to apply for reappointment when their contracts expire.

On 1 April 1994, three further agencies are being created:

Highways Agency
Coastguards Agency
Marine Safety Agency

Mr. L. J. Haynes will be appointed as chief executive of the Highways Agency from 1 April 1994 to 13 February 1999. His salary is currently £100,000 per annum.

Mr. C. J. Harris will be appointed as chief executive Coastguard Agency from 1 April 1994 to 19 May 1997. His salary is currently £47,994 per annum.

Mr. R. M. Bradley will be appointed as chief executive of the Marine Safety Agency from 1 April 1994 until 31 December 1995. His salary is currently £45,675 per annum.

Redundancy Arrangements

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many postcards he has received to date from members of his Department objecting to the imposition of new redundancy arrangements.

Mr. Norris: The permanent secretary has to date received some 3,950 pre-printed postcards from members of two trade unions, the CPSA and the NUCPS.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. MacGregor: The number of letters received from hon. Members by Ministers in the Department of Transport in February was 1,144. The number of letters written to hon. Members by Ministers in the Department of Transport in February was 1,196.

Victoria to Gatwick Rail Service

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the track costs that are charged to the Victoria to Gatwick InterCity service; how they differ from other services being prepared for privatisation; and what is the average figure for Great Britain.

Mr. Freeman: On 15 February, Railtrack published the illustrative revenue from the sale of track access rights to passenger train operating units—TOUs. The estimate of revenue from the sale of track access rights to Gatwick express in 1994-95 is £8 million. Railtrack estimated that total revenue from the sale of track access rights in 1994-95 to the 24 mainland passenger TOUs would be £2·2 billion.

Charges for Gatwick express and all other passenger TOUs have been calculated using the methodology set out in the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 15 February *Official Report*, column *237*.

Ticket Purchase

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the London Underground stations which do not have full-time ticket kiosks.

Mr. Norris: Every London Underground station has at least one full-time ticket purchasing facility.

Private Railway Companies

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the passengers charter will apply to private railway companies which win franchises to run passenger railway services.

Mr. Freeman: The existing passengers charter is BR's document, setting out BR's code of practice for dealing with passengers and for paying compensation when things go wrong. Franchisees will be required, as a condition of their franchise agreement, to produce and publish their own passenger's charters, which will be expected to cover the same ground, including the payment of compensation, as BR's existing charter.

London Traffic Cameras

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the effect of introducing camera enforcement of road traffic regulations in London.

Mr. Norris: Cameras have been used to record red light violations since 1989, and have reduced red light violations by 45 per cent. and violation-related accidents by 60 per cent.

The "speed" cameras introduced on west London trunk roads in October 1992 show considerable benefit from reduced numbers of road accidents and casualties. Traffic congestion and delay following accidents have also been reduced. I expect to release full-year accident figures in the near future.

There is no direct effect on road traffic regulations. The Road Traffic Act 1991 permitted the use of photographic evidence in courts. These regulations came into effect in July 1992.

Heathrow Night Flights

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the current restrictions on night flights at Heathrow.

Mr. Norris: The current restrictions, on which we consulted last October, end on 27 March. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 February, *Official Report*, column *78*, concerning the representations we received on these.

We consulted from 10 November to 31 December 1993 on the restrictions to apply from 27 March to 23 October 1994—the summer season—and for the following four years. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 31 January, *Official Report*, column *506*, concerning details of consultation. The number of responses given referred to those for the 1994 summer season.

London Buses' Subsidiaries (Privatisation)

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the application of the expected receipts from the privatisation of London Buses' subsidiary companies.

Mr. Norris: London Transport will retain the full amount of any proceeds from the sale of the companies up to a specified amount and 25 per cent. of any proceeds above that sum. The amount involved is commercially confidential at this stage in the sale process.

Road Building and Improvements

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Tranport what causal relationship his Department has established between the amount of new road building or road improvements and the increase in car ownership and car use.

Mr. Key: None. Growth in car ownership and use is best explained by growth in incomes and the economy. Nor is there conclusive evidence that individual road improvement schemes are a significant factor in creating traffic; but this relationship is being studied by the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, which is due to report shortly.

Vehicle Inspectors

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicle inspectors are employed in each region by the traffic licensing offices.

Mr. Key: The Vehicle Inspectorate—VI—is the Department of Transport's principal vehicle inspection agency. The VI employs two main groups of inspection staff: vehicle examiners—PTOs, HPTOs and SPTOs—who are responsible for conducting roadworthiness checks; and traffic examiners—TEs and STEs—who monitor and enforce regulations relating to drivers' hours and vehicle operating weights. Vehicle and traffic examiners also advise the traffic commissioners on licensing matters. The table summarises the number of staff engaged in this work by each of the VI's 23 enforcement areas.

Location	*Senior professional and technical officer*	*Higher professional and technical officer*	*Professional and technical officer*	*Enforcement coordinators*	*Senior traffic examiners*	*Traffic examiners*	*Total*
1. Inverness-Perth	2	1	6	—	1	4	14
2. Glasgow-Kilmarnock	—	—	12	—	—	5	17
3. Edinburgh	1	1	6	—	1	7	16
4. Carlisle-Preston	—	2	9	—	1	7	19
5. Manchester-Derby	1	—	17	—	1	6	25
6. Liverpool-Wrexham	1	1	13	—	1	7	23
7. Stoke-Wolverhampton	—	2	13	—	2	9	26
8. [illegible]m-Kidderminster	1	1	12	—	1	8	23
9. Cardiff-S[illegible]nsea	1	1	12	—	1	7	22
10. Bristol-Gloucester	1	1	10	—	1	5	18
11. Exeter-Plymouth	1	2	13	—	1	7	24
12. Bicester-Southampton	1	1	9	—	2	9	22
13. Mitcham-Lancing	1	1	11	—	1	10	24
14. Canterbury-Gillingham	—	2	9	—	3	11	25
15. Yeading-Edmonton	1	—	13	—	1	8	23
16. Purfleet-Royston	1	1	10	—	1	7	20
17. Norwich-Ipswich	—	2	8	—	1	6	17
18. Leicester-Leighton Buzzard	1	1	9	—	1	9	21
19. Grantham-Peterborough	—	3	7	—	2	4	16
20. Nottingham-Doncaster	1	1	12	—	—	7	21
21. Grimsby-Beverley	—	2	5	—	—	5	12
22. Leeds-Walton	1	1	12	—	—	9	23
23. Darlington-Newcastle	1	1	9	—	—	7	18
Group regional offices	8	18	1	5	1	—	33
							502

Note: Figures relate to substantive grade of staff.

Public Service Vehicles (Spot Checks)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many spot checks on public service vehicles are done on average each year.

Mr. Key: Based on figures for the past three years the Vehicle Inspectorate executive agency—VI—has conducted an average of about 58,000 roadworthiness and traffic enforcement spot checks annually. The relevant information is as follows.

1. Roadworthiness spot checks

Year	*Spot checks*
1990-91	20,527
1991-92	21,106
1992-93	[1]24,895
Total	66,528
Average	22,176

[1] Excludes 4,647 special checks on emissions.

2. Traffic Enforcement spot checks

Year	*Spot checks*
1990-91	32,584
1991-92	33,778
1992-93	40,508
Total	106,870
Average	35,623

The VI took over responsibility for the Traffic Enforcement Organisation from April 1991.

Motor Cycle Leg Protectors

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research is currently being conducted and at what cost into the use of leg protectors on motor cycles; what have been the conclusions drawn from previous research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Research on leg protectors is continuing at the Transport Research Laboratory—TRL. Most of the current effort is in support of the United Kingdom contribution to the International Standards Organisation —ISO—proposals for an ISO standard on "Test and analysis procedures for research evaluation of rider crash protection devices fitted to motorcycles", in which the motor cycle industry is participating. The cost over the last 10 years has been roughly £300,000 per annum at current

prices and at present represents some 29 per cent. of total expenditure on motor cycle related research. The research to date shows that properly designed leg protectors could reduce the severity of, or even eliminate, at least 25 per cent. of leg injuries without increasing injuries to other parts of the body. I refer the hon. Member to TRL's working paper WP/VS/213 entitled "TRRL Review of Research on Motorcycle Leg Protection—1991", a copy of which was placed in the Library in July 1992.

Fishing Crews

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the implementation of European Community 93/103/EC concerning minimum safety and health requirements for the crews of fishing vessels.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* Arrangements for the implementation of European Community directive 93/103/EC, which will only apply to new fishing vessels from 23 November 1995, will be discussed at the May meeting of the fishing industry safety group.

Negative Equity

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the problem of negative equity on property subject to compulsory purchase orders for road improvements.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The Government take very seriously the problem of negative equity and since October 1992 we have introduced measures, such as those designed to facilitate mortgage transfers between properties, to help affected home owners. We are actively considering whether, should a home which is the subject of negative equity be compulsorily acquired, any further measures are necessary and if so, what form these measures should take.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision concerning the construction of an underpass at the junction of Newham way and Prince Regents lane in Newham; and if prior to that date he will announce his proposals to meet the problems of negative equity in the area.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The inspector's report on the public inquiry into the scheme was received earlier this month and is now being considered. I cannot yet say when a decision will be announced.

On negative equity, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his other question which I have answered earlier today.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The table shows total staff in post, and percentages of women employed in each grade in the Department of Transport and its agencies. The figures reflect staff in post as at 1 April 1993.

Department of Transport—Staff in Post—1 April 1993

Grade	Total	Total Female	Female Percentage
Grade 1	1	0	0
Grade 2	4	0	0
Grade 3	25	2	8·0
Grade 4	16	0	0
Grade 5	110	8	7·3
Grade 6	146	7	4·8
Grade 7	763	73	9·6
SEO	951	81	8·5
HEO	1,395	330	23·7
EO	4,468	1,049	23·5
AO	3,676	2,563	69·7
AA	3,683	2,833	76·9
Chair/Member of Commission	8	0	0
Total	15,246	6,946	45·6

Shipping Forecast

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made to the broadcasting authority about having the shipping forecast times on the long wave.

Mr. Hanley: I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for the Meteorological Office under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive, Meteorological Office to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from J. C. R. Hunt to Mr. Barry Field, dated 15 March 1994:

I am responding to your Parliamentary Question concerning the timing of the shipping forecasts.

The importance of the shipping forecast is well recognised by the BBC, the Met Office and the Department of Transport. Although the situation has been considered in the context of other BBC radio programme changes, it has been agreed that the times of the shipping forecast will remain unchanged. On very rare occasions, the 1750 shipping forecast may be delayed if test matches (to be broadcast on Radio 4) are at a critical stage; if so an announcement will be made at 1750 giving the new time of broadcast.

ENVIRONMENT

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Gummer: That information is not available.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Gummer: The details of my Department's annual expenditure on running costs are published every year in the annual report. Expenditure on receptions is included within this figure and is less than 0·00002 per cent. of total net expenditure.

Expenditure, London

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total Government spending in the London boroughs of *(a)* Hackney, *(b)* Haringey, *(c)* Islington, *(d)* Lambeth and *(e)* Newham.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information on central Government financial support for the London boroughs concerned is as follows:

Government grants: 1993-94 estimates

£ thousands

	Revenue grants[1]	*Capital grants*	*Housing subsidies*[2]	*Total*
Hackney	291,191	3,679	116,565	411,435
Haringey	269,069	3,887	70,361	343,317
Islington	196,857	4,854	135,725	337,436
Lambeth	310,941	5,166	137,080	453,187
Newham	279,019	20,166	67,841	367,026

[1] Revenue grants consist of Revenue Support Grant, Specific and Special Grants; redistributed non-domestic rates are excluded.
[2] This consists of Housing Revenue account Subsidies and contributions towards running costs of Approved Homes Improvement Agencies.

Rents, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average percentage increase in rents for private *(a)* unfurnished and *(b)* furnished lettings set by rent officers in each for the last 10 years in the Doncaster area.

Sir George Young: The available information, which relates to south Yorkshire, is given in the table. Comparable data for the Doncaster area is not readily available.

South Yorkshire
Average yearly percentage increase in registered fair rents

Year	*Private Unfurnished Lettings*	*Private furnished lettings*
1983	2·9	7·4
1984	15·2	–3·5
1985	5·2	15·6
1986	10·3	6·4
1987	3·9	8·1
1988	12·6	12·3
1989	6·4	8·9
1990	10·8	13·6
1991	10·8	14·5
1992	8·1	–5·0

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the "Independent" magazine, which was published on Friday 18 March and contains the information requested.

Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Government Spending

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total Government spending in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Bath and *(c)* Bournemouth.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information on central Government financial support to the district councils in the areas concerned is as follows:

Government Grants: 1993-94 estimates

£ thousand

	Revenue Grants[1]	*Capital Grants*	*Housing Subsidies*[2]	*Total*
Pendle	11,508	1,570	3,996	17,074
Bath	14,004	894	6,589	21,487
Bournemouth	39,768	606	6,278	46,652

[1] Revenue grants consist of Revenue Support Grant, Specific and Special Grants; redistributed non-domestic rates are excluded.
[2] This consists of Housing Revenue Account Subsidies and contributions towards running costs of Approved Home Improvement Agencies.

Children at Risk

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the allocation within Doncaster's standard spending assessment, on a per capita basis, for children at risk, during the next financial year; what is the allocation for each of the other metropolitan borough councils in South Yorkshire; and on what basis this formula operates.

Mr. Baldry: The children's personal social services element for 1994-95 for Doncaster is £32 per head of resident population. Information for the other metropolitan borough councils is in the table:

Table showing the children's personal social service (PSS) element for 1994-95 per head of resident population for Doncaster and the other metropolitan borough councils in south Yorkshire.

	PSS for children (£/head)
Doncaster	32
Barnsley	26
Rotherham	27
Sheffield	33

The formula uses a "client group approach"; the client group is the estimated number of children at risk. Cost adjustments are made to reflect the increased costs associated with social conditions and differences in the costs of provision between areas. The formula for the children's PSS element, along with the formulae for other SSA elements, has been revised in the light of the SSA review.

Abandoned Mines (Discharges)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *315*, when he hopes to complete his review of the legal framework governing discharges from abandoned mines.

Mr. Atkins: We are still considering this subject. The consultation paper "Paying for our Past", published on 8

March, said that the justification for the special exemptions for abandoned mines should be reassessed in the light of the emerging conclusions of the review of contaminated land and liabilities.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *6*, what is the source of information on which he based his reply regarding the carbon dioxide emission implications of the latest GATT agreement.

Mr. Atkins: The terms of reference of working group III of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as agreed at the IPCC eighth session in Harare, require working group III to consider and develop as necessary a range of internally consistent scenarios for future emissions based on reasonable economic, demographic and technological projections and taking account of the gaps and uncertainties in available knowledge. Any available evidence on the impact of GATT on emissions would be considered as part of IPCC's review.

Fuel Bills (Advance Payments)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the use of special companies by local authorities to accept advance payments for fuel bills for the next five years.

Mr. Baldry: I have no such information.

Trunk Townstal Estate

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will give approval to the Trunk Townstal estate action scheme, Dartmouth; how much the scheme will cost; and how many older council houses will be refurbished.

Sir George Young: My Department is currently processing the application and a decision will be reached shortly. The total cost of the proposed scheme is £6·7 million, including estate action resources of £1·6 million, and provides for the refurbishment of 299 units as well as 98 new houses.

Air Quality Standards

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects his Department's expert panel on air quality standards to reach its conclusions on PM10 levels.

Mr. Atkins: The expert panel on air quality standards, a group of independent medical and scientific experts, is considering a standard for particles—PM10—and I expect it to reach its conclusions as soon as reasonably practicable.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the estimated cost of including the 12 towns recommended by his Department's quality of urban air review group in the enhanced urban network.

Mr. Atkins: The costs for including the 12 towns recommended by the Department of the Environment's quality of urban air review group in the enhanced urban network are £5,382,229 to March 1994.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether levels of PM10 monitored in towns in the enhanced urban network have exceeded *(a)* United States air quality standards and *(b)* World Health Organisation air quality guidelines.

Mr. Atkins: In 1992, levels of PM10 exceeded the United States air quality standard at Belfast on three days. World Health Organisation guidelines were exceeded in 1992 at Belfast on 10 days and in Birmingham on four days.

Provisional data for the first half of 1993 show that the United States standard was exceeded in Cardiff and Liverpool on one day each and that the WHO guideline was exceeded in London on two days, Belfast on seven days, Liverpool on three days and in Birmingham and Newcastle on one day each.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he plans to take to control levels of PM10 particulates in the air.

Mr. Atkins: Road transport is the main source of PM10 emissions in urban areas. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic earlier today. Further action to reduce levels of fine particles will be considered in the light of advice from the Department of Health's independent committee on medical effects of air pollutants and the independent expert panel on air quality standards, a group of independent medical and scientific experts which recommends air quality standards to the Secretary of State for the Environment, which is currently considering a standard for particles.

Castle Point Borough Council

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what explanation was given to his Department for the financial crisis at Castle Point borough council prior to his decision to impose capping on that council for the year 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: In its representations to the Department, the authority set out its view of both the manner in which deficits on the general fund had been incurred in 1991-92 and 1992-93 and the timing of their identification. The deficits were due, in the main, to incorrect budgeting for interest receivable and interest payable. The deficit for 1991-92 was identified by the district auditor during closure of the accounts in autumn 1992; the scale of the 1992-93 deficit had not been apparent until February 1993.

Water

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made as to the cost implications for Government and the water industry if an area is designated as a high natural water dispersal area; and what is the timetable for changes in designation.

Mr. Atkins: For a high natural dispersion area to be identified, the waters must meet the criteria set out for less sensitive areas in the urban waste water treatment directive. The cost implications for water industry discharges into waters identified as HNDAs will, in each case, depend on the actual arrangements made for the treatment of sewage and the discharge of the treated

effluent. The directive requires the identification of these areas to be reviewed at intervals of not more than four years.

Homeless Accommodation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that any borough or district council using accommodation in respect of its duties to the homeless in areas of other councils will be required to inform that council of their presence and terms of occupancy.

Sir George Young: The Housing Act 1985 requires local housing authorities to have regard to the homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, third edition, issued by my right hon. Friend, which includes guidance about placing homeless households in accommodation outside an authority's own boundary. My Department is consulting on possible changes to this legislation.

District Heating Schemes

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide estimates of the number of council tenants who receive unmetered supplies of gas and electricity through local authority district heating schemes and the number of council tenants who receive metered supplies of gas and electricity through local authority district heating schemes *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in each local authority in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* This information is not held centrally. Estimates of the number of local authority dwellings receiving unmetered supplies of energy for heating vary widely, from about 100,000 to about 300,000.

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list those concessions and rebates applicable to owners of private residential homes under the Disabled Persons Act 1978 on matters relating to his Department.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* I am not aware of any concessions or rebates granted by my Department to owners of private residential homes under disabled persons legislation. Matters relating to these properties are primarily for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

DEFENCE

Belize

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the terms of the memorandum of understanding have now been communicated to the Belize Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A draft memoranda of understanding—MOU—has been submitted to the Government of Belize. This will replace the existing status of forces agreement which covers the presence of the garrison. The aim of the MOU is to reflect the evolvement of the British garrison into a residential training presence, rather than make any substantive changes.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest timetable for the withdrawal of the battalion from Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is planned to withdraw the infantry battalion which is currently in Belize at the end of this month. The garrison drawdown is well under way and is planned to be complete by the end of September this year. Thereafter, there will be a residual United Kingdom training presence.

Ferranti International plc

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the defence orders and projects in which Ferranti International plc has an involvement; and if he will state the general nature of the involvement in each case.

Mr. Aitken: A comprehensive list of all projects in which Ferranti International plc, in administrative receivership, is involved is not held centrally, but the company is involved in the following types of project: submarine command systems, counter-measures and training systems; surface ship command and control systems, air defence systems, information-handling systems, the Seawolf weapons system, and shore training facilities; Eurofighter 2000 sub-systems, the Tornado radar system, Harrier FRS2 components, the radar warning receiver for Army Lynx and Gazelle helicopters, and air traffic control simulation; Rapier weapon system.

The nature of the work may range from design and development, through production, to the provision of in-service support, spares, repairs and post-design services.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 9 March, *Official Report,* column *254,* if he will list which of the memoranda of understanding listed in his answer were *(a)* wholly or *(b)* partially related to exclusion from export licence controls; and whether such exclusions formed part of the memoranda.

Mr. Aitken: Such exclusion formed no part of any memoranda of understanding.

Biological Warfare

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies he is undertaking of security from, or counter-measures against, environmental or biological attack.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom continues an extensive and broad based programme of research aimed at providing our armed forces with effective protection against attack by chemical or biological weapons.

Political Advisers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what access political advisers in his Department have to classified information;

(2) what level of vetting is undertaken of political advisers to his Department.

(3) what access political advisers in his Department have to data held by his Department as commercial-in-confidence.

Mr. Hanley: Classified information, and information with privacy markings such as commercial in confidence, is distributed within my Department on a need-to-know basis. All staff employed by my Department, including my right hon. and learned Friend's special adviser, have access to such information which they require to perform their duties effectively. It is Government policy to vet all staff who require regular access to material classified secret and above; the level of vetting will depend on the classification of material to which staff require such access.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all persons who have held the post of political adviser in his Department since 1979, giving the dates of office for each.

Mr. Hanley: Individuals who have held the post of special adviser in my Department since 1979 are as follows:

Andrew Dunlop Esq.—October 1986 to May 1988
Keith Simpson Esq.—June 1988 to December 1990
John Gardner Esq.—June 1991 to March 1992
Perry Miller Esq.—April 1992 to February 1993
Crispin Blunt Esq.—February 1993 to present

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the authorised height and speed of the pair of military jet aircraft that overflew the village of Clayton in South Yorkshire on 7 March at approximately 15.35 hours; what was their actual recorded height and speed; from which airfield they took off and landed at; and what was the nature of their sortie.

Mr. Hanley: Central records are only maintained of low-level military flights, which are those carried out below 2,000 ft. No military jet aircraft were booked to fly at low level in the low flying area concerned at approximately 15.35 hours on 7 March. However, it is possible that military aircraft overflew Clayton at heights above 2,000 ft.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low flying exercises have taken place in Wales in which planes have flown below 100 ft in the last year.

Mr. Hanley: Flying below 100 ft by fixed wing military aircraft is not permitted in the United Kingdom low flying system.

Malaysia

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution was made by his Department to the luxury yacht "Tunas Samudera" handed over to the Malaysian Government in 1989.

Mr. Aitken: My Department made no financial contribution to the sail training ship "Tunas Samudera".

Rescue Co-ordination Centre, Pitreavie

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current personnel establishment of the rescue co-ordination centre at Pitreavie; and what plans he has to increase it;

(2) what plans he has for the improvement of the improvement of the facilities of the rescue co-ordination centre at Pitreavie; and what sums have been allocated for that purpose;

(3) if he will make a statement about the future of the rescue co-ordination centre at Pitreavie.

Mr. Hanley: Detailed internal work continues on the implementation of our plans to locate the single military rescue co-ordination centre—RCC—at Pitreavie. The current personnel establishment for the RCC is 24. On current plans, the single RCC will require 36 staff, however manning could be reduced to 27 following the introduction of improved information technology. Funding of some £3,900,000 has been allocated for improved accommodation, communications and IT systems to support the single RCC.

"Options for Change"

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many redundancies will occur under the "Options for Change" programme; if he will list the ranks and regiments involved; and if he will make a statement with regard to his Department's policy concerning redundancy during active service.

Mr. Hanley: The ranks involved in redundancy so far are as follows:

Navy	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*
Ordinary Rate	Private	Corporal
Able Rate	Lance Corporal	Sergeant
Leading Rate	Corporal	Chief Technician
Petty Officer	Sergeant	Flight Sergeant
Chief Petty Officer	Staff Sergeant	Warrant Officer
Warrant Officer	Warrant Officer 1 and 2	Master Aircrew
Sub Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Flying Officer
Lieutenant	Captain	Flight Lieutenant
Lieutenant Commander	Major	Squadron Leader
Commander	Lieutenant Colonel	Wing Commander
Captain	Colonel	Group Captain
	Brigadier	Air Commodore
		Air Marshal
		Air Chief Marshal

All regiments and corps of the Army, with the exception of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Royal Irish Regiment —home service part time—and Adjutant General's Corps —military provost staff—were involved in the redundancy programme.

Personnel serving overseas who are selected for redundancy can return to the United Kingdom for their last six months of service to enable them to take their full entitlement of leave and resettlement training.

UNPROFOR (Pay and Conditions)

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding unfavourable comparisons of pay and conditions as between British and other forces currently serving in UNPROFOR in Bosnia and other parts of former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has received a considerable number of representations on this subject, based largely on misinformation and misunderstanding.

The full position on the pay of British troops serving with UNPROFOR was set out in my answer to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 7 February, *Official Report*, column *112*.

Head of Defence Sales

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the name of the next head of defence sales.

Mr. Aitken: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 9 March 1994, *Official Report,* column *253.*

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 22 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. John M. Taylor: At 14 March 1994 the number of staff registered as disabled was 185, representing 1·5 per cent. of the total. A further 2 per cent. of staff who have classified themselves as disabled have chosen not to register.

Magistrates

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish a charter for magistrates to encourage applications to the bench from the widest possible cross section of the public.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No. Steps are already taken through national and local initiatives such as press notices and articles, posters and leaflets in public places, and contact with employers and other organisations, to reach out to people of all backgrounds so that they are aware that it is open to anyone eligible to apply for appointment. Last year 2,062 appointments were made by the Lord Chancellor and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if the Lord Chancellor has decided whom he proposes to appoint to the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct to replace the outgoing members.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has today appointed the following people to serve as new members of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct:

Lee Bridges
Dr. Bob Hepple
Neville March Hunnings
Ian McNeil
Charles Plant
Professor Peter Scott
David Steel QC
Mary Tuck

The new members will commence their work for the committee on 1 April 1994.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *494*, about overriding the accounting officer's objections, what were the circumstances concerned, the amount of public money involved, and in what way the Public Accounts Committee and hon. Members were informed.

Mr. Jack: The Minister overruled the accounting officer's advice in February 1992 on a question of the location of the Ministry's divisional offices. The sum of public money involved was of the order of £70,000 per annum. This was a question of value for money, rather than of propriety or regularity, and it is standard Government procedure that such accounting officer memoranda are not automatically drawn to the attention of the Public Accounts Committee nor to that of the National Audit Office, unless they are conducting any relevant inquiry.

Norway (Fishing)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provision is being made in the common fisheries policy aspect of negotiations with Norway for entry into the European Union for *(a)* national negotiations with third parties, *(b)* Norwegian enforcement of catches by other EU countries, *(c)* Norwegian allocation of catches to other EU countries and *(d)* limited derogations from the common fisheries policy principles of access to all EU members.

Mr. Jack: The answers to the hon. Member's questions are as follows:

(a) Norway has been authorised, in close association with the Commission, to maintain its fisheries agreement with Russia and to establish total allowable catches at north Norway for a transitional period until 1 July 1998.

(b) North of 62 deg north, Norway can maintain its current control system for a transitional period of three years, in a way which does not discriminate between member states.

(c) Cohesion countries will benefit from adjustments to the European Economic Area provisions and from a transfer of Norway's cod quota in the North West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation's Division 3M.

(d) Before 1 January 1995 the Council will discuss and decide upon adjustments to the measures relating to the conditions of access to waters and resources referred to in the Act of Accession of Spain and Portugal and these adjustments will enter into force from 1 January 1996. Until then, equivalent constraints to those to which Spain and Portugal are subject will apply to Norway in certain EU waters.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the outcome of the negotiations for Norway's accession to the European Union as they relate to fishing.

Mr. Jack: The outcome of the negotiations on fisheries between the European Union and Norway, which were concluded on 16 March, was satisfactory to the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom should receive some additional 2,000 tonnes of north-east Arctic cod quota in 1997, if Norwegian stocks rise as predicted. Increased flexibility over where the western mackerel stock may be caught will also benefit United Kingdom fishermen.

The common fishery policy rules applying within the waters of the Twelve generally, and the special rules

applying to Spain and Portugal under their accession treaty, are unchanged by the agreement. Reciprocal arrangements for access to Community and Norwegian resources, including the setting of total allowable catches and quotas, fully respect the principle of relative stability. There will be no disruption to member states' shares of existing TACs and no increase in fishing effort.

The negotiations encompassed the following main topics:

(i) *Access to Waters*

The areas to which Norway and the EU grant each other access are unchanged by the agreement.

For so long as Spain and Portugal are subject to the restraints on their access to the waters of the other 10 member states which are set out in their accession treaty, Norway will be subject to equivalent constraints in certain EU waters.

The Council will decide, by 1 January 1995, on the rules which will apply to Spain and Portugal from 1 January 1996.

(ii) *Access to Resources*

EU access to Norwegian resources and Norwegian access to EU waters will be governed strictly by relative stability, generally with a five-year track record. However, Norway has conceded that one third of the western mackerel stock may be fished in any of the three management areas, giving increased flexibility, inter alia, to United Kingdom fishermen.

Norway has agreed to make additional quantities of cod available to the "cohesion" countries—effectively, for this purpose, Spain, Portugal and Ireland. This will predominantly be achieved by phasing in from 1995 the quota agreed in the EEA negotiations for 1997; by transferring 1,000 tonnes of Norwegian cod for NAFO area 3M in the north-west Atlantic, and by the purchase of fishing opportunities from third countries.

(iii) *Management North of 62 deg north*

Norway has a special management scheme and rigorous controls in north Norwegian waters as well as a bilateral agreement with Russia, much of which she has been authorised to maintain until 1 July 1998. During the transition period the Community will be examining how best to incorporate Norwegian experience and practices into the CFP.

(iv) *Access to Markets*

For a four-year period there will be a system of indicative ceilings for the quantities of salmon, herring, mackerel, shrimps, scallops, Norway lobsters, redfish and trout entering the EU Twelve from Norway. If the ceilings are exceeded, or the EU market disrupted, the Commission is empowered to take action to restore stable trade.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in the last five years she has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Jack: Ministers in this Department answer parliamentary questions in accordance with paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions she has referred to one of her Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to her Department this represents.

Mr. Jack: Between 1 March 1993 and 28 February 1994, this Department received 2,375 parliamentary questions. Of these, 13 were referred to agency chief executives. This represents 0·54 per cent. of the total.

Raptors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has, by species, concerning the number of raptors killed in Humberside and in each of the three counties of Yorkshire in each of the last four years by *(a)* shooting, *(b)* poisoning or *(c)* other means.

Mr. Soames: No licences have been issued by this Ministry to kill raptors. Cases reported to this Ministry of raptors killed by poisoning are given below:

	Humberside	*North Yorkshire*	*South Yorkshire*	*West Yorkshire*
1990	0	0	3 Kestrels 1 Sparrowhawk	0
1991	0	1 Hen Harrier	0	0
1992	0	2 Kestrels	0	0
1993	0	0	0	0

Information held centrally by the Home Office on prosecutions for illegal activities cannot separately identify the killing of raptors from other illegal activities against them because the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 does not separately identify an offence of killing wild birds from the offence of injuring or taking them.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. members by her and her ministerial colleagues during February.

Mr. Jack: Some 936 letters from hon. Members and peers were received in MAFF during February 1994 and 902 letters were sent to hon. members or peers by Ministers in this Department in the month of February.

Set-Aside

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to ensure that extensive grazing and late cropping for hay should be part of the non-rotational set-aside regime for environmental reasons.

Mr. Jack: The EC regulation governing set-aside under the arable area payments scheme prohibits agricultural

production, including grazing and hay-cropping, except between 1 September and 14 January when farmers may graze their own animals to take a late harvest of hay for their own use. While both grazing and hay-cropping would be beneficial in environmental terms, allowing them more generally would risk undermining the effectiveness of set-aside, since this would enable mixed farmers to reduce their area of grass without reducing their arable area. My right hon. Friend is not therefore seeking any change in this respect.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many public interest immunity certificates she has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* As far as we can establish, the Minister has signed one public interest immunity certificate since 1990, in 1993.

ENVIRONMENT

National Spring Clean Week

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support his Department is giving to the national spring clean week, 15 to 24 April, organised by the Tidy Britain Group.

Mr. Atkins: National spring clean week is funded from within the Department's grant to the Tidy Britain Group. We have recently given the group a further £93,000 to spend on additional publicity for this campaign, making the total 1993-94 grant to the Tidy Britain Group £2,968,000.

In addition, the Department will be looking to support publicity events and other activities connected with the campaign.

Global Warming

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *733-34*, what is the budgeted and actual cost to date of the research assessing the energy efficiency global warming campaign.

Mr. Baldry: The budgeted costs to date of the research assessing the energy efficiency global warming campaign are £235,836·40.

The figures for the actual costs to date are identical to those of the budgeted costs to date: £235,836·40.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Baldry: During the past 12 months, four parliamentary questions were referred to agencies in my Department for answer. Three of these were referred to the Ordnance Survey agency and one to the Planning Inspectorate agency. They represented 0·025 per cent. and 0·075 per cent. respectively of the total number of parliamentary questions answered by my Department during that period.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how Her Majesty's Government implement the policy of "polluter pays" in regard to consignments of toxic waste exported for treatment.

Mr. Atkins: The costs associated with the export of hazardous waste are generally met by the exporter. Under the EC Waste Shipments Regulation, which will apply in May, specific powers are provided which will enable competent authorities to charge exporters for the costs of implementing the notification and supervision procedure, together with usual costs of appropriate analyses and inspections. Exporters who are not themselves the producers of the waste will no doubt wish to reflect the impact of those charges in the cost of the service they provide to waste producers. Moreover, it is a requirement under the Waste Shipments Regulation that wastes shall be exported only where the process for which they are destined is environmentally sound. The costs of these processes are a matter for the terms of the contract between the exporter and the consignee.

Bolivia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from *(a)* Bolivian citizens, *(b)* the Bolivian Government or *(c)* non-governmental organisations in regard to the local pollution effects in Oruro in the Bolivian Andes arising from the toxic slag exported to the Funestano processing plant from the Capper Pass smelter in Humberside between October 1992 and March 1993.

Mr. Atkins: No Bolivian citizens have made representations to Her Majesty's Government. The Bolivian Government sought clarification of Bolivian newspaper reports from the British Government in May 1993 in the light of complaints from Greenpeace. In response, our chargé d'affaires met officials of the Bolivian Ministry of External Affairs on 2 June 1993 and confirmed the export had been in accordance with the United Kingdom law and procedures.

Christian Aid expressed concern at the export of wastes to Bolivia in a letter to the President of the Board of Trade on 10 June 1993. The Government have also received a number of representations from Greenpeace.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the actual spending per capita by each county, borough and metropolitan local council for the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry: I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Waste Regulation

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to implement section 61 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 before 1 June.

Mr. Atkins: The future of section 61 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is among the matters

raised in our consultation paper "Paying for Our Past" which I announced to the House on 8 March in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), *Official Report*, column *110*. We will decide what to do, and when, in the light of the responses we receive.

Environment Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive from Touche Ross consultants the report he commissioned on options for the proposed environment agency.

Mr. Atkins: Touche Ross is expected to complete the study on options for the geographical and management structure of the proposed environment agency by mid-May.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average waiting time for appeals against valuation to be heard *(a)* in England as a whole, *(b)* in each standard region and *(c)* in each local authority area since the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Baldry: A meaningful figure cannot yet be given on the average length of time taken to hear appeals, since a great many cases are being settled by agreement between the taxpayer and the Valuation Office agency, and relatively few have been heard as appeals by valuation tribunals.

EC Sprint and Valve Programmes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications for environmental research of the merger of the EC Sprint and Valve programmes under the fourth framework programme 1994 to 1998.

Mr. Atkins: Until the Commission brings forward its formal proposal for the third activity-specific programme, it is not possible to assess the impact of the new arrangements. However, in negotiations on this programme, Her Majesty's Government will be looking to ensure that the strengths of the two former programmes —Sprint and Value—are sustained.

Water Quality Objectives

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce statutory water quality objectives on English rivers.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* Regulations are to be made soon to set in place a national scheme for classifying water quality. This will open the way for consultation to start on the first batch of proposals for statutory water quality objectives.

Homeless (Definition)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his definition of "unintentional" as it will apply to those being assessed as homeless under his legislative proposals.

Sir George Young: The consultation paper "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies" states in paragraph 13.1 that

"the Government believes that the present provisions on intentionality remain appropriate, although they will require some modification to reflect the new legislation".

We will decide on the revised definition of intentionality in the light of the responses to the consultation.

Out-of-town Shopping Centres

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer on 16 March, *Official Report*, column *683*, on out-of-town shopping centres, what are the implications of planning policy guidance note 13 for his support for the proposed Dumplington scheme in Greater Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: PPG13 has no implications for Dumplington. Planning permission was granted for Dumplington on 4 March 1993, before PPG13 was published.

The grant of permission has been challenged by a group of local planning authorities in the courts. The group has suggested that given recent changes in policy a decision made on a similar application today would be to refuse. However, this argument is not relevant to the legality of the decision to grant planning permission for Dumplington. The Secretary of State had to consider matters as they were at the time of his decision.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the outcome of the triennial review of the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre.

Sir George Young: The triennial review of the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre executive agency has now been completed, and a summary of the evaluation report has been placed in the Library.

In 1992-93, the centre was voted "Best UK Conference Centre" by members of the industry for the sixth year in succession, and was awarded one of the first chartermarks. However, there is still room for improvement in meeting the agency's key objectives of securing a progressive reduction in its net costs to the Exchequer and of encouraging optimum occupancy levels. The target operating deficit in 1993-94 is £900,000, but when rent for occupation of the building is added the deficit is some £7 million. The target occupancy level for 1993-94 is 49 per cent. over 365 days for the main letting areas.

While I have decided that there should be no immediate change to the centre's status as a "next steps" agency, I have asked the agency to continue the search for further efficiencies and improvements in its financial and operational performance. In addition, I propose to test the value for money of the present arrangements by including a contract for management of the centre in my Department's market-testing programme for 1994-95. I intend that any resulting contract should come into effect from April 1996.

Leeds City Council

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered the response by Leeds city council to the notice served on the authority on 10 September 1993 under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has considered carefully the response which Leeds city council has made to the notice served on the authority, and has today given the authority a direction under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988. The effect of the direction is to require the authority, when it next re-tenders the work which was the subject of the notice, to seek my right hon. Friend's consent should it wish to reassign the work to the direct services organisation. The direction also requires the authority to ensure that future contracts allow contractors the opportunity to rectify any default in performance before penalties are incurred.

TREASURY

Bank of England

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Bank of England staff are analogous to the civil service grades of assistant secretary, grade 5, and above; how their pay scales differ from those of their civil service analogues; and what assessment he has made of the way in which limits which have been placed by the Government on civil service pay increases have been and will continue to be applied by the Bank.

Mr. Dorrell: The Bank of England does not employ civil service grades or grades that are directly analogous. Under the approach to public sector pay in 1994-95, Government Departments will be expected to offset pay increases for their staff with efficiency savings, and we would expect the Bank of England to follow a similar course. The previous approach to public sector pay, limiting settlements to the range zero to 1·5 per cent., has been implemented successfuly throughout the public sector including the civil service and the Bank of England.

Iran (Arms Exports)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what communications Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has had with the United States Justice Department in regard to allegations made by Mr. Ian Smalley, about arms exports to Iran.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise advises me that it has had no communications with the United States Justice Department in regard to allegations made by Mr. Ian Smalley.

VAT on Fuel (Advance Payments)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice his Department has given to utility companies with regard to advance payments of VAT prior to the introduction of VAT on fuel from April.

Sir John Cope: In meetings with British Gas and the electricity suppliers, customs has confirmed that such advance payments create a tax point under VAT law. Consequently, payments made before 1 April are subject to VAT at the zero rate.

National Insurance

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much would be raised by a 1 per cent. national insurance contribution in earnings above the level of the upper earnings limit.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply.

It is estimated that the additional yield in respect of the 1993-94 year would have been about £270 million.

VAT

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many collection staff were working for Customs and Excise in each year since 1980 *(a)* in London and the south-east and *(b)* in the United Kingdom as a whole in the area of value added tax.

Sir John Cope: It is not possible to provide value added tax employment figures for London and the south-east for the whole period requested. For the years ending 31 March 1991-92 and 1992-93, 3,727 and 3,627 staff in this geographical area were employed on such work. The comparable figure on plans for the current financial year is 3,350 staff. The United Kingdom figures for the same three years are 9,612, 9,429 and 9,500 respectively.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Sir John Cope *[pursuant to his reply, 20 January 1994, c. 779]:* I much regret that the figure relating to the proportion of letters to Treasury Ministers receiving a substantive reply within 15 days was incorrect. In 1993 Treasury Ministers replied to 58 per cent. of ministerial letters handled within central Treasury within the target set.

This mistake arose as a result of a flaw in our procedures for logging completed correspondence casework against new targets, and has only recently come to light. Action has been taken to ensure that in future our records are complete and accurate. I apologise for having inadvertently given a wrong figure in my original answer to the hon. Member.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Deportees

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which countries deportees escorted in 1993 and 1994 to date by the police forces of *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside were being deported; and what was the cost for each police force authority involved.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No in-flight escorts for deportees were provided by the police forces of South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire or Humberside in 1993 or 1994 to date.

Drugs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people in *(a)* Doncaster and *(b)* South Yorkshire convicted of drug offences in each year for the past four years were under 21 years of age;

(2) how many people in *(a)* Doncaster and *(b)* South Yorkshire have been convicted of drug offences in each year for the past four years.

Mr. Maclean: The information is given in the table. The 1993 data will not be available until autumn 1994.

Number and percentage of persons convicted of indictable drug offences at Doncaster Petty Sessional Division[1] and South Yorkshire Police Force Area and England and Wales 1989 to 1992

Year/Age	Doncaster[1]		South Yorkshire		England and Wales	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
1989						
Under 21	16	17	33	14	5,014	22
All ages	92	100	233	100	22,578	100
1990						
Under 21	22	25	56	22	6,298	26
All ages	87	100	252	100	24,558	100
1991						
Under 21	26	28	84	25	6,251	27
All ages	92	100	339	100	23,455	100
1992						
Under 21	47	26	156	29	5,772	25
All ages	181	100	539	100	22,677	100

[1] Includes cases heard at the Crown Court where the committing court was Doncaster psd.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were cautioned for drug-related offences in north Yorkshire in each year since 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The information is given in the table. The 1993 data will not be available until autumn 1994.

Number of juveniles—persons aged 10 to under 17 years—cautioned for indictable drug offences in North Yorkshire Police Force Area 1990-1992

Year	Juveniles aged 10 to under 17	Persons All ages
1990	3	49
1991	26	140
1992	41	266

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department is currently conducting into drug usage and drugs prevention in rural areas.

Mr. Maclean: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) on 15 March, *Official Report*, column 597. In addition to the telephone survey in Greater Manchester and its rural hinterland, information about self-reported drug misuse by people living in rural areas was collected in the 1992 British crime survey. Work is in hand to compare the data for inner-city, other urban and rural areas, which will be reported on in due course.

My Department has also part-funded some locally managed research in rural east Sussex, the results of which were published in a report by Dr. Russell Newcombe "Drug Use in the North Wealden District of East Sussex: A report on the investigation of the nature and prevalence of illicit drug use among young people in a rural area of East Sussex in 1993", available from the East Sussex Drugs Advisory Council; and is funding a Somerset county youth service project which involves, among other things, research to estimate the prevalence of drug misuse among the local population and the transient population of young holiday-makers and to develop primary preventive work in response.

Unlawful Killing (Children)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing *(a)* how many men and *(b)* how many women have been convicted of unlawful killing of a child during the last three years for which figures are available; and how many such men and women were (i) under the age of 16 years, (ii) 16 to 18 years and (iii) aged between 18 and 21 years.

Mr. Maclean: The available information, which relates to offences of homicide, is contained in the following table:

Number of suspects convicted of offences currently recorded as homicide where the victim was a person under the age of 16 years

	1990	1991	1992
Total suspects			
Male	30	31	24
Female	10	22	5
Age of suspect			
Aged 10 to 15			
Male	2	1	—
Female	—	1	—
Aged 16 to 17			
Male	—	1	1
Female	1	2	—
Aged 18 to 20			
Male	2	8	5
Female	1	3	1

The years shown relate to the year the offence was originally recorded by the police and figures are as at 27 August 1993. They are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and the courts, or as further information becomes available.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for the latest date available, the number of remand prisoners held in police cells by each of the police forces in Humberside, and the

three counties of Yorkshire; if he will list the police stations concerned; and what were the corresponding figures 12 months ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 22 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the Office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of remand prisoners held in police cells by the Humberside and three Yorkshire police forces.

On 17 March 1994, the latest date for which complete information is available, no remand prisoners were being held in police cells in the Humberside, West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire police areas.

In the South Yorkshrie police area, 31 remand prisoners were being held in the following police stations:

Doncaster	4
Rotherham	11
Thorne	5
Sheffield (Bridge Street)	11

This time last year there were no prisoners in police cells.

Child Witnesses

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the research findings from the project currently being conducted by Graham Davies at the University of Leicester: "Evaluation of New Provision for Children Witnesses, 1991"; and if he will outline the issues and scope of the research evaluation.

Mr. Maclean: The research project to which my hon. Friend refers is due to publish its findings in late-1994. The project is: monitoring and observing child witnesses giving evidence; sampling a range of opinion among legal, social service and police personnel and also child witnesses; evaluating sample video-taped interviews to test for their adherence to the memorandum of good practice, the voluntary guidance issued with the Criminal Justice Act 1991 concerning good practice in the recording of interviews with child witnesses; and analysing information from the Lord Chancellor's Department relating to the number of cases involving children and the outcomes of those cases, in order to assess the effectiveness of the provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 relating to the evidence of children.

Firefighters

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firefighters have been injured in south Yorkshire, north Yorkshire, west Yorkshire and Humberside in the line of duty in each year since 1980.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of firefighters killed or seriously injured in the line of duty each year since 1980 are shown in the table.

Table showing the number of firefighters seriously injured[1] or killed in the line of duty, 1980 to 1992

Year	South Yorkshire		North Yorkshire		West Yorkshire		Humberside	
	Fatalities	Serious injuries	Fatalities	Serious injuries	Fatalities	Serious injuries	Fatalities	Serious injuries
1980	—	20	—	9	—	27	1	16
1981	—	35	—	4	—	32	—	10
1982	—	16	—	4	—	24	—	27
1983	—	18	—	2	1	31	—	14
1984	—	26	—	8	—	39	—	8
1985	—	33	—	4	—	22	—	14
1986	—	14	—	5	—	40	—	16
1987	—	12	—	11	—	51	—	9
1988	—	19	—	—	—	42	—	12
1989	—	32	—	2	—	34	1	12
1990	—	27	—	5	—	32	—	7
1991	—	23	—	13	—	45	—	11
1992[2]	—	23	—	23	—	38	—	4

[1] Serious injuries are defined as those which result in absence of duty for at least one month.
[2] Provisional figures.
Source: Home Office fire statistics.

Operation Barnard

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police personnel were used in Operation Barnard in Wanstead on 16 February; and what was the total cost of the operation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that Operation Barnard involved just over 700 officers. The additional costs of the operation are estimated to be over £200,000. Information on the cost of support services and other resources involved is not available.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Michael Howard: The information requested is set out in the annual disability report contained in the magazine "Independent", which was published on Friday 18 March. A copy of this has been placed in the Library. The report shows that 182·5 of the staff currently employed by the Home Office are registered disabled, representing 0·4 per cent. of all staff.

Yugoslavia (Asylum Seekers)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from the former Yugoslavia have applied, to date, to the United Kingdom for asylum; how many have been *(a)* granted asylum, *(b)* granted exceptional leave to remain, *(c)* application still under consideration and *(d)* application refused; how many of those applicants who have been refused asylum or exceptional leave have, to date, been removed from the United Kingdom; to which country such people were removed; how many refusals are currently subject to appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for the period 1 January 1992 to 28 February 1994 is given in the table. The large majority of applications made in the period—an estimated 6,640 at 28 February 1994—are under consideration and the applicants are being allowed to stay in the meantime.

Information on the destination of cases removed is not readily available. No nationals of the former Yugoslavia are being removed to war zones. The number of refusals of former Yugoslav cases curently subject to appeal is not separately identifiable in the statistics.

In addition to consideration of asylum applications, the Government have, under arrangements announced in November 1992 and June 1993, offered to receive 1,000 particularly vulnerable individuals from the former Yugoslavia and their close dependants, an estimated total of 4,000 people in all. As at 18 March 1994, 601 particularly vulnerable individuals and 810 dependants had arrived under these arrangements. Before this, 68 sick and wounded ex-detainees from Bosnia arrived in September 1992.

Decisions[1] on applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom from nationals of the former Yugoslavia, excluding dependants, 1 January 1992 to 28 February 1994

	Number
Asylum applications[2]	7,685
Decisions[3,4]	455
Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum	5
Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave to remain[5]	175
Refusals	270
Refused asylum and exceptional leave—after full consideration	20
Refused under paragraph 180F[6]	155
Refused on safe third country grounds[7]	95
Applications pending[4]	6,640
Removals:	
Port cases	
Safe third country	65
Other	5
In-country cases[8]	n/a

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest five.
[2] Figures exclude information on applications made overseas.
[3] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the period.
[4] Information on withdrawals is not readily available and not shown in the table.
[5] Usually granted for a year in the first instance, subject then to further review.
[6] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to invitation to interview to establish identity (paragraph 101 prior to 26 July 1993).
[7] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.
[8] Information for enforcement cases is not available for the entire period. However, during the periods 1 January 1992 to 31 December 1992 and 1 August 1993 to 28 February 1994 the total number of removals in after entry enforcement cases, including also voluntary departures, was three.

Mrs. Liberty Cloke

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the husband in the United Kingdom of Mrs. Liberty Cloke—Ref: GV100/21136—is to be interviewed for a second time; when the British embassy in Manila requested his Department to arrange a second interview with Mr. Cloke; and what further information is required of Mr. Cloke to enable the British embassy in Manila to reach a decision on Mrs. Cloke's application to join her husband in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The request from the British embassy in Manila for a further interview with Mr. Cloke was received by the Home Office on 17 March 1994. Mr. Cloke will be interviewed as soon as possible to obtain further information which will enable the entry clearance officer to assess whether Mr. Cloke meets the requirements of the immigration rules for entry as a spouse.

Refugee Settlement Research Project

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the research findings from the refugee settlement research project will be released.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *176*.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *545*, what improvements are being made to procedures in his Department to ensure determinations favourable to the applicant are sent promptly to British posts overseas.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Arrangements are already in place to ensure that determinations are sent promptly and no changes to those arrangements are contemplated at present.

Armley Prison

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the provision of adequate toilet facilities and the cessation of slopping out to be completed at Armley prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Bob Cryer, dated 22 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the Office, to reply to your recent Question about the provision of toilet facilities at Leeds prison.

Prisoners in B, E and F Wings now have access to toilets either in or directly from their cells. Proposals for refurbishing the remaining wings envisage that, by February 1996 all prisoners at Leeds will have similar access to toilets and that slopping out will therefore no longer be necessary.

PRIME MINISTER

Punjab

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Prime Minister whether he raised the question of human rights in the Punjab with the Indian Prime Minister during his recent visit.

The Prime Minister: I discussed human rights in India with Mr. Narasimha Rao. The main focus of our discussion on human rights was, however, Kashmir.

Chief of Defence Staff

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister on what date he was first informed that the position of Sir Peter Harding as Chief of the Defence Staff might be compromised.

The Prime Minister: I was first informed of the circumstances which led up to the resignation of Sir Peter Harding on Saturday 12 March.

Bosnia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if, during his visit to Bosnia he sought to establish whether British-manufactured or designed shells, and British-licensed guns, have been used offensively against Bosnian civilians and British service men in Bosnia.

The Prime Minister: We have no evidence of British-made or British-designed weapons or ammunition being used offensively in Bosnia.

We understand that a formerly British-owned 1942 40mm Bofors gun has been surrendered under the ceasefire arrangements in central Bosnia.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Second World War Commemorations

Sir Jim Spicer: To ask the Prime Minister whether he intends to invite German representation at the events commemorating the end of the second world war.

The Prime Minister: The commemoration in Britain on 7 May 1995 of the end of the second world war will be the occasion to celebrate the 50 years of peace and reconciliation we have enjoyed since 1945. During that time we have developed extremely close relations with our allies and partners in Germany. We very much hope Germany will play a full part and be represented at a high level in the 1995 commemorations, for which planning is now in hand.

The focus of the 1995 commemorations will be:

- a service in St. Paul's;
- a parade in central London; and
- a lunch or dinner for the Heads of State or Government who attend.

In addition we hope to arrange a variety of events throughout the country designed to build on the theme of reconciliation.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to the Cabinet Office for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to him this represents.

The Prime Minister: In the past 12 months approximately 3 per cent. of my written parliamentary questions were referred to the Cabinet Office for answer.

Council of Europe

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Prime Minister whether he has replied to the letter from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Catherine Lalumière, concerning participation in the Council of Europe's campaign against racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware I have not received such a letter, but I understand that Mrs. Lalumière has written to the Lord Chancellor who will be replying shortly.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's views on the proposed changes to the European Court's treatment of human rights cases.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, 21 March, *Official Report*, column *31*.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My Department answers parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Diplomatic Representation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which independent countries of the world the United Kingdom is unrepresented by career members of the diplomatic service.

Mr. Goodlad: There is currently no resident representation by career members of the diplomatic service in the following independent countries: Afghanistan, Andorra, Armenia, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, North Korea, Laos, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Micronesia, Moldavia, Monaco, Nauru, Niger, Rwanda, St. Kitts and Nevis, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, Surinam, Tajikistan, Togo, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Western Samoa. Total countries: 49.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which countries his Office is represented solely by locally engaged staff.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is currently represented solely by locally engaged staff and/or honorary consuls in 28 independent countries: Afghanistan, Benin, Burkina, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Liechtenstein, Mali, Mauritania, Monaco, Niger, Rwanda, Surinam, Togo, Western Samoa.

In three of those countries it is represented solely by locally engaged staff: Afghanistan, Burundi, Kiribati.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which posts of his office have been reduced since 1990; and by how many staff.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is in the table:

FCO posts overseas
Reductions in United Kingdom based staff
1990–94

Country	*Post*	*Reduction*
Algeria	Algiers	3·0
Antigua	Antigua	1·0
Australia	Canberra	6·0
Austria	Vienna	3·0
Austria	Vienna CSCE	4·0
Bahamas	Nassau	5·0
Bangladesh	Dhaka	11·0
Barbados	Bridgetown	5·0
Belgium	Brussels	6·0
Belgium	Brussels JMO	2·0
Belgium	Brusselsukrp	4·0
Bolivia	La Paz	1·0
Brazil	Sao Paulo	1·0
Bulgaria	Sofia	2·0
Burma	Rangoon	2·0
Cameroon	Yaounde	2·0
Canada	Montreal	1·0
Chile	Santiago	2·0
China	Peking	3·0
China	Shanghai	1·0
Costa Rica	San Jose	1·0
Cuba	Havana	5·0
Cyprus	Nicosia	2·0
Czech Republic	Prague	8·0
Denmark	Copenhagen	2·0
Ecuador	Quito	2·0
Egypt	Alexandria	1·0
Egypt	Cairo	4·0
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	2·0
Fiji	Suva	1·0
Finland	Helsinki	6·0
France	Lyons	1·0
France	Marseilles	1·0
France	Paris	14·0
Germany	Berlin	28·0
Germany	Bonn	12·0
Germany	Dusseldorf	4·0
Ghana	Accra	3·0
Greece	Athens	4·0
Guyana	Georgetown	2·0
Honduras	Tegucigalpa	1·0
Hungary	Budapest	5·0
India	Calcutta	2·0
India	New Delhi	10·0
Iraq	Baghdad	15·0
Italy	Rome	3·0
Jamaica	Kingston	4·0
Kenya	Nairobi	5·0
Kuwait	Kuwait	1·0
Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	3·0
Malta	Valletta	1·0
Mauritius	Port Louis	2·0
Mexico	Mexico City	3·5
Morocco	Rabat	3·0
Netherlands	The Hague	1·0
Nigeria	Lagos	5·0
Norway	Oslo	2·0
Oman	Muscat	1·0
Pakistan	Karachi	3·0
Panama	Panama City	1·0
Paraguay	Asuncion	1·0
Peru	Lima	1·0
Poland	Warsaw	7·0
Qatar	Doha	1·0
Saudi Arabia	Riyadh	2·0
Senegal	Dakar	1·0
Sierra Leone	Freetown	1·0
Singapore	Singapore	5·0
Solomon Islands	Honiara	1·0
South Africa	Pretoria	3·5
Spain	Barcelona	1·0
Spain	Madrid	3·0
Sri Lanka	Colombo	1·0
Sudan	Khartoum	8·0
Sweden	Stockholm	1·0
Switzerland	Berne	1·0
Switzerland	Geneva Ukdel	0·5
Switzerland	Geneva Ukmis	1·5
Tanzania	Dar Es Salaam	1·0
Trinidad	Port of Spain	2·0
Turkey	Ankara	2·0
Turkey	Istanbul	3·0
United Arab Emirates	Abu Dhabi	1·0
United Arab Emirates	Dubai	4·0
Uruguay	Montevideo	5·0
United States of America	Chicago	3·0
United States of America	Los Angeles	1·0
United States of America	New York Btio	4·5
United States of America	New York Cg	1·5
United States of America	New York Jmo	6·0
United States of America	Washington	47·0
Venezuela	Caracas	3·0
Yugoslavia	Belgrade	3·0
Zaire	Kinshasa	5·0
Zambia	Lusaka	5·0
Zimbabwe	Harare	3·0
Kiribati	Tarawa	1·0
Congo	Brazzaville	1·0
Canada	Edmonton	1·0
Gabon	Libreville	2·0

Country	Post	Reduction
Somalia	Mogadishu	3·0
Liberia	Monrovia	3·0
Afghanistan	Kabul	3·0
Nigeria	Kaduna	6·0
Yemen	Aden	3·0

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs where his Department proposes to open new posts during the coming year.

Mr. Goodlad: There are no plans at present to open new posts staffed by United Kingdom-based officers. However, discussions are well advanced with the Japanese and South Korean authorities about proposals to open trade offices staffed by locally engaged officers in Nagoya and Pusan respectively.

BBC World Service

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking to increase the service given by the BBC world service and by BBC world service television in the coming year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are discussing with the world service plans for the 1994-97 triennium funding period. These include increases in broadcasting to Russia and to central Asia with the introduction of Uzbek and Azeri services. World Service Television operates commercially and decisions about its development are a matter for the BBC. It has the support in overseas markets of the official commercial and information services available to exporters.

Torture

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will extend to United Kingdom citizens the use of his good offices to resolve issues of compensation for torture undergone in countries where they have difficulty in pursuing legal action in the courts.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In principle we would make representations on behalf of any British national who has suffered in the way described. But there are difficulties in cases of dual nationals in the country of their second nationality.

Nuclear Test Ban

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the announcement by the United States Administration that it intends to maintain the nuclear test ban moratorium until September 1995.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have reaffirmed that we have no intention of testing while the United States moratorium continues, and that we will work with energy and speed towards the conclusion of an effective comprehensive test ban treaty.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to encourage states to join negotiations on a multilateral, verifiable fissile materials cut-off.

Mr. Goodlad: We supported the United Nations General Assembly resolution last year which called for the negotiation of a convention prohibiting the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We also supported the appointment on 1 February of a special co-ordinator at the conference on disarmament, who is currently seeking the views of its member states on the most appropriate arrangements for the negotiation of a cut-off convention.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the cost of overseas travel in 1993 for each of his Office's Ministers.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on 16 February, *Official Report*, c. *766*, and 24 February, *Official Report*, c. *389*.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985 including this year to date on official business; and what was the cost to his Department of each flight.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

EC Majority Voting

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy statements have been made to the House since 1979 about majority voting in the EC.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which document Her Majesty's Government were informed of the proposal to change the arrangement in the Community treaties for qualified majority vote in the Council of Ministers; who originated any such proposals; when they were received by Her Majesty's Government; how and by what means these and associated voting arrangements were made public in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* within other member and co-ordinate states of the Community.

Mr. Goodlad: The accession of new countries to the European Union requires substantial treaty amendment, including the amendment of qualified majority voting

arrangements. The Union's negotiating position has evolved over several months on the basis of informal presidency texts. The Brussels European Council in December 1993 settled the Union's negotiating position on a number of institutional issues and invited

"the General Affairs Council to supplement that decision by determining the threshold for the qualified majority of votes within the Council in the context of finalizing the enlargement negotations."

These decisions were recorded in the conclusions of the Council, deposited in the House on 13 December 1993. The qualified majority threshold has been a matter of active negotiation since that time. It is not possible to say whether or when any information on this subject has been made public in other member states or the applicant countries without incurring disproportionate costs.

Hong Kong Airport

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest talks on the future of Hong Kong airport.

Mr. Goodlad: A meeting of experts under the Sino-British airport committee was held on 3 March to discuss the Hong Kong Government's fourth financial proposal which was handed to the Chinese side on 2 February. The contents of diplomatic exchanges have to remain confidential. However, we believe that our latest proposals fully meet all the Chinese side's expressed concerns and hope that a full meeting of the airport committee can be convened shortly.

East Timor

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to Indonesia in accordance with United Nations resolutions regarding East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: We have encouraged the Indonesians and Portuguese to co-operate with the UN Secretary-General in his efforts to find a comprehensive solution for East Timor in line with the request in UN General Assembly resolution 37/30. We believe that the continuing dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia under the Secretary-General's auspices offers the best prospect for reaching agreement.

Turkish Gendarmerie Commander

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whom General Ilter, Commander of the Turkish Gendarmerie, met in the Ministry of Defence during his visit to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: I have been asked to reply.

When General Ilter, Commander Head of the Turkish Gendarmerie, visited the Ministry of Defence, he met my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence and General Sir Peter Inge, the then Chief of the General Staff.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the trial of British passport holders for seditious activity in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Four British passport holders were charged with treason—aiding a coup attempt—on 23 December in Freetown, and remain in custody there. Since 13 January this year a Sierra Leonean magistrate has been hearing evidence on the case in order to decide whether it should be referred to the High Court. The accused are being well treated: our high commission has full consular access.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress on disarmament and the establishment of a transitional Government in Liberia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We welcome the agreement of the signatories to the Cotonou agreement to establish a transitional national Government on 7 March and to commence the disarmament process.

We hope all aspects of the Cotonou agreement will now be fully implemented and that there will be no slippage in the timetable leading up to elections on 7 September.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if a date for elections has yet been set for Liberia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under the terms of the Cotonou agreement, elections are planned for 7 September 1994.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the United Kingdom's contribution to the Liberia trust fund has now been spent; and on what.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our contribution of $1 million is reserved for humanitarian purposes. None has yet been spent.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the strength of each of the national forces contributing to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group initiative in Liberia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no first-hand information but understand that the numbers are approximately as follows:

	Number
Nigeria	9,000
Ghana	1,000
Uganda	850
Tanzania	850
Sierra Leone	500
Gambia	[1]
Guinea	[1]
Mali	[1]

[1] Less than 100 each.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the demobilisation of child soldiers in Liberia; and what contribution Britain is making to their rehabilitation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The disarmament of Liberia's armed factions, to be followed by demobilisation, is now

taking place. It is not yet possible to judge how many child soldiers there are in Liberia. We have this year provided £1·6 million, including £672,000 to the United Nations Trust Fund for Liberia, in humanitarian assistance for Liberia, principally in support of Save the Children Fund, UNICEF and Red Cross programmes. These programmes include provision for the tracing, demobilisation and rehabilitation of child soldiers.

TRANSPORT

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received covering the planned red routes in London.

Mr. Norris: We have received representations from Members of Parliament, London borough councillors, residents, businesses, community groups and others, mostly about the extent of the red route network and the detailed measures, which are the subject of consultation by the Traffic Director for London.

Ticket Purchase

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that passengers who are unable to buy a valid ticket on the London Underground are not unduly penalised or harassed by the authorities.

Mr. Norris: London Underground has introduced a range of measures to minimise instances in which a passenger wishing to buy a ticket cannot do so. On those occasions when a ticket cannot be obtained there will be no liability to pay a penalty fare. London Underground's revenue control officials will be able to check the status of the ticket machines at any station on the network at the relevant time. A clear and accessible appeal mechanism will be available for any passengers who feel they have been unfairly charged.

Penalty Fares

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the possible amount to be recovered by London Transport in penalty fares.

Mr. Norris: London Underground estimates that it will recover some £5 million in extra revenue in the first year after the introduction of penalty fares and some £8 million in each year thereafter.

Fare Evasion

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the loss of revenue to London Underground due to fraud and evasion of buying tickets in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norris: London Underground estimates that, in the 1992-93 financial year, fraudulent travel cost it £30 million in lost revenue.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made regarding proposals to modify the Reading, Redhill, Tonbridge railway line to carry freight to the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: The stretch between Redhill and Tonbridge has already been upgraded. Railtrack will be commencing its study of the route between Reading and Redhill next month.

Lorries (Emissions)

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce measures requiring lorries to be fitted with devices to trap PM10 emissions.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 21 March 1994 at column *100*, and to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to a question from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) at column *114*.

The need for any further action will be judged in the light of the advice of the expert bodies referred to in my hon. Friend's reply.

Pollution

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce measures to provide for localised traffic bans to be imposed at times of high pollution incidence.

Mr. Key: The Government are not yet convinced of the cost-effectiveness of such measures. The introduction of catalytic converters on new petrol-engined cars through directive 91/441/EEC has resulted in overall reductions in regulated emissions of up to 80 per cent. from these vehicles. The next stage of emission reductions is now agreed for 1996-97 with a further enhanced package of measures under consideration for the year 2000. There are new emission limits for heavy-duty vehicles already agreed for the year 1996 with further requirements being considered for the year 2000. The result of these measures will be a considerable reduction in transport-related emissions until well into the next century.

Other measures that will benefit local air quality include encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking and, for the longer term, considering the possible benefits of congestion charging and the use of the planning system to reduce the need to travel by car. That last is addressed in the Government's recently published planning policy guidance note 13 on transport and land use planning.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to promote more widespread usage of catalytic converters on motor vehicles.

Mr. Key: None. Regulations are already in place which effectively require all new petrol-engined passenger cars to be fitted with catalytic converters, and which extend the requirement to new car-derived vans from 1 October 1994. An estimated 2.5 million cars are already fitted with the devices and, as the decade advances, there will be a natural progression towards an almost total catalyst-equipped fleet by the year 2003.

Diesel

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce measures to discourage the use of diesel as a motor engine fuel.

Mr. Key: A study on diesel vehicle emissions and urban air quality by the quality of urban air review group has recently reported and the Government have commissioned research from the energy technology support unit on the possible effects of increased diesel use. We are studying that research carefully. The Department of Health's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants is expected to report on the possible health effects of particulates later this year.

We have already agreed tighter emissions limits for future diesel vehicles and we will consider whether further action is necessary in the light of expert advice.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a detailed breakdown of amounts and the recipients of the £1·6 million which will be spent by the Office of the Rail Regulator in the financial year 1994-95 on external consultants for rail privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The regulator informs me that he expects to incur the majority of his planned expenditure on external consultants in obtaining advice on questions of economics, accounting, business efficiency and legal advice in connection with the exercise of his statutory functions relating to the approval of access agreements and the monitoring of licences. It is his intention to let contracts on the basis of fair and open competitive tendering.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a detailed breakdown of the amounts and recipients of the £5·9 milion he estimates will be spent by the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising in the financial year 1994-95 on external consultants for rail privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The Office of Passenger Rail Franchising will require a range of consultancy services in 1994-95, including legal, financial and accountancy advice. The expenditure required in respect of specific consultancy services will depend on the precise amount of work commissioned.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a breakdown of amounts and recipients of the £12 million he estimates will be spent by his Department in the financial year 1994-95 on external consultants for rail privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The £12 million expenditure for which the Department has made provision in the financial year 1994-95 is expected to cover advice on legal issues, merchant banking, accountancy and taxation, marketing, access charges, freight issues and information systems. The detailed breakdown will depend on how much work is commissioned in each area.

Goods Vehicle Operating Licences

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether local residents will continue to have the opportunity to object to the granting of a goods vehicle operating licence under the proposals set out in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

Mr. Norris: Yes.

Engine Emissions

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has received about the impact of vehicle emissions on air quality in London.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The London energy study carried out by the London Research Centre was published on 15 September 1993; it was funded by the European Commission, London Electricity plc and the Department of the Environment. One of the principal outputs of the study was a very detailed inventory of energy use, and the resultant emissions of pollutants to the London atmosphere covering almost 2,000 sq km in and around London. The table illustrates the contribution from road transport for each pollutant in 1991.

London 1991, road transport

	Percentage of total emissions
Carbon dioxide (as carbon)	33
Sulphur dioxide	22
Black smoke	96
Carbon monoxide	99
Nitrogen oxides	76
Volatile organic compounds	97

Rail Equipment Orders

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many orders were placed by British Rail in each financial year since 1990-91; what are the projections for 1994-95 and 1995-96 for *(a)* mainline passenger and freight locomotives, *(b)* mainline passenger coaches, *(c)* regional multiple units and *(d)* freight and goods wagons of all descriptions.

Mr. Freeman: Orders of traction and rolling stock by British Rail since 1990-91 were as follows:—

Financial year and description	*Number*
1990-91	
Locomotives (Class 92)	30
Electric multiple units	111
Container wagons	700
1991-92	
Locomotives (Class 92)	7
Electric multiple units	104
Diesel multiple units	63
Channel tunnel trainsets for North of London services	7
Automotive wagons	300
1992-93	
Locomotives (Class 92)	9
Electric multiple units	188
Channel tunnel night stock	139
Intermodal wagons	450
1993-94	
Electric multiple units	164

BR orders for subsequent years will be a matter for the new rolling stock leasing companies to be established on 1 April.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Sir John Wheeler: At 14 March 1994 there were 1,316 staff in the Northern Ireland civil service—4·4 per cent. of the service—who self reported a disability. Of these 470 —1·6 per cent. of the service—were, or had been, registered as disabled. In addition, 77 registered disabled people are working in the Northern Ireland civil service under the sheltered placement scheme.

There were no self-reported disabled in the home civil service.

European Funding

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds have been allocated to Belfast Harbour Commissioners from the European regional development fund in each year since 1980.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information is as follows:

Year	*Amount (£)*
1980	1,770,000
1981	1,100,000
1982	630,000
1983	450,000
1984	1,425,000
1985	750,000
1986	3,100,000
1987	5,462,500
1988	1,812,500
1989	1,500,000
1990	7,434,843
1991	30,584,700
1992	3,532,000
1993	6,787,500

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds have been allocated to Belfast airport from the European regional development fund in each year since 1980.

Mr. Tim Smith: The following European regional development fund grants have been committed to Belfast international airport since 1980:

	£ million
1982	2·108
1986	2·640
1988	0·999
1990	7·610
1991	0·314
1992	3·524

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds have been allocated to Belfast Harbour Commissioners by the European Commission from sources other than the European regional development fund in each year since 1980.

Mr. Tim Smith: No funds have been allocated to Belfast Harbour Commissioners by the European Commission from sources other than the European regional development fund.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants have been allocated to Belfast airport by the European Commission from sources other than the European regional development fund in each year since 1980.

Mr. Tim Smith: Since 1980, Belfast international airport has not received grants from any European Commission source other than the European regional development fund.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what proportion of capital projects is eligible for grant aid to public sector bodies in Northern Ireland under the European regional development fund;

(2) what proportion of a capital project is eligible for grant aid to private sector bodies in Northern Ireland under the European regional development fund.

Mr. Tim Smith: Public sector bodies may receive assistance of up to 75 per cent. of the total eligible expenditure for projects assisted by the European regional development fund. Private sector bodies may receive up to 50 per cent.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what study he has made on the impact of the privatisation of Belfast airport on the airport's eligibility for EU regional development grants.

Sir John Wheeler: Following the privatisation of Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. Belfast international airport will continue in principle to be eligible for assistance from the European regional development fund under Council Regulations 2082/93 article 17.

Police Complaints

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he will make available the report of the triennial review by the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The report has been laid today. It reviews the working of articles 4 to 16 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 during the period 1991-1994.

This is the second such report from the commission, which was established in 1988. I am glad to note that it is satisfied with the statutory procedures in the order for the handling of complaints from the public against individual police officers. However, it has made six recommendations which it considers will further enhance these procedures and, before reaching any decision on them, I intend consulting with the various interested bodies. I shall report to the House further in due course.

I am grateful to the commission for the considerable effort that has been put into the preparation of the report. The commission, by its fair and thorough handling of individual complaints, has already done much to improve the relationship between the police and the public it serves. Its triennial review is further evidence that it is concerned to ensure that the complaints system operates efficiently, effectively and impartially for all the parties involved and, most important, that it is seen to do so.

Security Statistics

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the security statistics, together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type offences and convictions for scheduled offences, for the period January to June 1993 will be available.

Sir John Wheeler: Security statistics for January to June 1993 are as shown. Statistics for earlier years can be obtained from the Library.

Statistics on security for the period January to June 1993

Contents	*Page number*
Table 1: a. Shooting incidents	1
b. Explosions/estimated weight	1
c. Bombs neutralised/estimated weight	1
d. Armed robberies	1
e. Amount stolen	1
f. Deaths	1
g. Injuries	1
Table 2: a. (i) Dwellings searched by the Army	2
a. (ii) Dwellings searched by the RUC	2
b. Finds	2
c. Persons charged with terrorist-type offences	2
Table 3: Tables of Convictions and Sentences for Scheduled Offences	3-5

Table 1
Statistics of terrorist activity

	Number
a. Shooting incidents[1]	230
b. Explosions	94
Estimated weight in kilograms	2,239
c. Bombs neutralised	28
Estimated weight in kilograms	1,413
d. Armed robberies[2]	250
e. Amount stolen	£670,257
f. Deaths:	
Civilian	29
Regular Army	3
Royal Irish Regiment	2
RUC	2
RUC Reserve	1
TOTAL	37
g. Injuries:	
Civilian	244
Regular Army	69
Royal Irish Regiment	18
RUC	60
RUC Reserve	15
TOTAL	406

[1] Excludes shots heard.
[2] Excludes attempts.

Table 2
Statistics of security forces activity

	Number
a. (i) Dwellings searched by the Army:	
Occupied	312
Unoccupied	85
Derelict	27
TOTAL	424
a. (ii) Dwellings searched by the RUC:	
Occupied	
Unoccupied	*see note* (1)
Derelict	
TOTAL	1,571
b. Finds:	
Weapons	137
Ammunition (rounds of)	7,545
Explosives (weight in Kgs)	312
c. Persons charged with terrorist-type offences:	
Murder	6
Attempted murder	36
Firearms Offences	49
Explosives offences	13
Armed robbery	22
Others	57
TOTAL	183

Notes:
(1) Breakdown into occupied, unoccupied or derelict not provided by the RUC.
(2) Searches of dwellings frequently involve both Army and the RUC and are registered in their respective records. The totals should therefore not be aggregated and are shown separately to avoid an element of double counting.

Table 3
Convictions and sentences for scheduled offences tried on indictment at Belfast Crown Court 1993

Offences	*Persons convicted*	*Non-custodial sentence*	*Young offenders centre/ training school*	*Custodial sentences (January—June 1993)* *Less than 5 years*	*5 years and less than 7 years*	*7 years and less than 10 years*	*10 years and less than 15 years*	*15 years and less than 20 years*	*20 years and over*	*Detained S.O.S.*	*Life*
Murder	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Aiding and abetting murder	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Attempted murder	24	0	1	0	1	1	10	8	3	0	0
Conspiracy to murder	19	0	0	0	0	1	4	8	6	0	0
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wounding for grievous bodily harm with intent	6	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manslaughter	7	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kidnapping and false imprisonment	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arson	13	10	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol bomb offences	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hijacking	7	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Offences	Persons convicted	Non-custodial sentence	Young offenders centre/ training school	Custodial sentences (January–June 1993) Less than 5 years	5 years and less than 7 years	7 years and less than 10 years	10 years and less than 15 years	15 years and less than 20 years	20 years and over	Detained S.O.S.	Life
Robbery	47	9	12	21	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blackmail	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing items for terrorist purposes	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withholding information	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attempting to elicit information useful to terrorists	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of information useful to terrorists	4	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Making property available	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withholding information about an arrestable offence	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying firearm with intent	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of firearm and ammunition in suspicious circumstances	9	4	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of firearm with intent	17	4	0	2	3	4	2	2	0	0	0
Explosives offences	11	1	0	0	1	2	5	1	1	0	0
Intimidation	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Receiving[1]	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Breach of suspended sentence	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	209	50	26	49	14	10	21	19	10	0	10

Notes:

1. Non-scheduled offences[1] are included in table 3 where a defendant and/or co-defendants were charged with scheduled offences, and where the charge was 'reduced' (eg from robbery to handling stolen goods), or where a defendant pleaded guilty to a lesser charge.
2. Breach of suspended sentences are included where the orders were made on scheduled offences. They are also included where the breach of conditions for non-scheduled offences are heard along with other scheduled offences.
3. Where a person has been convicted of more than one offence, only that offence which received the longest sentence is recorded in the statistics.
4. Unless where specifically stated (e.g. attempted murder or conspiracy to murder) attempts, conspiracy, aiding and abetting and involvement are included in the main offence.

Gaelic

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the total sums spent on promoting Irish Gaelic in each of the last 15 years.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* Government funding for projects which involve the promotion of Irish is provided from a variety of sources. Figures prior to the year 1985-86 are not available. Total Government spending in each of the years from 1985-86 was as follows:

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Central community relations unit	—	—	—	—	88,065	282,050	523,000	363,000
Belfast action team initiative	—	—	1,000	2,219	89,204	27,343	46,400	38,400
ACE programme	64,002	140,830	187,274	290,855	315,175	273,867	146,500	285,000
NIO (prison education)	22,294	34,618	29,400	31,582	37,044	29,883	61,500	50,000
Arts Council for NI	2,000	4,000	5,000	5,000	19,000	14,700	33,600	33,600
[1]Origin of placenames project	—	—	47,230	100,000	121,000	—	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	88,296	179,448	269,904	429,656	669,488	627,843	811,000	770,000

[1] From April 1990 responsibility for the origin of placenames project was transferred from the Department of the Environment to CCRU. Expenditure from 1990-91 is included in the CCRU figure.

These figures exclude Department of Education funding for the teaching of or through Irish.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Sir John Wheeler: Within the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments, freephone facilities are currently used for:

the confidential telephone, the purpose of which is to provide a means for those with information about terrorism to pass on what they know to the police;

the freeline social security service which provides information and advice on social security benefits;

the benefit inquiry line which provides specific information about disability benefits and assistance with forms completion to disabled people.

Freephone facilities are also operated: by the citizens charter unit for providing information on the charter; by the industrial relations division for general inquiries or claims from members of the public concerning redundancy and employees' rights on the insolvency of an employer; by the industrial research and technology unit to provide an innovation inquiry point for Northern Ireland industry and the public and to provide an environmental inquiry point to assist local industry in seeking professional advice on a broad spectrum of environmental issues affecting their business; and by the Training and Employment Agency to increase awareness among people with disabilities of the support which the disablement advisory service of T and EA can offer.

The information requested regarding operating costs for freephone facilities is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, from information available the estimated cost of freephone facilities for the financial year 1992-93 was £41,112 and for 1993-94 to date is £46,455.

Freepost including the business reply service is currently used for the return of transfer procedure tests, inspectorate papers and statistical information on schools and teachers, for vehicle tax enforcement procedures, for licensing of taxi drivers, and to assist and encourage the return of information required in connection with the processing of claims, benefits and surveys.

The cost of operating freepost including the business reply service is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, from information available the estimated cost for 1992-93 was £426,302 and for 1993-94 to date is £360,359.

HEALTH

Hospitals, Liverpool

14. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last visited Liverpool to discuss hospital provisions; and if she has plans for a further visit in the near future.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last visited Liverpool on 26 July last year, as part of her Mersey regional tour, and will be visiting the region again on 25 June 1994.

I visited Liverpool on 14 March.

GP Fundholders

15. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many GP practices are now participating in the fundholding initiative in Trent region; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are 159 general practitioner practices in Trent covering 31 per cent. of the population.

27. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has received on the effect of the general practitioners fundholding initiative on patient care.

Dr. Mawhinney: Fundholders are leading the way in improving services for patients. Improvements include shorter waiting times, out-patient clinics in general practitioner surgeries, better discharge arrangements and more cost-effective prescribing.

Cottage Hospitals

16. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what priority she attaches to the role of cottage hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: Community hospitals have an important role to play in providing health services to meet certain local needs.

NHS Expenditure

17. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the gross domestic product was spent on the national health service in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the percentage in 1978.

Mr. Sackville: Total national health service expenditure in the United Kingdom was equivalent to 5·9 per cent. of the gross domestic product in 1993-94, compared with 4·7 per cent. in 1978-79.

Grimsby Health Trust

18. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she proposes to ensure that the Grimsby health trust does not give priority to the patients of fundholding GPs.

Dr. Mawhinney: Joint guidance issued by the Department of Health and the medical profession in June 1991 clearly states that hospitals should not offer contracts to one purchaser that disadvantage the patients of another. However, hospitals may offer spare capacity to any purchaser who wishes to buy it, including fundholders.

Hospital Trusts

19. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will seek to improve the methods by which hospital trusts consult the public about planned or contemplated closures and reductions in hospitals and their related services.

Dr. Mawhinney: No, because it is district health authorities which are required to consult the relevant community health council not trusts.

Charing Cross Hospital

20. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to make a statement about the future of Charing Cross hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State yesterday announced that she has approved the application by Hammersmith, Charing Cross, Queen Charlotte's and Acton hospitals to become a single national health service trust. The new trust will come into being from 1 April.

Health Education Authority

21. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the Health Education Authority.

Mr. Sackville: Representations are received from time to time about various aspects of the Health Education Authority's work. Recently these have included an early-day motion tabled by my hon. Friend and others about "The Best Sex Guide".

Pharmacists

22. **Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the funding settlement with pharmacists.

Dr. Mawhinney: A remuneration offer for 1994-95 was made to the pharmacists' representatives on 14 March. This took account of their recent representations to us.

Prescriptions

23. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescriptions were issued last year; and what was their total cost to the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1992-93, general practitioners in England wrote 432 million prescriptions at a cost, including dispensing fees, of £3,303 million.

Elderly People (Health Care)

24. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the provision of health care under the NHS for elderly people who have suffered a stroke and are incontinent.

Mr. Bowis: The national health service is responsible for the provision of health care for all who are clinically assessed as needing it.

GP Drug Purchases

25. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the current guidelines laid down by her Department on the purchase of drugs used by general practitioners in the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: The vast majority of drugs prescribed by general practitioners are purchased and dispensed by community pharmacists. In those cases where GPs purchase drugs to dispense or administer themselves they do so as independent contractors. They are reimbursed for these at discounted rates against the national drug tariff.

NHS Trusts

26. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS trusts are now in operation in the Wessex region; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: From 1 April 1994 there will be 26 national health service trusts operational in the Wessex region. All hospitals in the Wessex region will operate as trusts from 1 April 1994.

Paediatric Nurses

28. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paediatric nurses there are in England; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In September 1992 there were 11,190 whole-time equivalent nurses working within paediatrics, compared with 9,660 in 1989, an increase of 15·8 per cent.

Site and Services Review, Sunderland

29. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ask the Sunderland health authority to make available the Ceri Davis site and services review; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The work undertaken in Sunderland by the independent team led by Ceri Davis was at the invitation of the Sunderland city hospitals unit. It is therefore for that authority to decide whether and to whom to make the report available. The district health authority will consult widely on any substantial proposed changes in service.

Acute Psychiatric Beds

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to review the provision and geographical spread of acute psychiatric beds in the NHS.

Mr. Bowis: The provision of psychiatric services is a matter for each district health authority. The health advisory service is currently reviewing district purchasing plans. The mental health task force has started work on the position in London.

Consultants

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the organisation which recommends merit awards for consultants; and if she will place in the Library the detailed criteria underlying these awards and the remuneration which follows for each category.

Dr. Mawhinney: The members of the Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards are as listed. The criteria for awards are set out in the leaflet "Consultants' Distinction Awards", a copy of which is available in the Library. The value of each of the four levels of awards effective from 1 April 1994 is as follows: A+-£48,605, A-£35,815, B-£20,465, C-£10,235.

Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards
Membership at 31 December 1993

Chairman: Professor Sir Gordon Robson CBE FFARCS
Vice-Chairman: Mr. A. L. Rennie CB

Members:
Professor Sir Herbert Duthie MD FRCS Eng FRCS Ed
Dr. J. R. Bennett FRCP
Mr. A. W. F. Lettin MS FRCS
Professor J. D. Swales MD FRCP
Professor A. C. P. Sims PRCPsych
Professor Sir Keith Peters FRCP
Professor Dame June Lloyd DBE MD FRCP DCH
Professor A. A. Spence PRCA
Dr. C. H. Paine BSc MA FRCP PRCR
Professor L. A. Turnberg MD PRCP
Professor N. L. Browse MD PRCS
Mr. A. P. J. Ross MS FRCS
Professor J. D. Hardcastle MA MChir FRCS FRCP
Professor G. V. P. Chamberlain PRCOG
Professor A. J. Bellingham PRCPath
Dr. J. M. O'Brien PFPHM FRCP
Mr. K. Ray FDSRCS
Mr. R. Atlay FRCOG
Professor G. D. Chisholm FRCP FRCS
Professor J. C. Petrie FRCP
Mr. C. MacKay FRCS
Professor L. G. Whitby FRSE PhD MD FRCP
Sir Duncan Nichol CBE

Epilepsy

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department gives on the long-term care of people suffering from different types of epilepsy.

Mr. Bowis: The long-term care of people with epilepsy is a professional matter for individual clinicians. The level of service available to meet the needs of sufferers is for determination by health authorities in the light of local priorities and available resources.

In 1993, the journal "Seizure" published a document on "Epilepsy Needs" drawn up by specialists in this field. This contains a helpful overview and epidemiology and describes the range of services available.

We have made funding available to the British Epilepsy Association/David Lewis centre to set up a model epilepsy clinic.

Brain Tumours

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many brain tumours have been diagnosed in children aged *(a)* five years or younger, *(b)* between five and 10 years, and *(c)* aged between 10 and 15 years within each regional health authority area in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The available information will be placed in the Library.

Community Care

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total increase in overall public expenditure on community care in each year since 1991.

Mr. Bowis: Total figures for public expenditure on community care for years since 1991 are not yet available.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline her Department's policy on the care and treatment of drug users under the community care programme.

Mr. Bowis: The Government attach a high priority to the establishment of effective community-based care services for those who misuse drugs, for which local authorities were given responsibility from April 1993.

Independent monitoring of these new arrangements shows that services are becoming more diverse and responsive to local needs. The Government will continue to keep the provision of such services under review, within general arrangements for monitoring community care.

Marriages

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people who divorced in each of the last three years got married at *(a)* 16, *(b)* 17 and *(c)* 18 years of age.

Mr. Sackville: The numbers of men and women who divorced in the last three years for which information is available, and who were aged 16, 17 and 18 when they married, are shown in the table.

England and Wales

Age at marriage	*Year of divorce (obtaining decree absolute)* 1989	1990	1991
Husbands			
16	171	167	158
17	1,029	970	931
18	4,029	3,780	3,853
Wives			
16	2,596	2,363	2,244
17	6,606	6,165	6,121
18	14,766	14,321	14,190

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Schizophrenia

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what effect she takes of research into the targeting of mental health services in respect of people with schizophrenia in developing her policies; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Assuming the hon. Lady means "account" rather than "effect" in her question, I can assure her that research studies commissioned by the Department or drawn to its attention are taken into account when formulating policy.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by her and her ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Sackville: Some 1,813 letters were received and 1,652 responses sent.

Drugs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what requirements for secure storage of drugs and equipment form part of her Department's agreements with pharmacists; what discussions she has had with pharmacists on pharmacy stores security in the last 12 months; and what allowance is taken in the payment structure for pharmacy services of either local or general security problems.

Dr. Mawhinney: The requirements for the handling and storage of controlled drugs are contained in the Misuse of Drugs (Safe Custody) Regulations 1973, as amended, which are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. For community pharmacists these regulations mean that, so far as circumstances permit, controlled drugs, with certain exceptions, must be kept in a locked safe or container. For non-controlled drugs, there are no statutory requirements. However, the code of ethics of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain sets out the practice standards with which pharmacists must comply. These include exercising a proper degree of professional care and control over the drugs and equipment in pharmacists' possession. Practice expenses are reflected in the global sum of money available for pharmacists' pay.

Contractual Incentives

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contractual incentives Doncaster royal infirmary, Mexborough Montagu NHS trust hospital, and Doncaster Healthcare NHS trust offer to general practitioner fundholders within Trent regional health authority and Doncaster health authority to secure contracts for treating their patients; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions in the last five years she has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Sackville: None. The Department answers parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Dentistry

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she takes to monitor variations in quality between private dental treatments and those dental treatments offered under the national health service; and what are her findings;

(2) what plans she has to eliminate differences in quality between the national health service dental service and the services of the private sector.

Dr. Mawhinney: Private dental treatment is a matter for the dentist and the patient. The Department does not monitor standards in the private sector but there is no reason to believe they are below those generally achieved in the national health service. The national health service general dental service provides registered patients with all the care and treatment necessary to secure and maintain their oral health. The dental reference service ensures that the quality of general dental services is maintained.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which areas of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's review of the dental remuneration system she has implemented since its publication in 1992;

(2) what plans she has to eliminate the inefficiencies of the NHS dental service.

Dr. Mawhinney: In line with his terms of reference, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report identified options for reform of the dental remuneration system rather than specific recommendations. Our proposals will be announced shortly.

Orthopaedics

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had from orthopaedic surgeons about the provision of bone-related tissue from *(a)* living patients undergoing hip replacement and other operations and *(b)* cadavers, for operations involving the build-up of the skeletal structure in patients undergoing knee replacement and other operations.

Mr. Sackville: None recently.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what calculation she has made of the additional resources that will be required by the national health service as a consequence of the operation of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Sackville: None. The annual risk attributable to individuals from radiation from Sellafield has been estimated as "vanishingly small". This was set out in the reply I gave the hon. Member on 11 January, *Official Report*, column *117*. We have not attempted to quantify the costs which might occur as a result of conventional industrial accidents occurring on site; this assessment is not normally made for industrial operations at any site.

Special Transitional Grant

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken to monitor the local impact of variations in levels of special transitional grant; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have in hand a wide-ranging programme of monitoring and evaluation looking at all aspects of the new community care arrangements. Resources for community care came from the personal social services/standard spending assessment, from the special transitional grant and from various specific grants.

Performance Pay

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much performance-related pay has been paid to health service employees in each year since it was introduced, by region and district.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made towards the abolition of regional health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: As a first step towards the new structure announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 21 October last year, the number of regional health authorities will be reduced from 14 to eight on 1 April 1994. From the same date eight regional offices of the management executive will be established, sharing common boundaries with the new regional health authorities. Legislation to abolish regional health authorities altogether will be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

Asthma

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her estimate of the prevalence of asthma in school children;

(2) what steps she intends to take to increase awareness and reporting of childhood asthma.

Mr. Sackville: The recently published "Health Care Needs Assessment No. 5, Lower Respiratory Disease Research Review", a copy of which will be placed in the Library, and which is funded by the Department of Health, states that the prevalence of asthma in children aged nought to 14 is 12 to 15 per cent.

The Department plans to include questions on asthma in children, from the age of two upwards, in the health survey for England in 1995. Last July, the Department launched the chronic disease management programme, which is an organised programme of care run by general practitioners for people with asthma. General practitioner practices are collecting information on asthma. This information will in time show both the incidence and prevalence of asthma.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she gives to parents of asthmatic children living in urban areas regarding *(a)* air quality and *(b)* passive smoking.

Mr. Sackville: Information on air quality and relevant general advice to those suffering from respiratory conditions is available continuously to the public on the freephone helpline: 0800 556677. Any individual can obtain medical advice specific to his condition from his general practitioner.

The links between passive smoking and asthmatic children were discussed in the reply I gave the hon. Member on 18 March, *Official Report*, columns *886-87*. Our advice for parents of asthmatic children is to protect their children by not allowing them to breathe in tobacco smoke.

Accident and Emergency Statistics

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by region, the number of new accident and emergency cases for each month since November 1992.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not collected on a monthly basis for new accident and emergency attendances. The most recent annual figures are shown in the table.

New accident and emergency cases, NHS hospitals, England—by region 1992-93

	Number
Northern	712,704
Yorkshire	851,205
Trent	926,631
East Anglia	338,875
North West Thames	771,198
North East Thames	964,819
South East Thames	918,914
South West Thames	617,496
Wessex	564,475
Oxford	453,362
South Western	663,641
West Midlands	1,333,724
Mersey	702,597
North Western	1,086,088
Special health authorities	87,473
England Total	10,933,202

Source: KHO9 returns

Out-patients

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish a table showing for each region the percentage of patients entering accident and emergency departments who were seen and assessed for treatment within five minutes of their arrival in the last period for which figures are available;

(2) what proportion of patients in each English health region were seen within 30 minutes of their out-patient appointment in the last period for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Regional performance as at 31 December 1993

	Immediate assessment in accident and emergency departments Percentage	*30 minutes waiting time in outpatient clinics Percentage*
Northern	86	87
Yorkshire	83	77
Trent	88	77
East Anglian	90	80
North West Thames	80	73
North East Thames	80	79
South East Thames	82	74
South West Thames	82	80
Wessex	82	79
Oxford	79	77
South Western	72	77
West Midlands	86	87
Mersey	90	79
North Western	82	80

Prostate Cancer Screening

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to improve prostate cancer screening for men.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans currently to introduce a national NHS screening programme for prostate cancer. The key aim of any screening programme must be to secure a demonstrable improvement in health by increasing length of life and enhancing quality of life. There is, as yet, no evidence that this would be achieved in relation to prostate cancer. The Department is aware of the need to assess the value of available techniques for the early detection of prostate cancer. Several research projects are currently being undertaken locally.

Pollution

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will estimate the number of premature deaths through lung disease caused annually by pollution from vehicle emissions;

(2) what assessment she has made of the impact of vehicle emissions on incidence of *(a)* leukaemia, *(b)* kidney cancer, *(c)* brain tumours, *(d)* chronic bronchitis, *(e)* emphysema, *(f)* asthma, *(g)* atherosclerosis and *(h)* heart failure.

Mr. Sackville: A number of estimates of deaths related to vehicle emissions have been made. Many assumptions are implicit in these and some use data from abroad. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 21 March, *Official Report*, c. *71-72* which sets out the action taken to assess the health effects of vehicle emissions.

Abortion

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by regional health authority the number of pregnancies that have been terminated by request by ethnicity for each of the last four years for which she has figures available.

Mr. Sackville: A pregnancy may be terminated only if two registered medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith, that an abortion is justified under one or more of the grounds specified in the Abortion Act 1967, as amended. The abortion notification sent to the chief medical officer does not include ethnic information.

Head Injuries (Treatment)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which hospitals in London employ multi-disciplinary rehabilitation teams for treating local patients who have suffered severe head injuries.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 8 March, *Official Report*, c. *161*.

Luton and Dunstable Trust Hospital

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement regarding the resignation of Mrs. Avril Dongworth, chief executive at Luton and Dunstable trust hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Luton and Dunstable trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. David Young, the chairman, for details.

Consultant Clinics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to prohibit consultants being paid for taking clinics in general practitioner fundholders' surgeries.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number and proportion of (i) men and (ii) women who will see improvements in their pension entitlements as a result of home responsibilities protection in (1) 2000, (2) 2010, (3) 2025 and (4) 2035.

Mr. Hague: The number of women, as estimated by the Government Actuary's Department, who would benefit from extending home responsibilities protection to the state earnings-related pension is shown in the table. Also shown is the percentage of female pensioners who would be affected. Data are not held which would allow reliable similar figures to be produced for men; however, the numbers are likely to be small.

Year	*Number million*	*Percentage of female pensioners*
2000	0·1	1
2010	1·0	15
2025	3·0	50
2035	4·0	55

Note:
The above figures for 2025 and 2035 assume state pension age of 65 for women.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that increases in pensions are made concurrently with increases in VAT charges at the beginning of the financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: In compliance with the statutory obligation imposed by section 150 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992, pensions will be increased in the week beginning with the first Monday in the new tax year.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by year for the last four years how much has been paid in housing benefit in London; and to how many households in Lewisham this benefit was paid.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Expenditure in London (£000)[1]	821,400	1,061,950	1,468,250	1,686,370
Housing benefit caseload in Lewisham[2]	28,700	31,400	34,400	33,000

Data sources:
Housing benefit, benefit subsidy claims and the housing revenue account claims and the housing benefit management information system quarterly caseload counts.
[1] The information has been rounded to the nearest £10,000.
[2] The numbers of households are averages of the four quarters and are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Netherlands Report

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, columns *217-18*, if he will obtain a copy of the Netherlands report on social security and poverty as global issues, already published in preparation for the world summit on social developments planned to take place in Copenhagen in March 1995; and if he will consider preparing a similar contribution for the world summit to add to the contributions of other members of the European Union.

Mr. Hague: No such report has been prepared by the Dutch Government. However, I understand that the Netherlands National Advisory Council on Development Co-operation held a conference on this issue as part of its 30th anniversary celebrations. The report of the conference is not due to be available until May 1994. Information on all relevant issues has already been provided to the United Nations in preparation for the world summit on social development.

Statutory Maternity Pay

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes are planned to the system of statutory maternity pay.

Mr. Hague: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on 8 March at columns *139-40*.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of whether the weather station at Finningley used to assess cold weather payments covers too wide an area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: All weather station coverage for the cold weather payments scheme is founded on the expert advice of the meteorological office. This is kept under regular review and refinements made. Current advice from the meteorological office is that the Finningley coverage is sensible and meteorologically sound.

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate, on the basis of the case 2 assumptions used in "The Growth of Social Security" and the projections of expenditure on different benefits derived from these assumptions, the proportion of *(a)* all and *(b)* newly retired pensioners who will be in receipt of income support in 1999-2000, in 2020 and in 2035.

Mr. Hague: On the basis of case 2 assumptions used in "The Growth of Social Security", approximately 13 per cent. of all pensioners in 1999-2000 would be expected to be in receipt of income support. Similar estimates for newly retired pensioners and for 2020 and 2035 are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sources: The 1994 social security departmental report and the social security publication "The Growth of Social Security 1993".

Benefit Tourism

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the outcome of the representations he has received from the Government of the Irish Republic on benefit tourism.

Mr. Hague: Proposals to tackle benefit tourism are currently before the Social Security Advisory Committee. Its representations, and all others, will be taken into account before regulations are laid before Parliament.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals have been lodged with the Child Support Agency, Falkirk against assessments of parental contributions since October 1993; how many have been heard; how many have been successful; and what is the average time in having an appeal determined.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Lilley: My team of Ministers and I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", as have our predecessors. We also seek to comply with the Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers to oral questions.

Child Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place the range of most up-to-date application forms and guidance notes for child benefit in the Library, together with the application forms for that benefit that are being piloted for future general use, and the previous application forms and guidance notes that have been in use generally, or experimentally, within the last 12 months.

Mr. Hague: They have been placed in the Library.

Service Widows (Pensions)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what considerations underlie the decision to restrict the pensions of widows of service men who died from smoking or drink-related diseases.

Mr. Hague: A war widow's pension is paid when the death of a service man or former service man is due to or hastened by service. It has been the long-standing policy of successive Governments that only where a severely disabling mental condition, which is itself due to service, renders the individual incapable of exercising personal choice should the effects of tobacco or alcohol be regarded as due to service. Amending legislation, which comes into force on 28 March, is intended to clarify the law in this respect. It will not affect the entitlement of any existing pensioner.

Pensioner Income

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much pensioners' real average income has risen since 1979.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

Percentage increase in pensioners' total average real income between 1979 and 1990-91

	Percentage increase before housing costs	*Percentage increase after housing costs*
All pensioners	42	54
Pensioner couples	39	53
Single pensioners	39	49

Notes:

1. Estimates derive from the Family Expenditure Survey. 1990-91 is the latest year for which information is available.
2. "All pensioners" includes single people over pension age and couples where the husband is over pension age.

Pension Entitlements

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the number of women who fail to claim or receive a retirement pension to which they are entitled at the age of 60 years; what estimate he has of the total amount of money unclaimed by such women; and what plans he has to enable women to make backdated claims for the entire period for which they have a pension entitlement.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested.

The only available information relates to the number of women who, on claiming retirement pension, receive increments because they deferred, either intentionally or unintentionally, claiming a pension based on their own contributions, to which they would have been entitled at age 60.

It is estimated that at March 1993 approximately 29,000 women aged 60 to 63 were receiving increments to a pension based on their own contributions. Estimates for women aged 64 or over receiving pension increments are not relevant because the increments may relate to periods prior to October 1989 when pension entitlement was precluded by the earnings rule rather than by a failure to claim.

We have no plans to change the existing provisions governing the time limit for claiming retirement pension and the maximum period for which arrears can be paid.

Malaysian Airline

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Hague: Since April 1993 no Minister or official has travelled on MAS. Prior to that date information is not available.

Prosecutions

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many prosecutions were instigated by his Department in the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 by nature of offence; by the number of convictions; by the number of custodial sentences; and by the financial penalties involved.

Mr. Hague: The available information is as follows:

Number of prosecutions

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Fraud prosecutions instituted by Benefits Agency	7,917	[1]4,385	5,821
Prosecutions instituted by the Contributions Agency	419	233	81
Total	8,330	4,612	5,895

[1] Figures for organised fraud prosecutions are not available for this year.

Notes:

1. Prosecutions for liable relatives sections, the predecessor of the Child Support Agency, were as follows:
   a. 11 people were prosecuted in 1990.
   b. 4 people were prosecuted in 1991.
   No figures are available for 1992.
2. We do not record prosecutions by nature of the offence.

In 1992-93, 98 per cent. of benefit fraud prosecutions instigated by the Benefits Agency were successful. No similar record of convictions is held for the years 1990-91 or for 1991-92. No records are held for the Contributions Agency.

The figures for convictions by the liable relatives section are:

a. 1 person was convicted in 1990:
b. 4 people were convicted in 1991.

The figures available for custodial sentences are for benefit fraud in 1992-93. There were 33 custodial sentences for benefit fraud prosecutions instituted by the Benefits Agency in this year. Figures are not available for previous years. No records are held for the Contributions Agency or for liable relative sections.

Statistics for financial penalties are not available for 1990-91 or 1991-92. The only statistics available are for Benefits Agency fraud in the year 1992-93:

	£
Compensation awarded	1,084,974
Costs	149,183
Fines	230,396

Destruction of Records

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how long after a benefit case goes dormant clerical records, cashed girocheques and order book foils are kept before they are destroyed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The administration of benefit records is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. he will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Porter, dated 21 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the storage times for clerical records, cashed girocheques and order book foils prior to destruction.

Clerical records are normally kept for a minimum of eighteen months after the cessation of the claim before they are destroyed.

Girocheques are destroyed six months after encashment. Since November 1992 they have been put onto microfilm before destruction, and the microfilms are kept for between six and seven years.

Order book foils are stored for twelve months after encashment before they are destroyed.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wheelchairs

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he has any new proposals to provide access for wheelchair-bound strangers to observe debates in the House.

Mr. Ray Powell: The question of access by wheelchair-bound visitors to proceedings in the Chamber and Committees will be included in the Committee's forthcoming inquiry into access arrangements for the disabled. If the hon. Member has any suggestion to make in this respect he is invited to write to the Committee.

Upper Waiting Hall Exhibitions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will review the system of allocating the Upper Waiting Hall for exhibitions so that hon. Members who win in the ballot cannot enter again in the life of that Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The arrangements for exhibitions in the Upper Waiting Hall were last considered by the Administration Committee on 10 March 1993.

I will ensure that the hon. Member's proposal is considered by the Committee at a future meeting.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the National Infertility Awareness Campaign to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 20 June to Friday 24 June.

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the work of the Samaritans to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 18 July to Friday 22 July.

Sir George Gardiner: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to ICSTIS—the Independent Committee of the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services—to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition on the work of the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards for Telecommunications and Information Systems to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 4 July to Friday 8 July.

Foyer Exhibitions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how many hon. Members have *(a)* entered and *(b)* been successful in ballots for foyer exhibitions in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of hon. Members entered ballot	*Number of hon. Members successful in ballot*
1990	69	35
1991	76	33
1992	57	29
1993	89	33
[1]1994	83	22

[1] To date.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of accidents on employment training/training for work, broken down by fatal, major and minor for the latest available three-month period, shown by region; and how many ET/training for work providers had contracts terminated *(a)* in that period and *(b)* in the three preceding months for reasons of inadequate health and safety.

Miss Widdecombe: The following table gives the latest available training for work accident figures for the quarter October to December 1993.

Region	*Fatal*	*Major*	*Minor*
South-East	0	2	9
London	0	0	3
Eastern	0	0	4
South-West	0	1	7
West Midlands	0	1	9
East Midlands	0	0	7
Yorkshire and Humberside	0	1	23
North-West	0	3	16
Northern	0	1	11
Scottish Enterprise	0	2	14
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	0	0	0
Welsh Office	0	2	4
National Totals	0	13	107

Notes:

1. Employment Department figures for training for work participants have been compiled on a similar basis to those for employees by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). However, the Employment Department's figures also include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments, and road traffic accidents, which would not have been reportable to HSE for employees.
2. Major and minor injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

Information on training for work provider contracts terminated by training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies for reasons of inadequate health and safety is not held centrally.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of people who are in training but are not included in figures for people in work.

Miss Widdecombe: In Great Britain in December 1993, there were estimated to be 7,600 participants on Government training programmes who were not included in the count of the work force in employment.

Unemployment, Westbury

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of unemployment in the Westbury travel-to-work area.

Miss Widdecombe: Westbury is part of the Trowbridge and Frome travel-to-work area. In February 1994 the rate of claimant unemployment was 8·1 per cent. —a fall of 1·5 percentage points on a year ago.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time jobs there were in the economy in (i) the latest quarter for which figures are available, (ii) the equivalent quarter 12 months previously and (iii) two years ago.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is shown in the following table:

Workforce in employment: Great Britain (seasonally adjusted)

	Thousands	
	Full-time	*Part-time*
December 1991	18,405	6,640
December 1992	17,538	6,779
December 1993	17,438	6,940

Tourism

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the number of people employed in the tourism industry; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: In December 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 1,436,400 employees in employment in tourism-related industries in Great Britain.

Youth Unemployment

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new initiatives he plans to reduce youth unemployment in London.

Miss Widdecombe: The local Employment Service and training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help young people in the area find the best and quickest route to employment. The Government intend to improve the range of opportunities available to school leavers still further in London and elsewhere by introducing modern apprenticeships in 1995.

Working Hours

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many hours were worked in the economy in each of the last four quarters.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey of the total number of hours worked by employees and the self-employed, in each of the last four quarters, are given in the following table:

Total hours worked by all employees and self-employed Great Britain—not seasonally adjusted

Quarter	*Total hours (billions)*
Winter 1992-93	10·1
Spring 1993	10·6
Summer 1993	10·3
Autumn 1993	10·8

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Hotels and Catering

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the number of people employed in *(a)* the hotel industry and *(b)* the catering industry.

Miss Widdecombe: In December 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 231,000 employees in employment in the hotel industry, Standard Industrial Classification 665, and 895,000 in the catering industry, Standard Industrial Classification 661-664, in Great Britain.

Skill Centres

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the record of the skill centres in London since privatisation.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has not contracted with the former skill centres since privatisation. Former skill centres which deliver Government training programmes under contract to training and enterprise councils are subject to the same financial and quality assurance checks as other providers. Therefore, no specific assessment of their record in London has been undertaken.

DEFENCE

Arms Sales

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any representative of his Department has met Mr. Gerald James, Mr. Michael Cruddas or Mr. Tim Laxton to discuss the sale of armaments;

(2) what information he has as to the involvement of Mr. Gerald James, Mr. Michael Cruddas or Mr. Tim Laxton in the sale of arms to countries overseas.

Mr. Hanley: My officials had routine contacts with Mr. James in his capacity as chairman of the defence manufacturing company Astra. These contacts may have involved discussions relating to the possible export of equipment manufactured by Astra, but there is no record of this. As we made clear in evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee in 1992, meetings were also held to discuss contracts assumed by Astra, following the company's acquisition of the Belgian firm PRB. My Department has no information about Mr. Cruddas or Mr. Laxton and I have no knowledge of any contact between them and MOD officials.

Radiation Tests

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the involvement of the United Kingdom in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and United States Department of Defence-sponsored radiation tests on United States citizens from 1964 to the mid-1970s.

Mr. Hanley: To the best of our knowledge the United Kingdom has not participated in any radiation tests involving United States citizens.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Hanley: The code of practice on Government information will further improve and reinforce my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information to the public. Details of the code's implementation will be available at the time of the launch.

World Meteorological Day

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to mark World Meteorological Day on 23 March.

Mr. Hanley: To mark World Meteorological Day I shall be opening a special exhibition at the science museum in South Kensington where I will announce recent developments in meteorology and climatology.

Asbestos

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those organisations that have written to him over the last year regarding asbestosis and members of the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has no record of having received any correspondence from organisations regarding the general issue of asbestosis and the armed forces over the last year. It has, however, received letters in that time relating to individual cases from solicitors' offices, coroners' offices and the Department of Social Security.

Britannia Beagles Association

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the type and number of animals killed by the Britannia Beagles Association, for each year since 1989.

Mr. Hanley: The Britannia Beagles Association is a private club and therefore information of the type requested is not held by my Department.

Armed Forces (Tasks)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is standard practice for records to be kept of the tasks undertaken by members of Her Majesty's armed forces during duty hours and compulsory activities.

Mr. Hanley: In the main, service personnel fill posts with recognised duties attached to them, and records of tasks undertaken are not therefore required. However, for security, administrative, accounting and health and safety reasons certain duties require that records are maintained of work performed.

Hunts

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *588*, if he will list the occasions in each of the past three years when hunts from his Department's establishments have led to the kill of live quarry.

Mr. Hanley: Hunts are privately funded events and participation in them is a private matter for the individuals concerned. My Department does not therefore hold records of the information requested.

Performance Pay

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *363*, what plans he has to consider the introduction of performance-related pay for service personnel.

Mr. Hanley: The Government have asked the Armed Forces Pay Review Body and the Senior Salaries Review Body to consider whether the concept of performance pay could be applied to the armed forces. The AFPRB has decided to appoint management consultants to assist with its work in this area. We envisage that performance pay will also be among the issues which will be addressed by the major independent review of service career and manpower structures and terms and conditions of service, described in my answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, columns *362-63*.

Mines

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to purchase new types of mines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We are currently considering procuring three new types of anti-tank mine: mines in the new century—MINX—vehicle launched scatterable mine system—VLSMS—and aimed controlled effect anti-tank mine—ACEATM. We are also reviewing our future requirement for anti-tank mines generally and for anti-personnel land mines. We will continue to ensure that any land mine capability we have fully meets the requirements of the international laws of armed conflict.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what current research is being conducted into the future of mine warfare; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department conducts research into many aspects of mine warfare, including methods of mine location, methods of neutralisation of mines, remote control of mines, limited life mines and self-neutralisation of mines.

These efforts are fully consistent with the international laws of armed conflict, including the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention, protocol 2 of which contains strict rules governing the use of land mines.

Ministerial Directions

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *401*, if he will set out the reasons for the issuing of formal directions on each of the occasions listed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The directions listed in my answer of 10 March were made because the Secretary of State for Defence at the time, or another Defence Minister, had decided, after considering all the factors involved including the advice of the accounting officer, that a particular course of action should be followed. The decisions were:

D Day 40th Anniversary celebrations: To provide transport on Defence Votes for a representative group of veterans to attend the celebrations.

Type 22 Frigate: To place an order for one Type 22 frigate with Cammell Laird and an order for a second with Swan Hunter.

Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment: To place the order for the second Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment on a single tender basis.

HMS Endurance replacement: To acquire Polar Circle (already on charter in this role) as the replacement ice patrol ship without a further survey of the market.

Chieftain replacement: To place an order for Challenger 2 as the replacement for the remaining two regiments of Chieftain tanks.

RNSD Copenacre: To close the depot in part rather than fully.

Image Intensifiers: To place an order for image intensifiers with English Electric Valves.

United Nations (Rations)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) of 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *783-84*, and his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1054*, what changes have taken place relating to the length of time of the proposed trial of the United Nations ration supply system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The proposed two-month trial of the United Nations ration supply system which was due to commence on 1 April has been delayed as a result of the United Kingdom troops at Tomislavgrad being re-deployed elsewhere in central Bosnia. The trial is now scheduled to commence on 1 May and will last for three months.

Ceremonial Uniforms

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *483*, if he will list the non-Ministry of Defence sources that have been used to purchase special items of ceremonial uniforms.

Mr. Aitken: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Landing Platform Dock Replacement

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *943*, if he will make it his policy to make a statement about the embarked force capability of the landing platform dock replacement once the project definition studies have been completed.

Mr. Aitken: Yes.

Accommodation Charges

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to change the current arrangements that determine accommodation charges in *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 1996, or *(c)* 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The accommodation charges paid by service personnel for both married and single accommodation are set on the basis of recommendations made by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body. There are no plans to change this arrangement.

Redundancies

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to make any members of the Ministry of Defence police force redundant.

Mr. Hanley: None, although a study is in hand into the role, aims, objectives, structure and pay of the MOD police. It is too early to say whether redundancies will result from this study.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to utilise the services of those serving in the armed forces who will be made redundant as a result of the forthcoming cuts in the spending of his Department.

Mr. Hanley: At this stage it is too early to speculate about the need for further redundancies.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the operational reasons for transferring search and rescue Sea King helicopters from RAF Brawdy to RAF Chivenor in July.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

EDUCATION

Mature Women Students

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many mature women students were taking degree courses at British universities in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Boswell: Information on the number of home-domiciled mature entrants to first degree courses at institutions in Great Britain is given in the table below.

Academic year	*Men*	*Women*
1979-80	14,600	10,800
1980-81	14,000	10,300
1981-82	14,800	11,000
1982-83	14,100	10,800
1983-84	14,000	10,700
1984-85	13,600	11,200
1985-86	14,800	12,900
1986-87	15,600	13,100
1987-88	16,600	15,300
1988-89	18,700	17,700
1989-90	21,000	21,500
1990-91	24,300	25,000
1991-92	35,900	35,500
1992-93	47,126	45,894

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the names of the interviewers who appointed Philip Head to the Further Education Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1019*. In addition to Mr. Roger McClure, the council's director of finance who acted as chairman, the panel which interviewed short-listed candidates for the post of head of property services consisted of Ms Di Hill, the council's personnel manager, and Mr. Christopher Jonas, a member of the council with relevant property expertise. The actual appointment was made in the light of subsequent discussions which were conducted by Mr. McClure.

Charter Costs

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total cost to his Department of *(a)* the higher education charter, *(b)* the further education charter and *(c)* the parents charter since their inception; and what are the estimated costs for 1993-94 and the budgeted costs for 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost of the parents charter campaign which was launched in September 1991 was £2·1 million. The further and higher education charters were jointly produced, printed, distributed and advertised in 1993-94. While it is not possible to attribute separate costs to either charter, the total cost of this campaign was £1·4 million.

The cost of the revised parents charter, to be launched later in the spring, is £2·2 million, falling in 1993-94, while the budgeted cost of distribution in 1994-95 is estimated at some £500,000 although contracts have yet to be let.

Hazardous Sports Courses

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what minimum level of training and qualifications he proposes to be necessary for a teacher or leader to possess when involved in canoeing and other hazardous sports courses.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no general power to prescribe by regulation requirements of this kind. However, relevant advice is given with respect to a wide range of outdoor activities in the Department's publication "Safety in Outdoor Education". That advice will shortly be supplemented by further guidance on procedures which should be observed by schools and others in the education service in arranging outdoor activities, which takes into account lessons learned from the Lyme bay tragedy.

School Repairs

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the estimated amount of outstanding repairs required to schools in each local education authority area in London.

Mr. Forth: Such information is not held centrally, either for individual LEAs or for LEAs in a particular region.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent on the repair and maintenance of school buildings by local education authorities in London in each financial year since 1989-90.

Mr. Forth: The total amount spent on the repair and maintenance of school buildings by inner and outer London LEAs since 1989-90 was as shown in the table. The figures include the costs of materials, charges and recharges by external agencies on the upkeep of buildings, fixed plant, grounds and sites.

Year	*Expenditure (Actual, £ million)*
1989-90	88·5
1990-91	78·3
1991-92	81·0
[1]1992-93	84·0

[1] Provisional.

Books

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent by each local education authority in London on books in 1993 prices in *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1984-85, *(c)* 1989-90 and *(d)* 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on total expenditure on books and equipment by each local education authority in London is given in the following table. The table shows combined figures for books and equipment because not all authorities' returns identify spending on books separately.

Total Expenditure on Books and Equipment by Inner and Outer London LEAs, in 1992-93 prices

LEA	*1979-80 (£000)*	*1984-85 (£000)*	*1989-90 (£000)*	*1992-93 (£000)*
ILEA	64,060	50,427	32,397	—
Corporation of London	—	—	—	25
Camden	—	—	—	2,770
Greenwich	—	—	—	[1]5,052
Hackney	—	—	—	[1]5,120
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	—	2,209
Islington	—	—	—	[1]4,571
Kensington and Chelsea	—	—	—	1,192
Lambeth	—	—	—	[1]5,027
Lewisham	—	—	—	9,529
Southwark	—	—	—	4,112
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	[1]5,837
Wandsworth	—	—	—	3,514
Westminster	—	—	—	4,910
Barking	4,911	[2]n/a	2,988	3,465
Barnet	5,177	3,748	3,449	5,069
Bexley	2,888	2,168	2,794	2,274
Brent	3,942	3,116	4,032	4,239
Bromley	3,052	3,334	3,331	2,322
Croydon	3,161	3,841	4,520	5,403
Ealing	3,530	3,049	2,396	2,686
Enfield	2,546	2,738	2,152	1,337
Haringey	2,723	2,849	[2]n/a	[1]3,374
Harrow	2,896	2,244	4,039	[1]3,750
Havering	2,748	3,080	3,816	4,392
Hillingdon	2,479	2,152	2,415	3,014
Hounslow	2,474	2,638	[2]n/a	[1]3,065
Kingston upon Thames	3,553	3,463	2,694	[1]2,270
Merton	1,891	1,454	2,895	[1]3,144
Newham	3,377	2,328	3,564	[1]3,955
Redbridge	2,009	2,026	3,338	3,831
Richmond upon Thames	1,496	1,380	2,433	2,130

LEA	1979-80 (£000)	1984-85 (£000)	1989-90 (£000)	1992-93 (£000)
Sutton	1,683	1,482	1,927	1,801
Waltham Forest	3,241	2,916	2,835	3,015

[1] Indicates a provisional figure for 1992-93.
[2] "n/a" indicates return not received from the LEA.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Patten: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". I also do my best to take account of the need for brevity in answering oral questions.

Schools (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for each grant-maintained *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school in south Yorkshire for 1993-94; and what is his estimate for 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total budgets for each grant-maintained school in south Yorkshire for 1993-94 and the estimates for 1994-95 are as follows:

	1993-94 £	1994-95 £
Primary		
Clifford CE GM school	142,728	139,644
Handsworth St. Joseph's RC primary school	102,235	275,536
St. Ann's RC junior school	111,772	326,003
St. John Fisher RC primary school	214,822	388,037
Secondary		
All Saints RC school	1,526,786	2,255,473
Notre Dame school	1,226,379	2,019,747

The amount shown for the total budget in 1993-94 includes annual maintenance grant, special purpose grants for restructuring development, premises, VAT, transitional grant and capital grants payable to the schools.

The amounts shown for the estimated total budget in 1994-95 include annual maintenance grant, special purpose grants for restructuring, development, premises, transitional grant and capital grants likely to be payable to the schools. Special purpose grants for VAT are not included as they will not be calculated until annual maintenance grants are finalised.

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many employees of the Further Education Funding Council have worked in further education either as academic or administrative staff; and what proportion this number is of the total staff.

Mr. Boswell: Of the total 338 staff currently employed by the Further Education Funding Council, 137—42 per cent.—previously worked within the education sector, 82—25 per cent.—of whom were directly employed in further education, including 51 of the council's 70 inspectors.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many employees of the Higher Education Funding Council have worked in higher education as either academic or administrative staff; and what proportion this number is of the total staff.

Mr. Boswell: Nine employees of the Higher Education Funding Council for England have previously worked in higher education institutions either as academic or administrative staff. This is about 5 per cent. of the total staff. A further 10 have worked in organisation closely linked with higher education. These figures exclude council members and contract and specialist quality assessors.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Overseas Aid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how his Department's use of overseas aid helps reduce political instability in the countries to which it is awarded, as asserted at paragraph 34 of his Department's annual report 1994, Cm. 2502.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The promotion of good government—including democracy and the rule of law—is one of the ODA's priority objectives. This contributes directly to political stability by strengthening legal channels for the resolution of political differences. More generally, the main purpose of ODA's assistance is to promote economic and social development, thus addressing some of the causes of political instability. We have paid particular attention to helping to improve the economy and civil society in countries which have experienced periods of civil unrest such as Uganda and Mozambique.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs between what dates the section on aid and trade provision review within the chapter on the overseas aid budget at pages 56-58 of his departmental annual report and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1997-98 Cm. 2502 was written.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA section of the report, including the section on the aid and trade provision, was compiled and edited during the period September 1993 to January 1994. The text on the aid and trade provision was first drawn up in November 1993.

Indonesia

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* current aid projects and *(b)* current Government contracts with Indonesia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The current bilateral aid projects in Indonesia are as follows:

Aid and Trade Provision

1. Steel Bridging—Phase 1—Bailey-type bridges for the Ministry of Public Works.
2. Marine Navigational Aids—for the Directorate of Sea Communications.
3. Scattered Diesel Generators—for the Indonesian Electricity Authority (PLN).
4. Television Studios, Bandung—equipment of new studios for Republic of Indonesia TV.
5. Cigading Port—provision of bulk handling equipment.
6. Cigading-Serpong railway—upgrading railway line for use in transportation of coal, cement and clinker.
7. Citayam-Cibinong Railway—a new single track railway line for use in transportation of coal, cement and clinker.
8. Radio Communications System for the Ministry of Forestry.
9. Jakarta Radio Studios—to re-equip studios for Radio Republic Indonesia.
10. Steel Bridging—Phase 2.
11. Jambi Diesel Power Plant—for PLN.
12. Security Systems for Bali and Medan Airports.
13. Flight Simulator for piston engine aircraft for Merpati Airlines.

Regular aid programme (mainly technical cooperation projects)

14. Tropical Forestry Management (includes five sub-projects).
15. Animal health.
16. Diponegoro University fisheries technology.
17. North East Sumatra Prawns.
18. Assistance to the National Grain Logistics Agency (BULOG).
19. Biotechnology development.
20. Assistance to clove production.
21. Gas distribution project—training for Indonesian Gas Authority Perusahaan Umum Gas Negara (PGN).
22. Hydrocarbon basin assessment project for Ministry of Mines and Energy (LEMIGAS).
23. Institutional strengthening of PLN.
24. Mini-hydro (PLN).
25. Primary Education.
26. Libraries and books development.
27. Institutional level English Language training.
28. National English Language teaching.
29. English Language teaching (distance learning).
30. South Sumatra Geological and Mining.
31. Regional finance.
32. National police management.
33. Public administration.
34. Development of professional training for Indonesian civil engineering consultants.

Aid financed research activities relevant to Indonesia

35. Collaboration between Indonesian Institute of Road Engineering and United Kingdom's Transport Research Laboratory.
36. Potential impact of climate change on Corals and Coral Reefs.
37. Forest resource accounting.
38. Fodder quality studies on Gliricidia sepium and other tropical multipurpose trees.
39. Poverty and sustainability in the management of capture fisheries in South and South East Asia.
40. Small Farm Ergonomics—handtools for crop production.
41. Local Application of Remote Sensing Techniques (LARST) for forestry management.
42. Effects of antibiotics on the microflora of aquaculture ponds and their products.
43. Quality improvement of turmeric and vanilla.
44. Assessment of aflatoxin contamination in spices.
45. Integrated pest management by modelling.
46. Cut and carry feeding systems for small ruminants on upland farms of West Java.
47. Feeding and management strategies for draught animals.
48. Labour investment in perennial crop production.
49. Variation in rice tungro viruses.
50. Biological characterisation of the pathogenic forms of the burrowing namatode, Radopholus similis, on perennial and other crops from different regions of the world.
51. Management of lepidopteran rice pests with pheromones.
52. Morphological and pathogenic characterisation of Elsinoe batatas: causal agent of sweet potato scab.
53. Seed production and experimental efficiency in a seedling seed orchard of Gliricidia sepium.
54. Management of Imperata cylindrica in smallholder farming systems.
55. Optimising the use of fumigant gases.
56. Transfer of coconut shell waste heat recovery unit technology to the Asian and Pacific region.
57. Validation of enzyme linked immunosorbent assays in the diagnosis and control of Trypanosoma evansi in South East Asia.
58. Assessing the present and future economic feasibility of True Potato Seed (TPS) in developing country agriculture.
59. Dipterocarp manual for foresters.
60. Evaluation of the content, composition and toxicity of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) in copra and derived products.
61. Biology of salt tolerance in Chrysomya megacephala (Diptera: Calliphoridae) and other species of blowflies which are pests of salted-dried fish in tropical developing countries.
62. Psocid ecology in relation to pest management in milled riced stores.
63. Characterisation and evaluation of key seed-borne fungal pathogens of rice.
64. Detection and identification of mycoplasmalike organisms (MLO) associated with little leaf disease of sweet potato (Ipomoea batatas).
65. Identification and epidemiology of insect vectors of mycoplasma-like organisms associated with little leaf disease of sweet potato (Ipomoea batatas).
66. Post-harvest processing of sweet potato in South-east Asia.
67. Tourism, Conservation and Sustainable Development.

In addition, there are 25 small projects and schemes—largest £14,200, smallest £19—covering essentially community-based activities in such sectors as water, agriculture, food, health and education.

Non-Governmental Organisations

Under the joint funding scheme with British NGOs, we are supporting some 21 schemes in sectors such as health, agriculture, horticulture, water, education, women's and community development.

We also provide support to VSO who have some 60 volunteers in Indonesia; about half are teachers and the remainder in natural resources, health and technical areas.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

The CDC, for which the principal source of external finance is the British aid programme, has investments totalling some £71 million covering 12 projects in sectors such as textiles, cement production power and plantation crops.

The Government have no contracts as such with Indonesia.

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of the Commonwealth Institute staff have now been made redundant or have received notice of redundancy; and what arrangements the Government have made for funding those redundancies.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Some 28 staff have been made redundant this year; a further 16 members of staff have recently received notice of redundancy; three employees on fixed-term contracts have not had them renewed.

An FCO grant of £2·4 million is being made available over the next two years to meet redundancy costs.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth about the future of the Commonwealth Institute.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Commonwealth Secretary-General serves, ex officio, as a governor on the institute's board. The assessors on the board, appointed by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to represent Government Departments in the United Kingdom, maintain a continuing dialogue with all governors, including the Secretary-General.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who are the leaseholders for the Commonwealth Institute site in Kensington.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under the Commonwealth Institute Act 1958, the Commonwealth Institute trustees are the leaseholders.

United Nations Specialised Agencies

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made, following UNCT resolution 44/211, of the balance of resources and effect between strengthening the role of the United Nations specialised agencies as centres of excellence and as aid agencies in the field.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/211, and the subsequent triennial review of progress embodied in resolution 47/199, we have been supporting efforts, through our membership of the agencies' governing bodies, to ensure that the specialised agencies concentrate on effective performance of their traditional functions. These include identifying global issues, analysing options and mobilising actions, rather than routine project implementation. Our assessment is that to date the agencies are responding satisfactorily to the pressure for reform, although we shall continue to monitor the situation closely.

SCOTLAND

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Lang: The code of practice will reinforce and build on my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information. In addition, my Department is considering the early release of blocks of records less than 30 years old and re-reviewing previously withheld material over 30 years old.

Dental Services

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dental practitioners within the Highland health board area have left the national health service over the last 18 months; and how many now restrict dental treatment within the national health service to children.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* Every general dental practitioner who intends to provide NHS treatment must join a health board dental list. Highland health board advises that 10 general dental practitioners have left its dental list in the past 18 months. The health board is not aware of any general dental practitioners in its area who restrict national health service dental treatment to children only.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* My Department has not set up any self-financing regulatory authorities since 1979.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on co-operation with departments of the Northern Ireland Office on trade, industry and transport between Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* My officials regularly meet those from Northern Ireland on matters of mutual interest, including those subjects mentioned by the hon. Member.

Drug-related Deaths

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many drug-related deaths there have been in Scotland in each of the last five years and in the current year to date; and if he will make a statement regarding the trend in drug usage and his plans to deal with the problem.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* In his annual report the Registrar General for Scotland gives a statistical summary of information, obtained during the death certification process, about deaths arising from the use of various drugs. However, it is known from special exercises that information derived in this way does not give a complete picture of the deaths which occur as a result of the misuse of controlled drugs, and efforts are in hand to improve the reliability of the statistics. The Scottish Office has estimated that, in the year beginning 1 November 1991, between 80 and 120 habitual drug misusers died as a direct result of drug misuse.

The misuse of drugs is a serious and continuing problem in Scotland. The drugs task force, chaired by my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State, is presently conducting a wide-ranging review of the current arrangements for tackling drug misuse in Scotland and considering ways in which the response might be enhanced.

Abortions

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many abortions were performed on women who were less than 13 weeks pregnant in each health board area for each year from 1990 to 1993; and how many of these operations involved admission and discharge of the patient on the same day.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The figures for 1993 are not yet available. The information for 1990-92 is as follows:

Under 13 weeks total

	1990	1991	1992
Scotland	9,112	10,005	9,764
Argyll and Clyde	616	629	477
Ayrshire and Arran	514	564	595
Borders	92	130	122
Dumfries and Galloway	219	212	219
Fife	586	607	577
Forth Valley	426	449	460
Grampian	1,077	1,203	1,160
Greater Glasgow	1,758	1,988	2,057
Highland	396	397	395
Island Boards[1]	14	13	26
Lanarkshire	591	637	681
Lothian	1,775	2,077	1,953
Tayside	1,048	1,099	1,042

[1] Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles Health Boards

Under 13 weeks—admission and discharge same day

	1990	1991	1992
Scotland	5,606	7,387	8,112
Argyll and Clyde	434	501	376
Ayrshire and Arran	348	533	566
Borders	70	121	112
Dumfries and Galloway	3	15	18
Fife	410	453	438
Forth Valley	109	292	393
Grampian	687	860	831
Greater Glasgow	628	1,120	1,750
Highland	289	307	320
Island Boards[1]	6	3	10
Lanarkshire	81	161	430
Lothian	1,582	1,986	1,879
Tayside	959	1,035	989

[1] Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles Health Boards

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many NHS-funded abortions were performed in non-NHS premises on women resident in each health board in Scotland for each year from 1990 to 1993.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* None.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fee-paying, private bed abortions were performed in national health service hospitals in each health board in Scotland for each year from 1990 to 1993.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* This information is not collected centrally.

Liver Biopsies

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the minimum and *(b)* the average number of days a patient stays in hospital after undergoing a liver biopsy operation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* Patients undergoing a liver biopsy in Scotland have an average length of stay in hospital of four days. The procedure can be carried out on a day case basis.

Nurses

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the whole-time equivalent number of student, pupil and Project 2000 nurses in each health board and in Scotland as a whole in 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The information requested, expressed in headcount terms, is set out in the table.

Nursing students by health board: 1989-93 (excluding 1991)

Health board	September each year	Student nurse[1]	Pupil nurse	P2000 student[1]
1989				
Scotland	8,408	7,679	729	—
Argyll and Clyde	506	418	88	—
Ayrshire and Arran	298	298	—	—
Borders	128	83	45	—
Dumfries and Galloway	220	220	—	—
Fife	486	421	65	—
Forth valley	389	389	—	—
Grampian	761	608	153	—
Greater Glasgow	2,405	2,365	40	—
Highland	288	288	—	—
Lanarkshire	602	539	63	—
Lothian	1,420	1,301	119	—
Orkney	24	—	24	—
Shetland	20	—	20	—
Tayside	832	720	112	—
Western Isles	29	29	—	—
1990				
Scotland	8,450	7,916	534	—
Argyll and Clyde	533	454	79	—
Ayrshire and Arran	314	314	—	—
Borders	129	94	35	—
Dumfries and Galloway	219	219	—	—
Fife	460	413	47	—
Forth valley	411	411	—	—
Grampian	701	595	106	—
Greater Glasgow	2,520	2,490	30	—
Highland	274	274	—	—
Lanarkshire	605	573	32	—
Lothian	1,368	1,260	108	—
Orkney	23	—	23	—

Health board	September each year	Student nurse[1]	Pupil nurse	P2000 student[3]
Shetland	16	1	15	—
Tayside	848	789	59	—
Western Isles	29	29	—	—
1992				
Scotland	7,685	6,193	89	1,403
Argyll and Clyde	532	410	8	114
Ayrshire and Arran	296	242	—	54
Borders	146	123	—	23
Dumfries and Galloway	230	190	—	40
Fife	408	307	1	100
Forth valley	431	280	—	151
Grampian	587	453	3	[4]131
Greater Glasgow	1,965	1,715	2	248
Highland	286	198	—	[2]88
Lanarkshire	595	495	—	100
Lothian	1,347	1,087	70	190
Orkney	11	6	5	—
Shetland	11	11	—	—
Tayside	828	664	—	164
Western Isles	12	12	—	—
1993				
Scotland	7,468	3,816	35	3,617
Argyll and Clyde	578	264	—	314
Ayrshire and Arran	330	153	—	177
Borders	154	86	—	68
Dumfries and Galloway	222	123	—	99
Fife	387	190	—	197
Forth valley	454	172	—	282
Grampian	660	288	1	[4]371
Greater Glasgow	1,561	918	8	635
Highland	310	140	—	[2]170
Lanarkshire	577	307	—	270
Lothian	1,340	734	26	580
Orkney	6	6	—	—
Shetland	11	11	—	—
Tayside	878	424	—	454
Western Isles	—	—	—	—

[1] Students training for their first qualification, ie excludes enrolled nurses training to become registered.
[2] Comprises Project 2000 students attending the Highland and Western Isles College of Nursing and Midwifery.
[3] Project 2000 student data are at 31 October.
[4] Includes Project 2000 students being trained for Orkney and Shetland Health Boards.

Health Care International

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many medical, nursing and other professional staff currently holding contracts of any type with Greater Glasgow health board or its previously associated trust hospitals, currently or at any time in the past, have simultaneously been contracted to work with Health Care International, Clydebank.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* No information is held centrally on medical, nursing and other professional staff of Greater Glasgow health board or of NHS trust hospitals in Glasgow contracting to work with Health Care International, Clydebank. NHS staff are entitled to contract with outside employers subject to the conditions set out in their NHS contract of employment.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek assurances from Health Care International that all medical, nursing, and other professional staff are on NHS terms and conditions of service in accordance with the conditions of authorisation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* Since the statutory authorisation of the building of the Health Care International hospital at Clydebank was granted in 1987, NHS trusts have been introduced which have freedom to determine the terms and conditions of service for the majority of their staff. In keeping with the objectives of the authorisation, HCI is seeking to provide remuneration and benefits packages for its staff which reflect current NHS terms and conditions of service. In determining such packages for medical staff, HCI takes account of the opportunities which exist for NHS staff to earn additional income from private practice and to qualify for distinction awards, neither of which are available to HCI staff.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements have been made for Health Care International to reimburse to the NHS reasonable nurse training costs as set out in the letter of authorisation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* HCI has agreed to contribute in kind to the cost to the NHS of nurse education and training by providing a significant local contribution in relation to clinical placements for student nurses in both general and specialty nursing units and by contributing to the preparation of post-registration nurses in specialty areas.

In addition, HCI has agreed to purchase specific post-registration education from colleges of nursing and to offer continuing nursing and education courses and seminars for its staff on a variety of topics.

These proposals will be subject to a review of progress within two years of the opening of the hospital. It is still too early in the hospital's development for any of the recommendations on the provision of placements to be put into practice, but my right hon. Friend intends to ensure that HCI fulfils its obligations.

Christmas Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by *(a)* Her Majesty's prison and *(b)* Her Majesty's remand prison the number of prisoners who applied for Christmas leave and the number of those who were granted Christmas leave; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 22 March 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of prisoners who applied for and were granted Christmas leave in 1993. You asked for these to be listed by (a) HM Prison and (b) HM Remand Prison. The information you requested is as follows:

(a) HM Prison	Applied	Granted
Open Establishments		
Noranside	119	119
Penninghame	59	59
Cornton Vale (Women)	4	3
Castle Huntly Young Offenders Institution	86	74
Polmont Young Offenders (Enhanced Regime)	20	8
Training For Freedom Hostels		
Aberdeen	2	2
Cornton Vale (Women)	1	1
Edinburgh	19	19
Perth	9	9
Polmont Young Offenders Institution	7	7
Total	326	301

(b) No remand prisoner in Scotland is eligible for Christmas leave.

Surplus Places (Cost)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of a surplus place in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* This information is not held centrally.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985 including this year to date on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Lang: No Scottish Office Minister or official from my Department, or its agencies, has travelled on the Malaysian airline MAS on official business.

Bird Killing

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the reasons for the decision not to prosecute in the case arising from the shooting of a short-eared owl on Dougarie estate, Isle of Arran.

Sir Hector Monro: It is not the policy of the Crown to give details of the reasons for decisions taken in individual cases. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate is, however, aware of the circumstances of this case and is satisfied that the procurator fiscal's decision not to proceed to trial was a proper one in the circumstances as then known to him.

Teachers

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many supply teachers are registered with each local authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest information available is set out in the table. Differences between individual education authorities in the criteria employed for compilation of their reserve or supply lists mean that the information is not suitable for regional comparison.

Teachers on reserve supply list as at 30 September 1993

	Primary	*Secondary*	*Special*	*Total*
Borders	157	235	32	424
Central	257	565	81	903
Dumfries and Galloway	310	126	9	445
Fife	275	299	0	574
Grampian	1,225	1,493	596	3,314
Highland	427	650	6	1,083
Lothian	242	362	67	671
Strathclyde	1,084	1,452	0	2,536
Tayside	458	750	6	1,214
Orkney	24	34	4	62
Shetland	46	40	0	86
Western Isles	70	66	0	136
Scotland	4,575	6,072	801	11,448

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what analysis has been undertaken by the Scottish Office Education Department into the number of teaching days lost due to stress-related illnesses since April 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None, as information on teacher absences is not held centrally.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for how many days supply teachers have been employed in the last year in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* each regional council area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Education Working Groups

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has in respect of the retention of copyright for publications produced by the regional working groups in education, following local government reform.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under clause 15 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, property vested

in one or more existing local authorities immediately before 1 April 1996 shall on that date be transferred to, and vest in, such new authority or authorities as may be specified in, or determined by, order by the Secretary of State. For the purposes of this clause, the definition of property includes copyright.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* special schools, by regional council area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provisional information for September 1993 is given in the table.

Pupil-teacher ratios in education authority schools, September 1993

	Primary schools	*Secondary schools*	*Special schools*
Scotland	19·5	12·8	4·5
Borders	18·4	12·5	2·8
Central	20·4	13·4	4·5
Dumfries and Galloway	18·6	12·3	1·9
Fife	19·3	13·5	3·6
Grampian	19·1	13·0	4·7
Highland	17·4	12·2	4·7
Lothian	20·0	12·9	5·0
Strathclyde	20·1	13·0	4·6
Tayside	19·4	12·3	4·3
Orkney	14·8	10·8	3·9
Shetland	12·4	9·0	3·7
Western Isles	14·2	9·6	5·3

Dornoch Academy

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dates on which his officials have met members of the school board of the Dornoch academy, and the matters discussed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Officials from the Scottish Office Education Department have met members of the school board of Dornoch academy on three occasions. On 27 October 1993 and 14 February 1994 officials met the full board and on 8 March 1994 they attended a meeting at which the chairperson and officials from Highland regional council were also present. In each case, the matters discussed have been directly related to the arrangements for the incorporation of Dornoch academy as a self-governing school from 1 April 1994.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds he has made available to the Dornoch academy school board for secured buildings and public liability insurance from 1 April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. After Dornoch academy becomes incorporated as a self-governing school on 1 April 1994, the board of management may apply for special purpose grant for premises insurance. The details of such arrangements are contained in the Self-Governing Schools Grant and Recovery (Scotland) Regulations 1994, laid before Parliament on 10 March 1994.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the correspondence which has passed between his officials and members of the Dornoch academy school board since 1 January 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not normal practice for copies of correspondence between the Secretary of State, or his officials, and third parties to be made public.

However, in order to clarify the Secretary of State's position with regard to the possible upgrading of Dornoch academy, I am arranging exceptionally to place in the Library a copy of a letter from my officials to the school board on this matter dated 11 March 1994.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Education Minister has to visit Dornoch academy, Sutherland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I look forward to visiting Dornoch academy in due course, subject to my other commitments, when next I am in the area.

Training

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the latest available results from the employment training leavers survey for each local enterprise company area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of employment training leavers who were *(a)* in a full-time job with their work experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another Government training programme, *(g)* on a full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* in a job club and *(k)* doing something else;

(2) if he will publish tables showing the latest available results from the youth training leavers survey for each LEC area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of youth training leavers who were *(a)* in full-time work with the same employer, *(b)* in full-time work with a different employer, *(c)* in part-time work, *(d)* on a full-time course at a college/training centre, *(e)* on another youth training scheme, *(f)* doing something else, *(g)* who were unemployed, *(h)* who had obtained a vocational qualification; and if he will also indicate (i) the number of questionnaires issued, (ii) the usable percentage response rate and (iii) the percentage of respondents who were early leavers;

(3) if he will give the latest available results from the employment training leavers survey for each LEC area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of leavers who had *(a)* been entered for a vocational qualification, *(b)* obtained a vocational qualification, *(c)* had failed to obtain a vocational qualification and *(d)* were awaiting their results; and how many of the employment training leavers in the relevant period had completed the training agreed in their initial action plan.

Mr. Stewart: Responsibility for the ET and YT leavers follow-up survey was transferred from the Training Agency to Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise on 1 April 1991. The Department of Employment was contracted to deliver the service on their behalf until 1 April 1993 when the enterprise bodies introduced their own follow-up systems.

I have asked the chairmen of the enterprise bodies to write to the hon. Member.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Lang: In the 12 months from 1 March 1993 to 28 February 1994 I referred 20 parliamentary questions to my Department's agencies for answer. This represents less than 1 per cent. of the 3,112 written parliamentary questions which I received in that period.

WALES

Wind Turbines

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the gross output of electricity produced from wind turbines in Wales in 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data on the electricity produced in Wales from wind turbines are only available for companies operating under the non-fossil fuel obligation.

According to data obtained from the Non-fossil Purchasing Agency Ltd. in the first nine months of 1993, Welsh wind projects under the non-fossil fuel obligation produced 72·2 GWh of electricity. Output for the final quarter of 1993 is not yet available.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Redwood: None. I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" which states that Ministers have a duty

"to give Parliament including its Select Committees, and the public as full information as possible about the policies, decisions and actions of the Government."

Unemployment, Newport

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current rate of unemployment in the Newport travel-to-work area.

Mr. Redwood: In February 1994 the unadjusted work-force-based unemployment rate in the Newport travel-to-work area was 10·7 per cent.

Wild Birds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list details of all current licences issued to kill wild bird species, including the premises and the wild bird species concerned.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Licences to kill protected bird species are normally only valid for a specific, limited period. No such licences are currently in force in Wales. As regards pest bird species, five general licences are currently in force which authorise pest control contractors to kill or take house sparrows or feral pigeons on a county basis.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each district health authority the number of community psychiatric nurses employed in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Detailed breakdowns of the numbers of nursing staff employed by health authorities and NHS trusts into occupational groups such as that requested are not considered reliable.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what provisions there are in the grant-maintained regulations to pay a special purpose grant for staff restructuring after the first 12 months of a grant-maintained school's existence;

(2) what additional financial assistance he has provided to Cwmcarn grant-maintained school, in order to facilitate the departure of the former head teacher.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Under schedule 6 of the Education (Grant-maintained Schools) (Finance) Regulations 1990, the Secretary of State is empowered to make grants to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools in respect of the premature retirement of any person who is or was a member of the staff of the school. In the case of the former head of Cwmcarn grant-maintained school, my right hon. Friend was prepared to contribute £9,191 towards the costs associated with his early retirement.

Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*]

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received from voluntary organisations in Wales on the Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*]; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since publication of the Bill, my right hon. Friend has received nine representations from voluntary organisations.

Public Bodies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that the addresses of members of non-departmental public bodies be published.

Mr. Redwood: The town and county of residence of each appointee is given in "Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales" and the address of each executive non-departmental public body is given in the respective annual reports. These publications are available in the Library of the House.

It would be an invasion of privacy to publish full details of individual appointees' addresses.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available in public libraries and local government offices in Wales the publication "Public Bodies—Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales".

Mr. Redwood: The quarterly list of appointments is available in the Library of the House and the Welsh Office, Cathays Park, Cardiff. The Department makes arrangements for individuals to consult the Welsh Office library

copy on request. The costs of making the publication available in public libraries and local government offices are not justified.

Environmental Research

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what research the Welsh Office has undertaken into water quality in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what research the Welsh Office has undertaken into the problem of upland acidification in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the environmental chapter of "Research, Wales—20th Report 1992-93" a copy of which is held in the science and environment section of the Library of the House.

Agricultural Tenants

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that agricultural tenants are ensured minimum tenancy agreements of 15 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A statutory minimum term has never featured in our proposals for agricultural tenancy reforms; nor is it included in the common position agreed by the majority of farming organisations and announced by the Government on 8 December. In the light of that agreement, we are now finalising details so that legislation can be introduced as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Highways Directorate

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what consideration he has given to granting executive agency status to the highways directorate of the Welsh Office.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Under the "next steps" initiative, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has decided that the highways directorate of the Welsh Office should be considered as a candidate for executive agency status. A prior options review is being undertaken to establish whether agency status or some other option would be appropriate. Those undertaking the review will be consulting local authorities in Wales. My right hon. Friend and I would welcome comments from other interested parties. These should be sent, by 31 May 1994, to: The Under Secretary, Transport, Planning and Environment Group, The Welsh Office, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF1 3NQ.

Arts Council of Wales

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce the membership of the Arts Council of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The membership of the Arts Council of Wales will be:

Ms Jane Davidson, Mr. Meirion Edwards, Mr. Frank Evans, Mr. Keith Evans, Ms Katrina Gass, Mr. Peter Griffiths, Ms Caroline Ireland, Mr. Geralt Jones, Mr. Geraint Stanley Jones CBE, Mr. Myles Pepper, Mr. David Richards, Mr. Alwyn Roberts, Mr. Eurig Thomas, Professor Gwyn Thomas and Ms Moira Vincentelli.

The members have been appointed for three years, apart from Mr. Frank Evans, Mr. Keith Evans and Mr. Eurig Thomas, who have been appointed for two years.

The council will have a wide range of experience in arts matters and expertise in many fields. Under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Lloyd Jones, the council will build on the work of the existing Welsh Arts Council to achieve its main aims of encouraging artistic excellence and increasing accessibility to the arts through Welsh and English.

I would also pay tribute to the members of the Welsh Arts Council who are not being re-appointed. They have played an important role in the development of the arts in Wales.

Cancer Treatment

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology concerning its proposals for the establishment of two satellite cancer treatment units in north Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The decision to develop a cancer treatment centre in north Wales was taken following extensive examination and consultation with interested and affected organisations and included consideration of the proposals for satellite cancer treatment units put forward by the Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology. In the course of this, my right hon. Friend's predecessor discussed the proposals with the Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology and officials had extensive discussions with the centre and others.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the National Audit Office concerning the viability of the establishment of a new cancer treatment centre at Glan Clwyd NHS trust hospital as against the development of networked radiotherapy facilities located in two centres in north Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* Officials are discussing a range of issues associated with the establishment of a cancer treatment centre at ysbyty Glan Clwyd with the National Audit Office.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research his Department has carried out on the viability of establishing a cancer treatment centre at Glan Clwyd NHS trust hospital; and what research his Department has carried out on alternative proposals for the provision of cancer treatment facilities in north Wales, including those of Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* In addition to its own investigations, the Welsh Office commissioned a number of independent appraisals of all the available options for improving cancer services for north Wales patients prior to the decision to develop a cancer treatment centre at Glan Clwyd Hospital NHS trust. The appraisals covered proposals put forward by the Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) of 14 March, *Official Report*, column 604, what form the new cancer treatment facility in north Wales will take; and what is the estimated cost of the new cancer treatment centre.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The project team established to manage the development of

a cancer treatment centre at ysbyty Glan Clwyd is undertaking the detailed planning process which will identify the exact form that the new centre will take and its associated costs.

Recycling

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to local authorities in Wales based on the report to the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State for the Environment, submitted by the packaging industry producer responsibility group entitled, "Real Value from Packaging Waste—A Way Forward".

Mr. Redwood: No. The plans are still out to consultation.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to earmark specific grants for demonstration schemes in recycling municipal waste by Welsh local authorities; what representations he has had from Cardiff city council in relation to the costs and benefits already achieved from its green bag recycling, and its possible extension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Authorities may be eligible for support under the EC LIFE programme, and may apply for help under the strategic development scheme run by the Welsh Office.

Cardiff city council has made a number of representations seeking additional revenue support for recycling schemes. As the arrangements for distributing resources are agreed with the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, the city council has been advised to pursue the matter with Council of Welsh Districts representatives on that body.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to ensure that Welsh local authorities are not omitted from any general Government initiatives to support existing recycling schemes or new recycling initiatives, with particular reference to those initiatives based on the Valpak scheme proposed by the packaging industry producer responsibility group.

Mr. Redwood: Local authorities themselves take steps to ensure that they take advantage of existing and new initiatives, including any opportunities to increase recycling activity in their area that may be presented by the producer responsibility group's proposals for packaging waste. I am keen to see local authorities in Wales hit the target for recycling one quarter of all household waste.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: The cost of such receptions is included in the entertainment expenditure for my Department which is published in the annual report.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: An accurate assessment of the quantity of these drinks actually consumed is not possible as stock levels on 1 April 1993 are not known.

The cost of purchases are included in the entertainment expenditure for my Department which is published in the annual report.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: Such purchases are included within my Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the annual report.

ETIS Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the expenditure committed on the ETIS —environment technology innovation scheme—programme; how many projects were supported; what was the regional distribution of expenditure and projects; how many applications there were in total; how many such applications were rejected because the scheme had closed; and on which date the scheme was closed for new applications.

Mr. McLoughlin: The environmental technology innovation scheme, ETIS, jointly managed by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment, was launched on 2 October 1990 and closed to new applications on 30 September 1993.

The information requested is as follows:

Region/Country	*Applications received*	*Applications received after closure date*	*Grants awarded*	*Expenditure committed £*
South East	167	—	9	1,728,055
East	39	—	3	564,180
South West	47	—	—	—
East Midlands	34	—	2	138,025
West Midlands	62	1	8	1,494,910
Yorkshire and Humberside	40	—	3	584,699
North West	65	1	7	1,064,020
North East	19	—	1	24,186
Scotland	33	—	1	835,120
Wales	14	—	—	—
Northern Ireland	1	—	—	—

Region/Country	Applications received	Applications received after closure date	Grants awarded	Expenditure committed £
Non United Kingdom	1	—	—	—
Totals	522	2	34	6,433,195

Parcelforce

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many new regional Parcelforce depots he plans to create; and how he proposes to finance them.

Mr. McLoughlin: The development of Parcelforce's depot network is a matter for the Post Office and Parcelforce.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all Parcelforce depots as at 1 April 1993; when each depot was opened; whether each depot is proposed for closure or has already shut; and what were the total costs in expenditure and lost jobs in the closure programme so far.

Mr. McLoughlin: Parcelforce is in the process of converting its depot network so that each depot is capable of handling the business's entire product range, instead of being product-specific. This move is designed to help Parcelforce maintain and improve its service to customers. Details of the programme are a matter for the Post Office. The hon. Member's interest in this subject has been brought to the attention of the Post Office.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what differences exist in terms of *(a)* recording for public sector borrowing requirement plans, *(b)* capital programme accounting for public expenditure plans, *(c)* external financing limit controls, *(d)* powers to raise capital between the Post Office and British Nuclear Fuels plc; and what return there will be for the Exchequer from both enterprises in the current financial year.

Mr. Heseltine: The Post Office is a public corporation and its borrowing requirement is counted as part of the PSBR. Its capital expenditure is controlled through the external financing limit set in the annual public expenditure round. The EFL limits its ability to raise finance over and above that generated internally.

British Nuclear Fuels plc is a Companies Acts company classified to the private sector. It is not set an EFL, but the relevant objectives, including in relation to capital projects, are met through targets on profitability and the corporate plan cycle. The extent of guaranteed borrowing by BNFL is limited by the Nuclear Industry (Finance) Act 1977, as amended.

In 1993-94 the Post Office has been set a negative external financing limit of £181 million. A negative EFL represents a net cash payment to the Exchequer in the form of debt repayment and/or accumulation of financial assets.

BNFL makes outright payments to the Exchequer in the form of dividends which are recorded on the income side of the Government accounts. The dividend paid in 1993-94 was £16 million.

Iraq and Saudi Arabia

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *252*, what was the share of defence in total over all Export Credits Guarantee Department project businesses in Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Needham: The percentage of total ECGD support for capital goods and projects since 1980 which related to defence contracts in the named markets was as follows:

	Saudi Arabia	Iraq
1980-81	0	0
1981-82	0	0·44
1982-83	0·28	0·34
1983-84	0	0
1984-85	0·39	0·08
1985-86	0	0
1986-87	0	0
1987-88	0	0
1988-89	21·77	0
1989-90	0	0
1991-92	0	0
1992-93	5·92	0

Research and Development

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer given to the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler), of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *204*, if he will explain the original reasons for the suspension of the exceptional projects scheme and for the extension of the suspension to 30 June 1994; for how many years the scheme was in operation; and how many projects there were and with how much expenditure in each year of the scheme's existence.

Mr. Sainsbury: Regarding the suspension of the exceptional projects scheme, I refer the hon. Member to my announcement of 26 January 1993, *Official Report*, columns 973-74.

The scheme was open for applications in the five years 1988-89 to 1992-93. In that time, 60 projects were submitted, of which only three succeeded in meeting the criteria. Two offers of grant totalling £5 million were approved in 1989-90 and one of £20 million in 1992-93.

Market Testing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that all companies and enterprises involved in Government contracts as a result of market testing or outsourcing programmes will observe the requirements of FRED 8, the Accounting Standards Board exposure draft on related party disclosure.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Accounting Standards Board is currently seeking comments on FRED 8 and may amend

the draft in the light of those comments. When it becomes a standard all companies and enterprises within its scope will have to comply with it.

Thermabond

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the dates on which companies containing the name Thermabond have gone into insolvency; and which of those insolvencies have resulted in a referral to his disqualification unit.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The liquidator, administrator or administrative receiver of any company which enters into formal insolvency is required to consider and make a report to my Department on the conduct of the directors.

Thermabond Ltd. and Thermabond Roofing Ltd. went into voluntary liquidation on 24 September 1991 and reports have been received from the liquidator of those companies. Thermabond Contracts Ltd. went into voluntary liquidation on 1 February 1994 and a report will be due by 1 August 1994.

Deregulation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the members, occupations and present enterprise links of the chemicals and pharmaceuticals deregulation task force; and what regulations they have been examining.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The report "Deregulation Task Forces: Proposals for Reform" which was published on 19 January and placed in the Library of the House gives details of the membership of all the task forces and their recommendations. Working papers which give fuller details of the areas examined by each task force will be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

Environmental Technology

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all his schemes and services for the promotion of environmental technology that are current together with the expenditure on, and projects supported by, each scheme or service estimated up to 1 April.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced on 7 December 1993, *Official Report,* column 149, a joint programme with the Department of the Environment aimed at encouraging the adoption by industry of best practice in environmental technology and techniques. The Department, in association with the DoE, is currently developing this programme which will be launched later in 1994. The Department will be contributing £11 million to this £16 million programme which is due to run for five years. The programme will concentrate on the provision and delivery of information to industry rather than on grant assistance. It will build on the experience of grant schemes to support research and demonstration of innovative environmental technology which closed to new applications during 1993.

Petrol

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward measures requiring petrol producers to reformulate petrol by removing aromatics.

Mr. Eggar: I have no such plans at present.

Multilateral Trade Organisation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the operation of the dispute settlement panel which will be invoked under the agreement establishing the Multilateral Trade Organisation where a member state fails to bring a measure found to be inconsistent with a covered agreement into compliance.

Mr. Needham: Dispute settlement panels in the proposed World Trade Organisation dispute settlement system will provide expert arbitration on disputed rights and obligations between members of the WTO. In circumstances where, following dispute settlement proceedings, a WTO member failed to bring a measure into conformity with its obligations, the member would be able to offer compensatory market access, or face retaliation by the aggrieved member. Both compensation and retaliation would be proportional to the impairment involved.

International Telephone Services

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) under what provision Oftel may *(a)* regulate international call charges levied by United Kingdom telephone companies and *(b)* make representations to overseas telephone companies about false-answer defects; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to ensure that the level of international telephone call charges and related matters are subject to regular scrutiny;

(3) what discussions he has had with United Kingdom telephone companies about appropriate action to warn their customers making calls to certain Asian and African countries of the charges arising from false-answer defects; and if he will encourage United Kingdom telephone companies to tell customers how to claim refunds when they are charged for international calls not made;

(4) which Asian and African countries have telephone systems which result in United Kingdom telephone companies charging customers for international calls not made because of false-answer defects; and with which Ministers of which of these countries he has held or proposes to hold talks about the problem.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has had no representations on this matter. The resolution of inaccurate billing resulting from calls that are not completed but that accrue charges because of a defect in equipment at the far end is a commercial matter for BT and Mercury. Customers should contact BT and Mercury in the first instance. Where customers are not satisfied with the redress they receive from companies they contact Oftel.

Oftel received less than a dozen complaints on this matter between October 1992 and June 1993, including calls to Nigeria and Pakistan. The problem does not affect more than a small proportion of the calls to the countries concerned. In the normal course of events United Kingdom telephone operators cannot detect the problem until alerted by customers, who are able to do so because of itemised billing. They have, however, made representations to telecommunications operators in the countries concerned.

Both companies have been quick to rectify genuine mistakes in bills resulting from these faults and have made good-will payments to customers. Oftel and my

Department have not become involved in these commercial matters. In cases where customers have been refunded as a result of billing errors, BT and Mercury have nevertheless had to stand the loss resulting from having to make call delivery payments to operators at the far end.

Under condition 24 of its licence, BT is subject to restriction of prices for a range of services which includes international telephone calls. At present this restriction stands at retail prices index minus 7·5 per cent. This formula is next due for review in 1997. BT demonstrates to Oftel that it is complying with price restriction on the basis of a methodology agreed with Oftel.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the magazine "Independent", which published the annual disability report in its issue of Friday 18 March 1994, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Dry Cleaning Fluids

Mr. Welsh: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what help his Department has given to Master Services Group (Leather Master) to develop hydro-carbon technology;

(2) what steps the Government have taken to encourage the development of safe substitutes for dry cleaning fluids.

Mr. McLoughlin: The DTI is supporting two projects to encourage the development of safe substitutes for dry cleaning fluids. These are:

(i) a project under the environmental management options scheme DEMOS lead by Master Services Group with a grant of £134,332 over 13 months to support the research and development of a hydrocarbon non-halogenated fluid; and

(ii) an award of £45,000 made under the small firms merit award for research and technology to assist a project lead by ECO Cleansing Products, aimed at combing the use of a new solvent with ultrasound and de-humidification chambers.

Property Purchases

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) whether Her Majesty's Government have been asked by the Commission of the European Communities to comment upon the principal report by Wilde Sapte and Maclay Murray and Spens, entitled "Information and Protection of Transactions concerning Immovable Property Purchased by Consumers", which it commissioned; and what his policy is on the conclusions of that report;

(2) what information he has concerning the conclusions of the report "Information and Protection of Transactions concerning Immovable Property Purchased by Consumers" which was commissioned by the Commission of the European Communities and received by the Commission in August 1993; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what consultations with industry have been undertaken by his Department in connection with the report "Information and Protection of Transactions concerning Immovable Property Purchased by Consumers" commissioned by the Commission of the European Communities; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what recent representations he has received from *(a)* the House Builders Federation, *(b)* the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance and *(c)* other bodies concerning the report "Information and Protection of Transactions concerning Immovable Property Purchased by Consumers" which was commissioned by the Commission of the European Communities; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will make a statement indicating the position of Her Majesty's Government on those provisions of the report "Information and Protection of Transactions concerning Immovable Property Purchased by Consumers" which deal with *(a)* legal advice given to purchasers of property, *(b)* standard contracts used by developers, *(c)* the use of technical reports from surveyors, and *(d)* the time scale of property purchase and local authority searches; and to what extent in each case the proposals are consistent with his Department's deregulation initiative;

(6) if he will make a statement indicating the position of Her Majesty's Government on those provisions of the report "Information and Protection of Transactions concerning Immovable Property Purchased by Consumers" which deal with *(a)* financial advice on the purchase of property, *(b)* provision of information concerning planning issues, *(c)* taxation associated with property transfer, *(d)* secure deposit holding schemes, *(e)* arrangements for purchase of property off plan and prior to construction, *(f)* arrangements for land registration, *(g)* curbs on the ability of vendors to negotiate with more than one potential purchaser, *(h)* further regulation of estate agents and mortgage arrangers, *(i)* further requirements on the disclosure by advisers of their relationship with others and *(j)* further restrictions on the content of property advertising; and to what extent in each case the proposals are consistent with his Department's deregulation initiative;

(7) if he will make a statement indicating the position of Her Majesty's Government on those provisions of the report "Information and Protection of Transactions concerning Immovable Property purchased by Consumers" which deal with *(a)* further restrictions relating to guarantees of construction standard, *(b)* further regulation of joint ownership, leasehold and service charge arrangements, *(c)* creation of new pan-European bodies to regulate property purchase, *(d)* proposals to prevent market dominance by building societies and banks in lending for property purchase and *(e)* attempts to limit commission rates for sale of property; and to what extent in each case the proposals are consistent with his Department's deregulation initiative.

Mr. Needham *[holding answers 21 March 1994]:* My Department has received from a trade association a copy of this report to the European Commission. It has not been asked by the Commission to comment nor consulted industry, though representations have been received from the House Builders Federation. It is important that, if consideration is given to Community legislation on property transactions, full account is taken of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and of the need to avoid imposing unnecessary burdens on business. This view will be communicated to the Commission.

Textile Outputs

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) by what percentage output of worsted yarn changed between 1987 and 1992 in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* France and *(d)* Italy; if he will publish a table showing United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of worsted yarn in 1970, 1979, 1987 and 1992, together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to reach the 1987 level;

(2) what was the percentage change in the level of output of cotton cloth between 1988 and 1992 in the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy; if he will publish a table showing United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of cotton cloth in 1970, 1979, 1988 and 1992, together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to reach the 1988 level;

(3) what was the United Kingdom output of tufted carpets between 1988 and 1992 and the corresponding figure for Germany, France and Italy; if he will list United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of tufted carpets in 1970, 1979, 1988 and 1992 together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to equal the 1988 level;

(4) what was the United Kingdom output of weatherproof outerwear in each year since 1988 and the corresponding figure for Germany, France and Italy; if he will list United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of waterproof outerwear in 1970, 1979, 1988 and 1992 together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to equal the 1988 level;

(5) what were the percentage changes in the output of footwear between 1987 and 1991 in the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy; if he will publish a table showing United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of footwear in 1970, 1979, 1987 and 1992, together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to reach the 1987 level;

(6) what was the United Kingdom output of woven carpets with yarn containing 50 per cent. or more by weight of wool between 1989 and 1992; what were the corresponding figures for Germany, France and Italy; if he will publish a table showing United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of such carpets in 1970, 1979, 1989 and 1992 together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to reach the 1989 level;

(7) what was the percentage change in the output of worsted cloth between 1987 and 1992 in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* France and *(d)* Italy; if he will publish a table showing United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of worsted cloth in 1970, 1979, 1987 and 1992, together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to reach the 1987 level;

(8) what was the United Kingdom output of clothing, hats and gloves in each year since 1988; what were the corresponding figures for Germany, France and Italy; if he will list United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of clothing, hats and gloves in 1970, 1979, 1988 and 1992 together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to equal the 1988 level;

(9) what was the change in United Kingdom output of men's and boys' tailored outerwear between 1988 and 1992 with the corresponding figure for Germany, France and Italy; if he will list United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of such outerwear in 1970, 1979, 1988 and 1992 together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to equal the 1988 level;

(10) by how much output of cotton yarn other than waste yarn changed between 1988 and 1992 for the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy; if he will publish a table showing United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of cotton yarn in 1970, 1979, 1988 and 1992, together with the numbers employed in the United Kingdom industry; and when he expects United Kingdom output to reach 1988 levels;

(11) what was the change in United Kingdom output of textiles between 1988 and 1992 with the corresponding figure for Germany, France and Italy; if he will list United Kingdom production, imports, exports and consumption of textile yarn in 1970, 1979, 1988 and 1992 together with the numbers employed; and when he expects United Kingdom output to equal the 1988 level;

(12) if he will make a statement on the scale of the output of wool cloth in the United Kingdom compared with the corresponding figures for Italy and France in 1993; and if he will publish a table showing the corresponding percentages for 1973 and 1979 together with, for each of the three years (i) production imports, exports and consumption of wool cloth by each of the three countries and (ii) United Kingdom imports from and exports of wool cloth to each of the other three countries.

Mr. Needham: The available information may be found in the "Annual Abstract of Statistics", the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", publications in the Business Monitors series, the *Employment Gazette*, the United Nations "Industrial Statistics Yearbook" and "Monthly Bulletin of Statistics", and the "Textiles Bulletin". Data are also available from the Central Statistical Office's central shared database, and from Eurostat's CRONOS database. All of the above data sources are in the Library of the House.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the change in the level of United Kingdom imports of semi-manufactures since 1970, and the change in the level of exports; what were the corresponding figures for imports and exports from the EEC Twelve; what was the corresponding increase in the United Kingdom output, in import penetration, and in the import content of United Kingdom output of finished manufactures; and how many manufacturing jobs were lost as a consequence.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom visible trade is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom". Copies of this publication are available in the Library of the House. Semi-manufactures are defined by sections 5 and 6 of the standard international trade classification.

Owing to major difference between the industrial and trade classifications, it is not possible to provide comparable information on United Kingdom production and employment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the percentage change since United Kingdom entry into the EEC of the United Kingdom, French and Italian shares of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries and the reasons for the difference in performance.

Mr. Needham: The information can be readily derived from table E2 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", published by the Central Statistical Office, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. The Department has not undertaken a study of the reasons for the difference in manufactures export share between the United Kingdom, France and Italy since United Kingdom entry into the EEC.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the increase in each quarter since the third quarter of 1992, taking that quarter as a base equal to 100, in export unit values for finished manufacturers shipped to the rest of the EC and to the rest of the world together with the increase in the nominal exchange rate against the ecu and non-ecu currencies.

Mr. Needham: Unit values for exports to EC and non-EC countries, with 1990 as a base, are available from the Central Statistical Office central shared database, access to which is available in the Library of the House. Reweighting to a different base period would entail disproportionate cost.

The sterling exchange rate against the ecu is also available from the database. A single exchange rate of sterling against non-ecu currencies is not readily available. The International Monetary Fund publishes details of US dollar exchange rates against other currencies in "International Financial Statistics", which is available in the Library of the House.

Manufacturing Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in the United Kingdom share of the volume of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries since 1990; and if he will publish the latest three months' figures for the change in value since 1970 for the United Kingdom and those countries.

Mr. Needham: The information can be readily derived from table E1 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", published by the Central Statistical Office, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Information on the latest three months' change in the value of exports manufactures by the United Kingdom and the main manufacturing countries is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Intermediate Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the change in United Kingdom output of intermediate goods since 1985; what is his estimate of the corresponding change in the volume of imports and exports; and what is the implied change in import penetration.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom output and trade for intermediate goods is available from the Central Statistical Office central shared database, access to which is available in the Library of the House. There are, however, significant differences between the output and trade classifications. A reliable measure of import penetration is therefore not available.

Car Market

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the import share of the United Kingdom car market in February; which countries gained most from the change compared to last year; what was the movement in the rate of exchange during those 12 months; and if he will make a statement indicating why the share changed.

Mr. Needham: The information regarding the import share of the United Kingdom car market is in the table:

Registrations of new cars in the United Kingdom by country of origin

		February 1994		*February 1993*	
		New cars	*Percentage*	*New cars*	*Percentage*
EC		129,054	88·57	109,012	85·85
of which	France	21,197	14·55	18,672	14·70
	Germany	17,473	11·98	15,605	12·29
	Italy	3,216	2·20	2,880	2·27
	Spain	10,826	7·43	5,068	3·99
	United Kingdom	61,864	42·45	58,689	46·22
EFTA		1,746	1·20	1,475	1·16
Other West European		0	0·00	21	0·02
Eastern Europe		2,516	1·73	968	0·76
Japan		9,398	6·45	12,297	9·68
Other Countries		2,996	2·06	3,211	2·53
Total imports		83,846	57·54	68,295	53·78
TOTAL		145,710	100·00	126,984	100·00

Source: Monthly Registrations Press release published by The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Limited.

Information on the rate of exchange is regularly published in table 7.1A of the Central Statistical Office's "Financial Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Trade in the motor industry is determined by market forces and consumer preference. New car sales in Europe as a whole are still depressed, and manufacturers are stepping up their efforts in the United Kingdom, which is currently one of the few expanding markets available. The number of United Kingdom-produced cars registered in February 1994 was still 5·4 per cent. higher than that of February 1993.

Overseas Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the ratio of imports of textiles to home demand in 1968, 1973, 1979, 1988, 1992 and his estimate for 1993, *(b)* the corresponding ratios for imports from the EEC, *(c)* output and employment in the United Kingdom industry and *(d)* the change since 1988 in the value and volume of (i) United Kingdom output and (ii) imports of textiles from (1) the rest of the EEC and (2) all sources;

(2) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the ratio of imports of footwear and clothing to home demand in 1968, 1973, 1979, 1988, 1992 and his estimate for 1993, *(b)* the corresponding ratios for imports from the rest of the EEC, *(c)* output and employment in the United Kingdom industry and *(d)* the change since 1988 in the value and volume of (i) United Kingdom output and (ii) imports of such products from (1) the EEC and (2) all sources;

(3) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the ratio of imports of motor vehicles and parts to home demand in 1968, 1973, 1979, 1988, 1992 and his estimate for 1993, *(b)* the corresponding ratios for imports from the EEC, *(c)* output and employment in the United Kingdom industry and *(d)* the change since 1988 in the value and volume of (i) United Kingdom output and (ii) imports of such products from (1) the EEC and (2) all sources;

(4) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the ratio of imports of chemicals to home demand in 1968, 1973, 1979, 1988, 1992 and his estimate for 1993, *(b)* the corresponding ratios for imports from the EEC, *(c)* output and employment in the United Kingdom industry and *(d)* the change since 1988 in the value and volume of (i) United Kingdom output and (ii) imports of such products from (1) the rest of the EEC and (2) all sources;

(5) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the ratio of imports of electrical and electronic engineering products to home demand in 1968, 1973, 1979, 1988, 1992 and his estimate for 1993, *(b)* the corresponding ratios for imports from the EEC, *(c)* output and employment in the United Kingdom industry and *(d)* the change since 1988 in the value and volume of (i) United Kingdom output and (ii) imports of such products from (1) the rest of the EEC and (2) all sources;

(6) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the ratio of imports of office machinery and automatic data processing equipment to home demand in 1968, 1973, 1979, 1988, 1992 and his estimate for 1993, *(b)* the corresponding ratios for imports from the EEC, *(c)* output and employment in the United Kingdom industry and *(d)* the change since 1988 in the value and volume of (i) United Kingdom output and (ii) imports of such products from (1) the rest of the EEC and (2) all sources;

(7) if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the ratio of imports of mechanical engineering products to home demand in 1968, 1973, 1979, 1988, 1992 and his estimate for 1993, *(b)* the corresponding ratios for imports from the EEC, *(c)* output and employment in the United Kingdom industry and *(d)* the change since 1988 in the value and volume of (i) United Kingdom output and (ii) imports of such products from (1) the rest of the EEC and (2) all sources.

Mr. Needham: No. The available information may be found in the "Annual Abstract of Statistics", the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", publications in the Business Monitors series, the *Employment Gazette*, the "Engineering Sales and Orders Digest", and the "Textiles Bulletin". Data are also available from the Central Statistical Office's central shared database, from Eurostat's CRONOS database, and from the Chemical Industries Association's "Basic International Chemical Industry Statistics". All the above data sources are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) whether he will publish a table showing for trade with non-EEC countries the volume of imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the relative volume for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990, each quarter from the beginning of 1992 to mid-1993 on the basis of trade in 1985;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for trade with the rest of the EEC unit values for imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the terms of trade for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990 and each quarter from the beginning of 1992 to mid-1993 on the basis of trade in 1985;

(3) whether he will publish a table showing for trade with the rest of the EEC the volume of imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the relative volume for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990 and each quarter from the beginning of 1992 to mid-1993 on the basis of trade in 1985;

(4) whether he will publish a table showing unit values for imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the terms of trade for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990, each quarter from the beginning of 1992 to mid-1993 on the basis of trade in 1985;

(5) whether he will publish a table showing the volume of imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the relative volume for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990 and each quarter from the beginning of 1992 to mid-1993 on the basis of trade in 1985;

(6) if he will publish a table showing for trade with non-EEC countries the unit values for imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the terms of trade for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990 and each quarter from the beginning of 1992 to mid-1993 on the basis of trade in 1985.

Mr. Needham: Information on whole world trade on the basis of trade in 1985 was last published in "First Release, UK Balance of Payments—Current Account in December, CSO(92)11", by the Central Statistical Office on 28 January 1993. Information prior to 1991 for whole world data can be found from earlier press releases.

Information for non-EC countries was first published in "First Release, UK Balance of Trade with countries outside the European Community in January, CSO(93)27. Prior to this information on whole world data was not split into EC and non-EC data. Information on non-EC trade was last published in "First Release, Balance of Trade with countries outside the EC—June 1993, CSO(93)100". Press releases after this date used the 1990 basis.

Copies of all the above publications are available in the Library of the House.

Separate information on EC data is not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will publish a table showing the volume of imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the relative volume for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990, each quarter from the beginning of 1992 and the latest three months on the basis of trade in 1990;

(2) whether he will publish a table showing for trade with the rest of the EEC unit values for imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the terms of trade for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990, each quarter from the beginning of 1992 and the latest three months on the basis of trade in 1990;

(3) if he will publish a table showing unit values for imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the terms of trade for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990, each quarter from the beginning of 1992 and the latest three months on the basis of trade in 1990;

(4) whether he will publish a table showing for trade with the rest of the EEC the volume of imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the relative volume for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990, each quarter from the beginning of 1992 and the latest three months on the basis of trade in 1990;

(5) whether he will publish a table showing for trade with non-EC countries the unit values for imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the terms of trade for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990, each quarter from the beginning of 1992 and the latest three months on the basis of trade in 1990;

(6) if he will publish a table showing for trade with non-EC countries the volume of imports and exports of semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and all manufactures together with the relative volume for each year from 1987, for the first quarter of 1987, the third quarter of 1990, each quarter from the beginning of 1992 and the latest three months on the basis of trade in 1990.

Mr. Needham: The information is available from the Central Statistical Office central shared database, access to which is available in the Library of the House. Information for whole world trade is available from 1970 onwards. Information for EC and non-EC trade is available from 1988 onwards.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with Taiwan in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the real exchange rate in each of these years; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(2) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures less diamonds with Belgium in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those years; what was the real exchange rate in each of these years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(3) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with China in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those years; what was the real exchange rate in each of these years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(4) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with Germany in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those years; what was the real exchange rate in each of these years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(5) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with France in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those years; what was the real exchange rate in each of these years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(6) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with Indonesia in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those years; what was the real exchange rate in each of these years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(7) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with Italy in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of these years; what was the real exchange rate in each of those years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(8) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with Russia in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those years; what was the real exchange rate in each of those years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(9) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with the Netherlands in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of

these years; what was the real exchange rate in each of those years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(10) what was the import to export ratio for trade in manufactures with Germany in 1993 to the latest available date and what was the corresponding surplus or deficit; what were the figures for 1970, 1979 and 1985 and the corresponding level of the real exchange rate compared to 1993; and if he will list the principal surpluses and deficits in 1993 together with the reasons therefor:

(11) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with Brunei in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those years; what was the real exchange rate in each of these years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them;

(12) what was the ratio of imports to exports for trade in manufactures with Singapore in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1993 to the latest date for which figures are available; what was the surplus or deficit in each of those three years; what was the real exchange rate in each of these years; what were the principal (i) surpluses and (ii) deficits in 1993; and what were the reasons for them.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom trade in manufactures, defined in sections 5 to 8 of the standard international trade classification, is published regularly by the Central Statistical Office in the "Overseas Trade Statistics" of the United Kingdom.

Since the beginning of 1993, the publication appears in two parts: "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with countries outside the European Community (Extra-EC Trade)", and "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with countries within the European Community (Extra-EC Trade: Intrastat)". These publications are available from the Library of the House.

Belgium and Luxembourg are treated as a single economic unit; separate figures for the two are not available. Information on United Kingdom imports of diamonds from Belgium-Luxembourg is commercially confidential.

For statistical purposes, the former German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany were combined, as Germany, since 1991.

Information on real exchange rates is not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the export figures of manufactures in the three months to November 1993 and the corresponding figures for the same period in 1990 for the United Kingdom and the other main manufacturing countries.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom exports of manufactures in the three months to November 1993 is available via the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed from the Library of the House. The corresponding information for the main manufacturing countries is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. The 1990 information is published by the CSO in "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" February 1993, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the *(a)* United Kingdom, *(b)* German and *(c)* French share of 3Q1992 exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries in the third quarter of 1992.

Mr. Needham: The information requested can be found in table E2 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" February 1993, published by the CSO, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made as to the extent to which the standstill since 1990 on the price of semi-manufactures imported from non-EC countries has contributed to the change of 6 per cent. in the United Kingdom of intermediate goods over the same period.

Mr. Needham: The Department has not undertaken such a study.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the levels of United Kingdom exports of commercial vehicles weighing over 7·5 tonnes between 1988 and 1992; what was the level of exports from Germany, Italy, Sweden, Spain and France in those years; and which countries accounted for the change in the level of United Kingdom exports.

Mr. Needham: Information on the level of United Kingdom exports by country of commercial vehicles weighing over 7·5 tonnes can be readily derived from information in table 62 of "Motor Industry of Great Britain —World Automotive Statistics", published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd., a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

The information for Germany, Italy, Sweden, Spain and France could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the volume of semi-manufactures imported from non-EEC countries in the three months to the end of January and how this is affected by the change since 1990 of the nominal exchange rate for sterling against the currencies of those countries; what was the increase in the case of imported semi-manufactures *(a)* used in producing manufactures other than food, drink and tobacco and *(b)* which compete directly or indirectly with home-produced goods; and what was the consequential increase in the import content of goods manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: Information on the volume of semi-manufactures imported for non-EC countries in the three months to January 1994 was published by the Central Statistical Office in "First Release CSO(94)38, Balance of Trade with Countries Outside the EC—January 1994". The release is available in the Library of the House.

An exchange rate for sterling against non-EC currencies is not readily available. Nominal exchange rates against the US dollar are published regularly by the International Monetary Fund in "International Financial Statistics". The publication is available in the Library of the House. It is not possible to isolate the effect of exchange rates on imports from other factors.

The increase in the volume of semi-manufactures used in producing manufactures other than food, drink and tobacco could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. All imports compete directly or indirectly with home-produced goods. The import content of goods manufactured in the United Kindom cannot be identified.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the United Kingdom output of passenger cars in 1991 in comparison with that of Spain; what was the balance of trade and the ratio of exports to imports in that year between Spain and the United Kingdom in *(a)* cars and *(b)* components; and what assessment he has made as to the local content of cars produced in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) Spain.

Mr. Needham: The available data are published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd. in "Motor Industry of Great Britain 1992—World Automotive Statistics". Data for United Kingdom and Spanish output of passenger cars can be found in table 12. United Kingdom exports of passenger cars and parts and accessories to Spain are in table 60. The corresponding table for imports is table 89. This publication is available in the Library of the House.

The Government have a long-standing practice of establishing understandings on local, European content with major inward investors in the vehicles sector, which are monitored regularly. The local content of cars produced in the United Kingdom by the major Japanese manufacturers is currently 70 per cent. or more. Information about the local content of cars produced in Spain is not available.

Motor Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the development of the British car industry in the Common Market since 1975 and the extent to which forecasts made at that time were fulfilled.

Mr. Sainsbury: Relevant statistics relating to the development of the British motor industry can be found in the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders' annual publication "Motor Industry of Great Britain—World Automotive Statistics" which is held in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *229*, to what extent his Department is responsible for collecting information concerning the effect of the change in the terms of trade for manufactures on production and trade in motor cars; what steps had been taken by him or on his behalf to secure such information and with what result; what account will be taken of this matter in the following White Paper on competitiveness; what steps his Department has taken to obtain the information from trade organisations and academics specialising in the development of the car industry; and if he will now do so.

Mr. Sainsbury: Data relating to international trade by the United Kingdom are collected by Customs and Excise and published by the Central Statistical Office. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders also publishes trade statistics calculated from the data collected by Customs and Excise. The CSO also compiles the producer price index for motor vehicles and parts thereof, but no separate index is published for motor cars alone. Data are not collected relating to the prices at which new cars are sold at retail distribution to final buyers within the United Kingdom.

The terms of trade of motor cars in international markets and their production are determined by market forces, including the competitiveness of individual car manufacturers.

The White Paper on competitiveness will be presented to Parliament later this year.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he will take to ensure that the auditing firms that audit public limited companies will be required to file annual accounts and other information with the appropriate supervisory body.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to introduce such a requirement.

An auditor which is a company or an unregistered company within the meaning of the Companies Act 1985 is already subject to the disclosure requirements of that Act. With the exception of certain partnerships which are subject to the Partnerships and Unlimited Companies (Accounts) Regulations 1993, unincorporated bodies are not required to publish accounts.

Liquidators' Fees

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what have been the total fees of the liquidators associated with *(a)* Polly Peck, *(b)* the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and *(c)* the Maxwell Group of companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department does not have this information.

Time Zones

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he intends to proceed upon the deregulation task forces' recommendation that the United Kingdom should harmonise its time with that of Europe following his Department's decision not to use the procedures of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

We are taking the views of the transport and communications task force into account in our consideration of policy on future summer time arrangements, which we hope to bring to a conclusion soon.

Radio Spectrum Review Committee

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will publish the report of the stage 3 radio spectrum review committee; and if he will make a statement on the future management of the radio spectrum.

Mr. Heseltine: *[pursuant to his reply, 10 March 1994, c. 336-37]*. The consultative document has been published today and I have placed copies in the Library of the House.

The document seeks views on how to manage the spectrum to maximise the economic benefit derived from it while preserving access by the armed forces, the emergency services and the widest range of other users, such as the scientific community and hobbyists. It envisages an extended role for the private sector in planning the spectrum and assigning frequencies, with the Radiocommunications Agency retaining responsibility for a number of core functions that need to be performed by Government.

The document also proposes changes to the basis of charging for access to the spectrum to clarify the choices facing radio users. At present, the licence fees paid by radio users give little incentive to use spectrum efficiently. The development of a secondary market in spectrum access rights and selective auctions would enable the value of the spectrum to be better reflected in pricing and make it easier for new users to gain access to spectrum.

Indonesia

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to stop arms sales to Indonesia.

Mr. Needham: No. All applications for export licences for arms are subject to rigorous scrutiny on a case-by-case basis.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Attorney-General how many public interest immunity certificates were signed in each year since 1964.

The Attorney-General: I understand that no central records have been kept.

As to the signing of certificates by the Law Officers, I refer my hon. and learned Friend to the answer that I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), *Official Report*, column *13*. We do not have any records for any earlier period.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Attorney-General how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

The Attorney-General: The number of registered disabled people employed by the departments for which I am responsible is set out in the table.

The Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Fraud Office and the Treasury Solicitor's Department also employ people with disabilities who are not registered, but the numbers are not readily available.

Each of the Law Officers departments is an equal opportunities employer.

Department	*Registered disabled people*	*Percentage of total workforce*
Legal secretariat to the Law Officers	—	—
Crown Prosecution Service	38	0·6
Serious Fraud Office	—	—
Treasury Solicitor's Department	11	2·0

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Attorney-General what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

The Attorney-General: In respect of the departments for which I have responsibility, the code of practice directly applies only to the Treasury Solicitor's Department. The Department is currently preparing a procedure for compliance with the code which will reinforce and build on existing arrangements for the provision of information. The Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office will seek voluntarily to comply with the code so far as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 23 March 1994

HOME DEPARTMENT

Bail Digging

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to reply to Alnwick district council's representations to him about the proposed byelaw relating to bait digging.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are carefully considering the legal issues relating to this matter and hope shortly to be in a position to send the council a substantive reply.

Police Register

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there will be a charge to organisations who wish to check the police register for the suitability of adults who will be working with children.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The possibility of charging for checks on criminal records is one of the issues being considered by the Home Office in its current review of arrangements for access to criminal records for vetting purposes. No decision on this matter has yet been reached.

Fire Safety

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of personnel engaged in fire safety enforcement in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is estimated that approximately 1,834 full-time equivalent specialist fire safety officers are engaged in the enforcement of fire safety throughout England and Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will visit Queensferry fire station to discuss aspects of fire safety responsibility with members of the Clwyd fire brigade.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Police Officers, London

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of police officers per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 for London.

Mr. Charles: The available information is contained in the table.

Number of police officers per 100,000 population in the City of London and in the Metropolitan police district

Year	Officers per 100,000 population
1979	318
1980	334
1981	356
1982	375
1983	381
1984	382
1985	382
1986	383
1987	389
1988	397
1989	403
1990	403
1991	403
1992	393
1993	385

Drinking Ban, Cleveland

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to give approval to the ban on drinking in public places in Yarm and Thornaby, Cleveland.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Home Office Officials wrote to Stockton-on-Tees borough council on 21 March giving agreement in principle to the proposal for byelaws prohibiting the consumption of intoxicating liquor in designated parts of Yarm and Thornaby. That letter asked for further essential information about the areas which the council wishes to designate. We expect to be able to give provisional approval to the byelaws once the necessary information has been obtained.

Political Asylum

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for political asylum there have been in each of the past three years by persons travelling from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus; and how many of these applications have been refused.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available as such cases are not identified separately in our statistics.

Television Licences

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were remanded into custody in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* the west midlands for each quarter for each of the last five years for non-payment of fines imposed for not possessing a television licence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Lynne Jones, dated 23 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were remanded into custody in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* the West

Midlands for each quarter for each of the last five years for non-payment of fines imposed for not possessing a television licence.

There were none in England and Wales. When a court fine is unpaid the court considers a number of non-custodial options and only then can impose a custodial sentence. Information for Scotland should be obtained from the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Howard: My ministerial colleagues and I received approximately 2,300 letters from, and wrote just over 1,500 letters to, hon. Members in February.

Prisons

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average weekly cost of keeping *(a)* convicted prisoners and *(b)* prisoners on remand in prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from I. Dunbar to Ms Cheryl Gillan, dated 23 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent question about the average weekly cost of keeping (a) convicted prisoners and (b) prisoners on remand in prison.

Costs are collected for types of establishment rather than for types of prisoner. The figures for 1992-93 are:

Type of establishment	*Net operating cost per prisoner place per week*
	£
Local Prisons and Remand Centres	561
Remand Prison	333
Dispersal prisons	705
Category B Training prisons	481
Category C Training prisons	357
Adult Male Open prisons	285
Young Offender Closed establishments	418
Young Offender Open establishments	392
Female establishments	505

During the year in question convicted prisoners were held in all types of prison except the remand prison and remand centres. Remand prisoners were held in the remand prison, remand centres and local prisons. It is not, therefore, possible to provide an average cost for convicted and remand prisoners separately.

Prison Officers

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what circumstances under the "Conduct and Discipline in the Prison Service" it would be a disciplinary offence for a prison officer to contact an hon. Member regarding his own employment circumstances;

(2) what are the rules governing the political activities of members of HM Prison Service;

(3) in what circumstances under the "Conduct and Discipline in the Prison Service" a prison officer is prevented from raising with his own hon. Member concerns relating to *(a)* the handling of a grievance in his own case and *(b)* the operation of a particular prison establishment;

(4) if the rules of confidentiality covering prison officers extend beyond individual cases to the general standards of operation of the prison service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from I. Dunbar to Mr. Kevin Hughes, dated 23 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the Office, to reply to your recent Questions about prison officers contacting honourable Members, and the rules about confidentiality and political activities in the Prison Service.

Like all civil servants, prison officers have always been subject to the rule that they should not attempt to enlist political or other outside influence to support their own personal claims as civil servants. An internal procedure enables any personal concern of a member of staff to be reviewed, with the ultimate right of appeal to the Permanent Head of the Home Office.

Members of the Prison Service are entitled to raise general matters with their Members of Parliament, but must have regard to their duty of confidentiality and loyal service to the Crown. They should avoid any action which might compromise the right of colleagues or inmates to privacy, and have a duty to protect official information which is held in confidence.

You asked about the circumstances in which it would be a disciplinary offence for a prison officer to raise, with an honourable Member, matters concerned with his own employment in the Prison Service. "Conduct and Discipline in the Prison Service", introduced in July 1993, specifies "attempting to enlist the assistance or support of outside individuals or organisations (including Members of Parliament) to secure advancement or improve one's personal position", and "disclosure of official information held in confidence, whether to inmates, the press or others" are examples of conduct which may attract disciplinary action.

It is not possible to state the precise circumstances in which disciplinary action might be taken in these areas, since this would depend on careful consideration of the circumstances of the particular case. The Prison Service Code of Conduct and Discipline specifically provides that disciplinary action against a member of staff who is alleged to have attempted to secure personal advancement by approaching an honourable Member can be taken only with the agreement of the personnel management division at Prison Service Headquarters.

As to the rules governing political activities of members of the Prison Service, the position is that civil servants, including members of the Prison Service, are required to discharge loyally the duties assigned to them by the government of the day of whatever political persuasion. Ministers and the public must have confidence that civil servants' personal views do not cut across the discharge of their official duties. The intent of the rules governing political activities by civil servants is to allow them the greatest possible freedom to participate in public affairs without infringing these fundamental principles. The rules are concerned with the public expression of political views, rather than privately-held opinions.

These rules are set out in detail in the Home Office Staff handbook and a Home Office Notice, copies of which are enclosed.

Voluntary Services Unit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the projects, services and organisations which have received funding from the voluntary services unit for each year since 1981, listing the payments made in constant 1993 prices, and distinguishing

between those projects whose scope is limited to *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* Northern Ireland, *(e)* England and Wales and *(f)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Court Cases (Reporting)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to require that media reporting of cases to be brought before the courts in the Irish Republic shall be subject to the same restrictions as govern reporting of cases brought before United Kingdom courts.

Mr. Maclean: Where a warrant for arrest has been issued or granted in a criminal case in the United Kingdom, including a case where that warrant forms part of an extradition request, any person publishing material that creates a substantial risk that the course of justice in the proceedings in question will be seriously impeded or prejudiced is already liable to proceedings under the Contempt of Court Act 1981. There are no plans to extend the scope of the Contempt of Court Act to the period before proceedings are active, as defined by schedule 1 to the Contempt of Court Act 1981.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. William McGrath

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute a public inquiry into the length of time it took to bring to trial those accused of the death of Mr. William McGrath, of Morrison street, Bolton, and the access to drugs of the key witnesses in the case who were under police protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The listing of cases for trial is a matter for the courts.

The actions taken by police officers in the course of their duties are operational matters and entirely the responsibility of the police. I understand, however, that at no time during this case were any witnesses under police protection.

Safer Cities

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many safer cities programmes were running each year since 1 April 1989; what was the total cost of their budgets for each year from 1989-90; how many will be running on 1 April; and what will be the total of their budgets for 1994-95.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of safer cities projects operated and the total cost of their budgets since 1 April 1989 is as follows:

Year	*Projects*	*Cost (£ million)*
1989-90	16	3·3
1990-91	16	6·3
1991-92	20	7·2
1992-93	20	7·7
1993-94	[1]20	[2]6·0
[3]1 April 1994	14	[2]2·1

[1] The figure for 1993-94 excludes the 10 new areas which were announced in December 1993 and are currently being established.
[2] Estimated.
[3] Announcements on further projects are planned for 1994-95. As the bulk of the funding for safer cities is to be included in the single regeneration budget to be administered by the Department of the Environment from 1 April 1994, the precise timetable for later waves, together with associated costs, will be drawn up in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The costs quoted are therefore only those which remain funded by the Home Office.

The costs include some expenditure, such as project staff salaries and rent for office accommodation, which is incurred by the safer cities central team.

Crime Clear-up Rates

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the highest five clear-up rates for primary crime in police authorities in England and Wales in each of the past seven years.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* My Department does not use the term "primary crime". Instead, the figures provided are the percentage of all recorded offences which were cleared up by "primary" means: charged, summoned or cautioned—as opposed to "secondary" means: taken into consideration, interview of convicted offender and other. Police forces with the highest primary clear up rates on this basis are given in the table. The information is not yet available for 1993. Prior to 1989, information in this format is incomplete.

	Per cent.
1989	
Gwent	48
Dyfed-Powys	42
Suffolk	37
Cumbria, Wiltshire	35
1990	
Gwent	43
Dyfed-Powys	39
Suffolk	36
Wiltshire	30
North Wales	28
1991	
Gwent	38
Suffolk	34
Dyfed-Powys	32
Wiltshire	29
Cheshire	27
1992	
Gwent	35
Dyfed-Powys	30
Suffolk	29
Wiltshire	25
Cheshire	23

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cash Plans

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish an update table A—cash plans—of "Trade and Industry 1994"—Cm 2504—in constant 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Heseltine: The figures provided in table A of the Department of Trade and Industry's 1994 report are produced in cash terms, consistent with Treasury guidance. They may be adjusted to reflect constant 1992-93 prices, this being the current basis used for such analysis, by means of the GDP deflators which are shown in table 1.1 of the Statistical Supplement to the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95 (Cm 2519). Table 5B.4 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95 shows the DTI's overall expenditure for the period 1988-89 to 1996-97 adjusted in this way.

Staff Numbers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide for each of his Department's laboratories and agencies *(a)* the number of whole-time equivalent staff in post now, *(b)* the number of WTE staff in post at 1 April 1993, *(c)* whether operational and management budgets for the 1994-95 year have been determined, *(d)* whether the agency is subject to review and the date on which that review began and *(e)* what financial target was set for 1993-94; whether it is expected to achieve it; and what target has been set for 1994-95.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested in *(a)*, *(b)* and *(d)* is set out in the table. Budgets and targets for 1994-95 have not yet been confirmed. Achievements against the 1993-94 financial targets will be published in the agencies' annual reports and accounts: these will be laid before Parliament and placed in the Library of the House.

Agency	*Number of permanent staff (whole time equivalent)* *1 March 1994*	*1 April 1993*	*Review of agency announced*	*Financial target 1993-94*
Accounts services agency	91·0	88·5	September 1993	(i) Recovery of full costs (ii) Net total not to exceed £90,000 estimates
Companies house	963·0	983·5	July 1992	(i) 6 per cent. return on capital employed (ii) Recovery of full costs
Insolvency service	1,615·0	1,572·5	July 1993	To operate within allocated expenditure budget
Laboratory of the Government Chemist[1]	315·5	313·5	May 1993	(i) Recovery of full costs (ii) Net total not to exceed –£520,000 in estimates
National engineering laboratory[1]	331·0	363·5	May 1993	(i) Recovery of full costs from Government work carrried out (ii) Net total not to exceed £2,452,000 in estimates
National Physical laboratory[1]	736·5	767·5	May 1993	(i) Recovery of full costs (ii) Net total not to exceed –£3,545,000 in estimates
National weights & measures laboratory[1]	44·5	48·0	May 1993	(i) To operate within allocated expenditure budget (ii) Recovery of full costs of fee-earning activities
Patent office	957·5	1,009·0	June 1993	(i) Recovery of full costs (ii) 6 per cent. return on capital employed
Radiocommunications agency	541·0	524·5	(No review announced)	(i) Recovery of full costs (ii) Net total not to exceed –£3,028,000 in estimates
Warren spring laboratory[1]	203·5	266·5	(Merger with AEA to form the national environmental technology centre announced on 10 June 1993)	(i) Recovery of full costs (ii) Net total not to exceed £1,900,000 in estimates

[1] DTI Laboratories.

Technology Transfer

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all his Department's schemes and services to promote technology transfer together with the date on which they were opened; what was the expenditure committed; and if he will list the projects supported in each scheme or service in expected outturns up to 1 April.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's innovation and technology budget covers a number of schemes to promote technology transfer. The major ones are listed in the table, together with the date on which they were opened and, where available, the expenditure committed. DTI activity for which technology transfer is not the main objective is not included.

In addition, the Department continues to seek to raise awareness in the benefits of participating in EC research and development programmes, many of which incorporate elements of technology transfer.

The additional information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Title	Commenced	Committed expenditure £ millions
Advanced Control Technology Transfer	1992	4·6
Biochemical Engineering Programme	1989	4·3
Biotechnology Means Business	1990	0·42
Business with Applications Specific Integration Circuits System (ASICS)	1994	3
Carrier Technology Programme	1992	18
Engineers to Japan Scheme	1991	0·5
Environmental Best Practice Programme (jointly funded with the Department of the Environment)	1994	11
Industrial Units Scheme	1992	4·07
Manufacturing, Planning and Implementation (MPI)	1991	8·75
Neural Computing Technology Transfer	1992	5·75
New and Renewables Programme	1988	[1]3·5
OSTEMS—Overseas Sciences and Tech Experts Mission Scheme	1986	[2]0·27
Overseas Technical Information Service (OTIS)	1985	[2]0·19
Postgraduate Training Partnerships	1992	6·4
Programme for Competitive Manufacturing	n/a	
PROST Awareness	1994	1
Pump Centre	1992	1·6
Senior Academics in Industry Scheme	1992	0·8
Teaching Company Schemes (TCS)	1975	[2]5·5
Technical Action Line (TAL Phase II)	1992	n/a
Technology Audits	1992	1·9
Vision Technology Transfer Centre	1990	1·3

[1] Figures for 1994-95 available only.
[2] Figures for 1993-94 available only.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Eggar: The code of practice will reinforce and build upon my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information.

We will be establishing a central contact point to deal with requests for information under the code. Requests for information which can be dealt with simply and quickly will not attract a charge. More complex requests, requiring a significant diversion of resources, will attract a charge in line with the amount of work involved. We will keep our charging arrangements under review at all times. Details of charges and other administrative matters will be made available when the code comes into force.

Phone Calls (Asia and Africa)

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning telephone customers in the United Kingdom being charged for telephone calls not made to Asia and Africa because of false-answers defects; what estimate he has as to the numbers of United Kingdom customers so charged; and how much revenue accrues to British telephone companies as a result.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 22 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *202*.

Bestwood and Atlanta Fund Managers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total cost of the inspectors' report on Bestwood and Atlanta Fund Managers; how it has been disbursed to each inspector; what are the business connections of the inspectors; when the inspectors were appointed; and on what date the report was published.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The inspectors, Mr. Gabriel Moss QC and Mr. John Venning FCA of Robson Rhodes, chartered accountants, were appointed on 23 June 1989. Their report was published on 20 January 1994. The total cost of the inspection was £2,684,000, £202,370 being paid to Mr. Moss and the remainder to Mr. Venning's firm.

Company Returns

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many incorporated companies have failed to file accounts at Companies House for each year since 1985;

(2) what action he takes when a company fails to file its annual return within the prescribed period;

(3) if he will provide a list of the number of companies which have been fined or have been disincorporated as a result of failure to file annual returns for each or any of the years since 1985.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: These matters are for Companies House. I have therefore asked the Chief Executive, David Durham, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from D. Durham to Mr. Austin Mitchell, dated 18 March 1994:

Mr. Hamilton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, has asked me as Registrar and Chief Executive of Companies House Executive Agency, to reply to the following Parliamentary Questions which you tabled:

*How many incorporated companies have failed to file accounts at Companies House for each of the years since 1985.

*What action is taken when a company fails to file its annual return within the prescribed period.

*How many companies have been fined or have been disincorporated as a result of failure to file annual return for each or any of the years since 1985.

The statistical information which you have requested is published by the President of the Board of Trade in the general annual report of matters within the Companies Act, which is laid before both Houses of Parliament pursuant to section 729 of the Companies Act 1985. However, for your convenience, I have extracted the relevant figures from the reports for each of the years in question. I shall now attempt to clarify the remaining points which you have raised.

Companies House tries very hard to ensure that each individual company is reminded of its obligation to deliver annual returns and accounts. On average, some two million letters are issued each year, as a timely reminder before documents become due and, if needs be, in an attempt to secure compliance of the law where documents are found to be outstanding.

Where it is established, having issued reminders, that a defaulting company remains in business or in operation, every effort is made to encourage the company to file with the minimum of delay. Regrettably, however, it is sometimes necessary to institute criminal proceedings in order to secure delivery of the required documentation. Failure to file annual returns or accounts is a criminal offence and, on conviction, a fine of up to a maximum of £5,000 can be imposed upon directors personally by the Court for each separate offence.

In addition, where annual accounts are delivered outside the statutory time provided by the Companies Act, the company itself is liable to a civil penalty of up to £1,000 for private companies and £5,000 for public companies, depending on the lateness of the

accounts. I must stress, however, that the system of late filing penalties is designed to encourge timely filing, with the ultimate aim being that no penalties are levied because all companies file on time. There is no late filing penalty payable in respect of the late delivery of annual returns.

With regards to disincorporation, or dissolution of companies. Section 652 of the Companies Act 1985 provides me with authority to strike off and dissolve a company where I have reason to believe that it is no longer in business or in operation. Before dissolving a company, I am required to issue a number of notices to the company at its registeredd office address, inquiring if it remains in business or in operation. In the absence of any response, a notice is published in the London Gazette warning of my intention to strike the name of the company off the register. A copy of this notice, which is also sent to the company, is placed on the company's record. I must emphasise, that dissolution action is not intended to be a punishment for failing to comply with the disclosure requirements of the Companies Act.

Finally, I can assure you that Companies House is committed in everything it does to balance the interests of limited companies who have a statutory duty to provide information, with the interests of the public who have a right by law to such information. If records at Companies House are up-to-date, companies can be investigated and assessed before any dealings take place and a great deal of financial uncertainty and, as is so often the case today, the loss of hard earned money may be avoided.

I hope that I have correctly interpreted the questions which you have tabled and that I have covered the points raised. Should you, however, require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Compliance rates for annual returns and accounts, 1984 to 1993

Thousands of companies
Percentage of companies on effective register

	Companies up-to-date in filing:										
	Effective register (thousands)	*Compliant annual returns (thousands)*	*(percentage)*	*Default annual returns (thousands)*	*(percentage)*	*Compliant accounts (thousands)*	*(percentage)*	*Compliant for both returns and accounts (thousands)*	*(percentage)*	*In default for both returns and accounts (thousands)*	*(percentage)*
England and Wales											
May 1985	810	544	67·1	266	32·9	518	63·9	471	58·1	—	41·9
June 1986	785	692	88·2	93	11·8	663	84·4	623	79·4	—	20·6
June 1987	824	731	88·8	93	11·2	699	84·9	665	80·7	—	19·3
June 1988	872	775	88·8	97	11·2	742	85·1	697	79·9	—	20·1
June 1989	936	817	87·3	119	12·7	787	84·1	734	78·4	—	21·6
June 1990	964	868	90·0	96	10·0	827	85·7	784	81·3	—	18·7
June 1991	931	799	85·8	132	14·2	802	86·1	725	77·9	—	22·1
June 1992	921	825	89·6	96	10·4	844	91·6	781	84·8	—	15·2
June 1993	900	821	91·2	79	8·8	848	94·2	792	88·0	—	12·0

Convictions by the Department under the Companies Act 1985-93 (inclusive)

	Directors convicted	*Companies involved*
1985	1,699	775
1986	1,694	899
1987	1,628	927
1988	1,448	1,016
1989	1,269	956
1990	1,245	1,005
1991	1,581	1,284
1992	1,549	1,080
1993	1,897	1,168

Companies removed from the registers, 1985 to 1993

	Number
1985	51,100
1986	95,500
1987	74,300
1988	67,200
1989	103,000
1990	82,726
1991	95,886
1992	128,760
1993	108,798

Pennine Commercial Holdings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the inspectors to inquire into the affairs of Pennine Commercial Holdings were appointed; when the inquiry was completed; what are the business connections of the inspectors; whether any of them came from the accountancy firms criticised in any DTI inspectors' reports; what is the cost of the investigation and how it has been disbursed to each inspector; what reports so far have been published; and when he will publish the final reports.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Elizabeth Appleby QC and Peter Wilfred Foss FCA of Moores Rowland were appointed inspectors of Pennine Commercial Holdings plc on 4 October 1983 under the provisions of Section 165(1)*(b)* of the Companies Act 1948 (now section 432 of the Companies Act 1985). The inspectors have not been criticised in any DTI inspection report. The inspectors are reviewing their interim report on Pennine Commercial Holdings with a view to submitting a final report following the conclusion of criminal proceedings. When the completed report is submitted, publication will be considered. The cost of the investigation to date is £384,000 of which £35,000 relates to the legal inspector, and the balance to Mr. Foss's firm.

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department started sending copies of the DTI inspectors' reports to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England; and what were the reasons for the decision to do so.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my letter to him of 28 October 1992. It has long been the practice to send copies of published reports to the institute in appropriate cases. Section 449(1)(L) of the Companies Act 1985 introduced the ability to pass to the Institute copies of reports prior to publication. The first such disclosure was in 1988.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if partners from the auditing firm criticised in the DTI inspectors' reports on Sound Diffusion, Rotaprint, Alexander Howden, Edencorp, Milbury and WMD Underwriting agencies are present on the Auditing Practices Board or its working parties.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The constitution of the Auditing Practices Board is a matter for the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will introduce legislation under which auditors would owe a duty of care to individual creditors;

(2) if he will introduce legislation under which auditors would owe a duty of care to individual shareholders.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to do so.

Al Saudi Banque

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what legislative proposals he has for the reversal of the 1989 Al Saudi Banque judgment.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such proposals.

Chile (Alcohol Trade)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what details are available of the annual value of Chilean wine imported into the United Kingdom; and what is the annual value of the Scotch whisky exported to Chile.

Mr. Needham: Information on the annual value of wine imported into the United Kingdom from Chile is available from 1988 onwards. The annual 1993 value of imports into the United Kingdom was £7·4 million. Information on the annual value of Scotch whisky exported to Chile is not identified separately from exports of Irish whiskey in the United Kingdom trade classification.

HEALTH

Temazepam

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total net ingredient cost of the drug temazepam in each NHS region and family health services authority area in 1991-92 and 1992-93, and for the six-month period 1 April 1993 to 1 October 1993; and if she will express these figures as an expenditure per head of population.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information will be placed in the Library.

Information prior to October 1991 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *165*, if she will list by region hospital closures which have been contested by community health councils in each year since 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The following known hospital closures were initially contested by community health councils and remained contested throughout the consultation period. More detailed information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Hospital closures which have been contested in this way since 1988 are as:

Region

Northern:
Ponteland and Lemington Hospitals, Newcastle

Yorkshire:
Grove Hospital, Ilkley
Brandesburton Long Stay, Hull

Trent:
Balderton Hospital, Newark
Scarsdale Hospital, Chesterfield

East Anglian:
Newmarket Hospital, Suffolk

North West Thames:
Clapham Hospital
South Middlesex Hospital
Westminster Hospital
West London Hospital
Westminster Children's Hospital
St. Mary Abbots Hospital
St. Stephens Hospital

North East Thames:
Rush Green Hospital

South East Thames:
Sydenham Children's Hospital

South West Thames:
St. James' Hospital

Wessex:
None

Oxford:
Iver Cottage Hospital, Berkshire

South Western:
Almondsbury Hospital, Almondsbury
Standish Hospital, Stonehouse

West Midlands:
Mill Street Hospital, Kidderminster
Birmingham Accident Hospital

Mersey:
St. Paul's Eye Hospital, Liverpool

North Western:
Whittingham Hospital, Preston

Drugs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in respect of which named drugs she has asked in the period since 1 April 1993 family health services authorities, general practitioners fundholders and general practitioners generally to review their prescription practices.

Dr. Mawhinney: Family health services authorities are responsible for working with general practitioners to improve the cost effectiveness of prescribing. It is for local decision whether the use of particular categories of drugs is targeted for review depending on local prescribing patterns.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many *(a)* first or second in line managers and *(b)* medical consultants who were employed by regional health authorities at the time she announced her decision to reduce the number of regions from 14 to eight have been moved, or will move later this year, to other posts in the NHS on protected salaries;

(2) for each of the 14 regional health authorities, how many *(a)* first and second in line managers and *(b)* medical consultants have (i) been appointed to a post in one of the eight merged regions, (ii) been appointed to a newly created post with a district health authority, (iii) been appointed to a previously established but vacant post with a district health authority, (iv) obtained employment outside the NHS and (v) become or expect in April 1994 to become unemployed.

Dr. Mawhinney: All employees of the 12 existing regional health authorities which are affected by mergers on 1 April 1994 will transfer to six new regional health authorities with effect from that date. Employees' employment rights will be protected by the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

Appointments to posts in the new regional health authorities and in district health authorities, and the terms of those appointments, are matters for the employing authority.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for each of the 14 regional health authorities, how much money has been set aside for *(a)* redundancy or severance pay and for paying for early retirements and *(b)* for paying protected salaries in the forthcoming year, to employees who will lose their job as a result of the merger of regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Questions of redundancy will be determined by the level of staffing identified as being needed to carry out the functions of national health service central management. This will depend upon the analysis of functions carried out in the NHS and the allocation of functions across the new structure. It is not therefore possible at this stage to estimate the cost of implementing the proposals to streamline NHS central management.

Cognex

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made to make available Cognex —Tacrine—to United Kingdom patients.

Mr. Sackville: Cognex—Tacrine—is not currently licensed to the United Kingdom. However, under the Medicines Act doctors have clinical freedom to treat particular named patients with unlicensed medicines.

Emphysema

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has conducted or commissioned into the number of work-related incidences of chronic emphysema that have occurred since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. However, the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, spent £1,097,000 in 1992-93 on research into the respiratory system, some of which may be of relevance to emphysema.

Generic Prescribing

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy towards generic prescribing.

Dr. Mawhinney: Successive Governments have encouraged the use of generic drugs where these are available and clinically appropriate.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the whole-time equivalent numbers of *(a)* agency and *(b)* bank nursing and midwifery staff employed in the NHS for each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table.

Bank and agency nursing and midwifery staff—England at 30 September each year

Whole-time equivalents

Year	*Bank*	*Agency*
1987	4,920	6,130
1988	5,830	6,240
1989	5,910	7,230
1990	6,230	6,710
1991	8,540	3,930
1992	10,020	3,230

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

The increase in bank nurses and midwives together with the corresponding decrease in agency nurses and midwives reflects the more widespread flexible working arrangements in the NHS for nurses and midwives.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the dates Ministers, or officials from her Department, including her Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985 including this year to date on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to her Department.

Mr. Sackville: Since 1 April 1993 no Minister or official from the Department of Health has used the Malaysia airline MAS on official business. Prior to that date information is not available.

Oral Health Strategy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department is expecting to produce an oral health strategy; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 18 February at column *1042*.

Prescription Medicines

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) of 4 March, *Official Report*,

column *917*, what has been the annual rate of growth of the price index for national health service medicines since 1978.

Dr. Mawhinney: A single price index is not available for all national health service medicines. The annual rate of growth of the price index for family health services medicines since 1977-78 has been about 2·5 per cent.

Pollution

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of known environmental carcinogens she estimates result from vehicle emissions.

Mr. Sackville: The known environmental carcinogens produced by vehicle exhaust emissions are benzene; 1, 3-butadiene; and some polyaromatic hydrocarbons—PAHs—.

The expert panel on air quality standards—EPAQS—which advises my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has reported estimates that 87 per cent. of benzene emissions to the atmosphere are derived from vehicle exhausts. Benzene is classified by the International Agency for Research in Cancer—IARC—as a known human carcinogen. There are other sources of benzene to which people are exposed such as the diet, water and cigarette smoke. The panel has estimated that an urban non-smoker would take in between 61 per cent. and 80 per cent. of daily exposure from inhaled air.

Other than local leaks from industrial plants, vehicle exhaust emissions are the only source of 1, 3-butadiene in the atmosphere. IARC has classified this compound as a probable human carcinogen.

The quality of urban air review group—QUARG—which advises my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has estimated that 14 per cent. of the emissions to the atmosphere of PAHs derive from vehicle exhausts. IARC has classified some PAHs as probable human carcinogens, some as possible human carcinogens, and others, it has not classified.

The classification of carcinogens by IARC is widely accepted and is based on an assessment of the available research findings. Only where this includes human studies are chemicals classified as a known human carcinogen.

The reports of EPAQS and QUARG are available in the Library.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage target the NHS Supplies Authority has set for annual purchasing saving.

Mr. Sackville: At least 4 per cent. of the total aggregate value of all contracts negotiated for national health service customers within the year.

Inward Investment

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money has been spent to date on the commissioning of a management consultancy to draw up a strategic plan to attract inward investment from United States and Japanese pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies; and what is the total budget allocation for the project.

Mr. Sackville: Consultancy support in drawing up an inward investment strategy has been commissioned at a cost of £25,000. The budget for implementing the strategy will be determined when the initial stage has been completed.

High Blood Pressure

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to enable patients who require treatment for high blood pressure to use public swimming pools free of charge.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Drugs Companies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the annual saving to the NHS arising from drug companies supplying certain drugs free to hospitals for each of the last five years; what assessment she has made of this practice for the health service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We are aware that some drug companies supply drugs free of charge to hospitals either as samples or where clinical trials are in progress. Information on the extent of these supplies is not available centrally.

Hotel Use

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of the use of private hotels for management, training and conference purposes by NHS staff and executive and non-executive members of *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* trusts, *(c)* district health authorities and *(d)* family health service authorities, by region and district in each of the last five years; and what are the reasons for the use of this accommodation.

Dr. Mawhinney: Use of private hotels is for each national health service body to determine on the basis of value for money, and costs cannot be separately identified from financial returns and accounts.

Funding Allocation

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the guidance issued to NHS managers on how funds released by the closure or reduction of acute units are to be transferred to the primary health care sector.

Dr. Mawhinney: The "Priorities and planning guidance 1994-95", EL(93)54, identifies this as a matter for regional health authorities to address, in conjunction with other national health service authorities and purchasers, in developing their investment strategies. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the Government's objective of transferring resources from the acute to the primary health sector is reflected *(a)* in the regional and national training plans for community nursing services and *(b)* in the regional and national plans for staff in post within community nursing services.

Mr. Sackville: Regional commission training places for non-medical staff, including community nurses, are based on provider unit forecasts for qualified staff in post required in five years' time.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each purchasing health authority in England, the figures for revenue funding in 1992-93,1993-94 and 1994-95, and the estimated figures for 1995-96 and 1996-97; and if she will identify the changes for each health authority's revenue budget resulting from the replacement of the regional allocation working party system of determining funding allocation.

Mr. Sackville: Information will be placed in the Library showing 1992-93 expenditure for each district health authority. It is the responsibility of regional health authorities to allocate resources to districts. Information on the total resources allocated to DHAs in 1993-94 and 1994-95 or assumptions about future allocations is not available centrally.

The use of resource allocation working party (RAWP) targets was discontinued in 1990 when weighted capitation was introduced. Consequently, no RAWP targets are currently available for comparison with weighted capitation shares. Comparisons would not be meaningful. Under the old system authorities were funded for their "catchment population", whereas now they are purchasers of services for their resident population, with cross-boundary flows of patients being covered by payments under the national health service contracts.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many contracts her Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health has spent the following amounts from running costs on consultancy since its establishment as a separate Department:

	£
1990-91	18,398,000
1991-92	24,258,000
1992-93	18,399,000

Information on the number of contracts is not available.

Infant Mortality

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the infant mortality rates by region for the last available year and by sex.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Infant mortality rates[1] by regional health authority for 1992

Regional Health Authority of usual residence	*Males*	*Females*
Northern	8·1	6·2
Yorkshire	7·5	5·9
Trent	8·2	5·4
East Anglian	5·6	3·6
North West Thames	6·0	4·9
North East Thames	8·3	5·8
South East Thames	7·3	5·4
South West Thames	6·0	5·5
Wessex	6·1	4·9
Oxford	6·3	5·7
South Western	7·0	4·0
West Midlands	8·9	7·4
Mersey	6·4	5·0
North Western	8·1	7·3
Wales	6·3	5·7

[1] Infant mortality deaths under one year per 1,000 livebirths.

Disabled Children

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of children suffer from a permanent disability.

Mr. Bowis: The 1985 survey of disability conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys estimated that 3·2 per cent. of children under 16 in Great Britain had disabilities.

Breast Milk

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she takes to monitor regularly dioxins and similar substances in breast milk; what are her most recent findings; and what further plans she has.

Mr. Sackville: Two monitoring exercises have been carried out for dioxins in human milk in the United Kingdom, both as part of a World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe initiative. The results of the first exercise were reported in pollution paper No. 27: Dioxins in the Environment (HMSO: London, 1989). The second exercise is nearing completion and the results will be published in due course.

Results of the most recent analyses of human milk for total polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and organochlorine pesticides were published in Food Surveillance Paper No. 34: Report of the Working Party on Pesticides Residues: 1988-1990 (HMSO: London, 1992). Further analysis of specific PCB compounds is under way as part of the second WHO exercise, referred to above.

The need for monitoring of human milk for these contaminants is kept under review by the relevant working parties of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's steering group on chemical aspects of food surveillance, on which the Department of Health is represented.

Copies of both papers are available in the Library.

Homeless Children

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the number of homeless children for the last available year by region.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Lead Contamination

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had or will have with colleagues in other Departments regarding the phasing-out of leaded petrol and lead water pipes in homes and schools.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is in regular contact with the Department of the Environment which is responsible for matters relating to lead in the environment. As part of the Government's policy of reducing public exposure to lead, we cut wherever possible, the permitted amount of lead in petrol from 0·4 to 0·15 grammes per litre

in 1985. We have also encouraged the widespread use of unleaded petrol which now accounts for 55 per cent. of the United Kingdom market. All new cars must now be built to run on unleaded petrol and have catalytic converters fitted; these do not operate effectively if used with leaded petrol. This action should raise the market share of unleaded petrol to at least 90 per cent. by the year 2000.

The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989, as amended, require that drinking water at the point where the water is supplied contains no more than 50 mcg of lead per litre. This standard is more rigorous than the requirements of the European Community Drinking Water Directive. The Commission is currently drafting a new directive. When the position on the new directive is clearer, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be discussing with us any further action on levels of lead in drinking water.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were not on waiting lists for treatment but were waiting to see a specialist in the national health service in each region for each quarter for the last two years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting times to first out-patient appointment is not collected. This year regional health authorities have set targets for first out-patient appointments and are aiming to reduce those that are unacceptably long. Most people who attend out-patient clinics are not placed on an in-patient or day case waiting list as they are either treated immediately or do not require any treatment.

Child Protection Register

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls were on a child protection register for the latest available year for each age cohort.

Mr. Bowis: The information is shown in the table.

Estimated numbers of children and young people on child protection registers in England at 31 March 1993, by age and sex

Age Group	All children	Boys	Girls
All Ages	32,500	16,000	16,400
Under 1	2,300	1,200	1,200
1-4	9,900	5,100	4,800
5-9	10,000	5,200	4,700
10-15	9,100	4,100	5,000
16 and over	1,100	400	700

Notes:—Figures are rounded to the nearest 100 and may not add up due to rounding.
The figure for "all ages, all children" includes unborn children.

Disabled Children

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many disabled children are in residential care for each age cohort, by sex and by region.

Mr. Bowis: The information available centrally, about the number of disabled children in residential care, relates to children looked after because their parents need relief from problems or stresses of caring for them. Information for 31 March 1992 is shown in the table.

Estimated number of children looked after in residential accommodation because parents need relief from the stresses of caring for a child with disabilities at 31 March 1992

Social Services Inspectorate Regions [note]	All children	Total boys	Under one	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16 to 17	18 and over	Total girls	Under one	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16 to 17	18 and over
England	380	250	0	0	40	150	50	10	130	0	(*)	20	70	20	10
Shire Counties	110	80	0	0	10	40	20	(*)	40	0	(*)	(*)	20	10	0
North of England	20	20	0	0	(*)	10	(*)	0	(*)	0	(*)	0	0	(*)	0
Central England	30	20	0	0	(*)	10	10	(*)	10	0	0	0	10	(*)	0
Southern England	60	30	0	0	(*)	20	10	0	30	0	0	(*)	20	10	0
Metropolitan Districts	130	80	0	0	20	50	10	(*)	40	0	0	10	30	10	(*)
North of England	130	80	0	0	20	50	10	(*)	40	0	0	10	30	10	(*)
Central England	(*)	(*)	0	0	0	(*)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
London	140	90	0	0	20	50	20	(*)	50	0	(*)	20	20	10	10

Notes:
1. Figures relate to SSI policy regions.
2. Separate estimation procedures have been used for each region and figures rounded to the nearest 10. They will not necessarily add to totals.
3. * Indicates less than 5 children.
4. Short term placements covered by a single agreement are excluded.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she takes to monitor local authorities' duties under the Children Act 1989 to identify children with disabilities and provide or make available services which might benefit them.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health publishes annual reports on the operations and achievements of the Children Act 1989. The 1993 report will be available shortly and will include a commentary on the services provided by local authorities for children with disabilities. In February 1994, the social services inspectorate pulished a report of a national inspection of local authority services to disabled children and their families, copies of which are available in the Library.

Haemodialysis

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are made by health authorities to pay the extra cost of water and heating bills for patients requiring haemodialysis treatment at home; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities are responsible for meeting costs connected with home haemodialysis including the cost of maintaining the dialysis room at the

appropriate temperature. From 1 April 1994 health authorities will also be responsible for meeting the cost of water used in the course of home haemodialysis by patients whose water supply is metered by their local water company.

Psychiatric Problems (Children)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the number of children in the United Kingdom who have a psychiatric/psychological problem which handicaps them for a year or more.

Mr. Bowis: Information on duration of handicap is not collected by the Department. It is estimated that at any point, between 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. of children and teenagers have worries or problems severe enough to need help in overcoming them.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of hospital admissions for mental illness for the latest available year for each age cohort for children by sex and by region.

Mr. Bowis: Information relating to the admission of children into hospitals is not available in the precise form requested. Provisional information available centrally on the number of finished consultants episodes in the mental illness specialties in 1990-91 is shown in the table.

	Males			*Females*			*Persons*		
	0-4	*5-9*	*10-14*	*0-4*	*5-9*	*10-14*	*0-4*	*5-9*	*10-14*
Mental Illness (Finished Consultant Episodes) 1990-91 Provisional									
Northern	24	42	62	11	16	47	35	58	109
Yorkshire	53	58	66	41	29	74	95	86	140
Trent	18	22	79	1	17	66	19	38	145
East Anglia	3	3	20	0	1	19	3	4	39
North West Thames	24	2	36	20	0	26	44	2	62
North East Thames	15	2	45	12	0	58	28	2	103
South East Thames	9	6	6	5	2	28	13	9	34
South West Thames	6	25	34	14	7	18	20	32	52
Wessex	44	44	25	16	23	24	60	67	49
Oxford	32	48	59	19	11	110	50	59	169
South Western	4	51	103	2	4	80	6	55	183
West Midlands	36	20	37	17	9	63	54	29	100
Mersey	15	18	47	13	5	27	28	23	73
North Western	6	321	72	6	183	95	13	504	167
Special Health Authorities	2	22	33	4	7	28	6	30	61
Total	290	683	724	181	315	763	472	998	1,487

Notes:
1. It should be noted that the figures in the table relate to finished consultant episodes and not to individuals, as a patient may be admitted more than once during the year.
2. The total figures do not always match the separate figures for males and females due to rounding.

Allergies

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the number of *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls in the United Kingdom having chemical and food intolerance allergies for each age cohort and by sex.

Mr. Sackville: Such estimates are not available.

Uganda Treasury (Debt)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will encourage the International Monetary Fund to sell off part of its gold stocks to generate the resources to write off debt owed to the fund by Uganda.

(2) if he will consider establishing a debt relief fund for Uganda, additional to the existing aid budget, to help Uganda meet its repayment obligations to multilateral lending agencies.

Mr. Nelson: Although Uganda is severely indebted, net transfers from the international financial institutions—IFIs—remain substantially in Uganda's favour. Most IFI support for Uganda is on highly concessional terms, thus reducing the debt service burden.

Debt to the IMF does not account for a high proportion of Uganda's debt stock. Uganda has benefited from highly concessional IMF assistance under the enhanced structural adjustment facility—ESAF—and, subject to continuing to pursue appropriate economic policies, is expected to receive further assistance under the enlarged ESAF. The United Kingdom was a prime mover in the establishment of ESAF in 1987 and has just agreed a further contribution of £50 million to enlarge the facility to help the poorest countries such as Uganda. The United Kingdom will over time contribute one ninth of the subsidy required by the enlarged ESAF. Uganda also benefits from highly concessional credits from the World Bank's International Development Association, which concentrates on lending to the poorest countries. The United Kingdom contributed £620 million to the IDA at the last replenishment. In addition, Uganda has help meeting its repayments on non-concessional loans to the bank through the bank's fifth dimension facility.

While the United Kingdom has advocated sales of IMF gold in the past, this has been to fund targeted concessional facilities such as ESAF rather than debt write-off. The United Kingdom believes that continued targeted concessional financial assistance is the best response by the IFIs to the debt problem of the poorest countries such as Uganda. Debt write-offs even if financed by gold sales would, by running down these institutions' assets and increasing their financing costs, weaken their financial

standing and hence their ability to assist all developing countries. Both the IMF's and the World bank's funds are finite and revolving and intended to be available for use by members when and where they are most needed.

Uganda also has help in meeting its debt service obligations through concessional terms for its official debt. The United Kingdom has been a prime mover for this. The existing Trinidad terms which have the effect of halving payments due to creditor Governments over the period of an IMF agreement and give a commitment to consider reducing the stock of a country's reschedulable debt after three to four years of economic reform, are based on an initiative by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he was Chancellor. The United Kingdom continues to press other official creditors to agree to immediate stock of debt reduction, with reductions up to 80 per cent. for the most needy, for countries which have a one to two year track record of economic reform and are up to date with their debt servicing.

The United Kingdom believes that the approach outlined above is the most effective response to Ugandan debt and that a debt relief fund would not be a cost-effective or necessary use of the United Kingdom aid programme for Uganda.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is set out in the publication "Independent", which was published on 18 March 1994, copies of which have been placed in the House Libraries.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the increase in the exchange rate against the ecu since February 1993 has had on the profitability of United Kingdom exports to the rest of the EC of manufactured goods; and what is his assessment of the part that played in the sale of Rover cars to BMW.

Mr. Nelson: The profitability of United Kingdom exports of manufactures to the rest of the EC depends on a number of factors. No estimate is available of the effect on such profitability of the exchange rate against the ecu. The sale of Rover to BMW is a matter for the firms themselves.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the visible balance of trade in manufactures on a balance of payments basis as a percentage of gross domestic product in 1971, 1979, 1989 and estimated for 1993: what assessment he has made of the reason for the changes; and whether he will publish the change in the (i) nominal and (ii) real rate of exchange which the treasury model of the economy shows would be required to restore the balance in terms of gross domestic product to what it was in (iii) 1978 and (iv) 1971.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for the visible balance of trade in manufactures and for gross domestic product are available on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. The identifiers are BPJF and CAOB. A country's visible trade balance depends on the strength of its own domestic demand and that of its trading partners, and on the level of its competitiveness.

All members have access to the Treasury model through the House of Commons Library. It is Treasury practice not to provide the results of model simulations in answer to parliamentary questions. This is due both to the excessive cost involved and the difficulty in making appropriate assumptions without knowing the context in which the figures will be used.

Economic Indicators

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the changes in *(a)* the real exchange rate, *(b)* the balance of trade in manufactures and *(c)* the rate of economic growth since 1964; and what assessment he has made of the extent of correlation between these indicators.

Mr. Nelson: There is no unambiguous definition of the real exchange rate. A variety of indicators is available. These are published in "Economic Trends", table 28. These, along with the balance of trade in manufacturers and GDP are also available on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. Some useful identifiers include:

FLAA—relative export prices;
FLAC—relative unit labour costs;
BPJF—the manufactures balance;
CAOP—GDP at factor costs.

Correlation coefficients, calculated from these data, are set out in table 1.

Table 1: Estimated Correlation Matrix of Variables (1964-91)

	FLAA	*BPJF*	*CAOP*	*FLAC*
FLAA	1.0000	—	—	—
BPJF	.21237	1.0000	—	—
CAOP	−.17787	−.71785	1.0000	—
FLAC	.96217	.19706	−.23963	1.0000

Annual data for the competitiveness measures are not yet available for 1992 and 1993 on the CSO database.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what part the deputy governor of the Bank of England plays in the formulation of interest rate policy; and whether the views he has recently expressed on the prospects for inflation represent those of the Government.

Mr. Nelson: Decisions on interest rates are a matter for Ministers, advised by Treasury officials and the Bank of England. In his speech to the Institute of Credit Management on 9 March, the deputy governor warned of the dangers of relaxing the fight against inflation. The Government will continue to set interest rates to meet their objectives for low inflation.

Diesel Fuel

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce fiscal measures to discourage the use of diesel as a motor engine fuel.

Sir John Cope: There are no plans at present to introduce such measures.

Gas Fuel

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce fiscal incentives to encourage buses and taxis to run on gas fuel.

Sir John Cope: There are no plans at present to introduce further measures.

Petrol Aromatics

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce fiscal incentives to petrol producers to reformulate petrol by removing aromatics.

Sir John Cope: There are no plans at present to introduce such incentives.

Food Exports

Mr.Gill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what instructions have been received by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise from Commission auditors in respect of the examining of food exports by the offloading of containers at any particular port.

Sir John Cope: Following a visit to the United Kingdom Customs in 1993, Commission auditors expressed dissatisfaction with the depth and rigour of examination of exports where common agricultural policy refunds were claimed. As a result, Customs issued more detailed guidance to staff on the standards to be observed.

Betting Duty

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column 222, how much general betting duty the Exchequer collected between November 1993 and January 1994.

Sir John Cope: Receipts from general betting duty in the three months November 1993 to January 1994 totalled £108 million. General betting duty is paid in the month following that in which the duty accrues. Thus the receipts for November 1993 to January 1994 relate to races run the months of October to December 1993.

Finance Bill

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he received asking for the deletion of clause 241 of the Finance Bill or to have it amended following consultation between the Treasury and the Institute of Chartered Accountants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Following representations made before and during the Committee stage debate on 17 March, the clause has been withdrawn. The Government have given a commitment to bring the matter back before the House in the next Finance Bill, which will allow the Inland Revenue and professional institutes an opportunity for consultations.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the correlation coefficient, lagged or otherwise, between the rate of exchange and *(a)* the percentage of adult males of working age in work and *(b)* the rate of unemployment since 1964.

Mr. Nelson: The correlation coefficients can be calculated from information available in the House of Commons Library. Population, employment, and unemployment figures from 1981 are available on the NOMIS database. Employment and unemployment figures before 1981 are published in the *Employment Gazette*. Population figures before 1981 are available from the population estimates unit of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Figures for sterling exchange rates index are published, for example, in *Economic Trends*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the correlation coefficient, lagged or otherwise, between the rate of inflation and *(a)* the percentage of adult males of working age in work and *(b)* the rate of unemployment since 1964.

Mr. Nelson: The correlation coefficients can be calculated from information available in the House of Commons Library. Population, employment, and unemployment figures from 1981 are available on the NOMIS database. Employment and unemployment figures before 1981 are published in the *Employment Gazette*. Population figures before 1981 are available from the population estimates unit of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Figures for the Retail Prices Index are published in *Economic Trends*.

National Insurance

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what level the national insurance upper earnings limit would now be set had it increased at the same rate as the average earnings index since 1989; and what additional amounts in each year that would have raised.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply.

The upper earnings limit is statutorily linked to the level of the basic pension. If the limit had been raised instead in line with the increase in average earnings since 1989, and rounded to the nearest pound, it would now be £442. The additional amounts that would have been raised in each year are in the table:

Additional national insurance contributions raised

Year	*(£ million)*
1990-91	45
1991-92	[1]0
1992-93	100
1993-94	140

[1]In the year to September 1990 prices rose more than earnings, and the upper earnings limit would not have been higher in 1991-92.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Balfour Beatty

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of cases in which Balfour Beatty has received aid moneys, otherwise than in connection with the Pergau dam project, from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the World bank or *(c)* other multilateral organisations in respect of work in developing countries with which the United Kingdom has significant aid ties, which the company has subsequently had to return following failure to complete the work.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under *(a)* we know of only one aid and trade provision case involving Balfour Beatty in which a project has had to be terminated and aid moneys returned. The project in question was the mini-hydros project in Peru, which was approved in July 1982 involving an ATP grant of £4,843,000. The project was frustrated because the local institution, Electroperu, failed to meet its contractual obligations, did not complete associated civil works and defaulted on its bank loan. The project was also hampered by the local security situation. At no point during the contract did any United Kingdom party fail to fulfil its obligations.

For projects under *(b)* the World bank and *(c)* other multilateral organisations, the ODA does not hold details of contracts placed with United Kingdom firms by these institutions and such information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. The Pergau dam project is 60 per cent. complete and is on schedule for completion in August 1996.

Biodiversity

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation regarding its expertise in biodiversity, particularly in respect of discussions on the global environment facility; and what action the Government are taking to discourage unnecessary duplication in the United Nations system.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have had no consultations with UNESCO in this area. In relation to the global environment facility the instrument establishing the restructured GEF, agreed in Geneva on 16 March, is designed to encourage co-operation in the United Nations system.

Pergau Dam

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the environmental impact report from the consultant sent to assess the Pergau dam project in early February 1991.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have placed a copy of the report entitled "Pergau Hydro-Electric Project: Environmental and Socio-Economic Issues" in the Library today.

Earth-scanning Radar

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether consideration has been given to the provision of earth-scanning radar equipment similar to that in use in the Gloucester murder inquiry for use in de-mining operations supported under the United Kingdom overseas aid budget.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our role in humanitarian mine clearance operations continues to be one of funding organisations with suitable programmes. We have not to date received any proposals using advanced technology, but would consider funding the use of any appropriate technology which would speed up mine eradication.

Peru

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid is to be given to Peru in the coming year; and for what it has been allocated.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Bilateral aid to Peru during the coming year will be largely technical co-operation. Expenditure is likely to amount to approximately £3 million in 1994-95 financial year. This involves agreed activities in animal health, renewable energy generation, teacher training, scholarships for technical training for Peruvians in the United Kingdom, and small development projects managed through the British embassy.

Further projects either under development or planned will be directed mainly to support for health service reform, family planning and reproductive health services, renewable natural resources and water conservation. Assistance will also be provided through funds made available to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations under the joint funding scheme. In 1994-95 this support is likely to amount to over £1 million for activities in a wide variety of sectors.

South Africa

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he will take to ensure that the Government of South Africa after the elections of 27 April will promote educational opportunities for all; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Currently more than half of our bilateral aid to South Africa is spent on increasing access to, and improving the quality of, education and training for those disadvantaged by past policies. Education will continue to feature prominently in our growing aid programme, now running at some £15 million a year.

We will discuss with the new South African Government how best to support their efforts to reconstruct the education system on a professional, equitable and affordable basis.

International Military Services Ltd.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in which aid and trade provision agreements since 1979 International Military Services Ltd. has played a role; and if he will give details of the company's involvement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: International Military Services Ltd. has not been lead contractor on any ATP projects. The names of subcontractors on ATP projects are not held centrally by either ODA or DTI and could be collected only at disproportionate cost. We are not aware of any role played by International Military Services Ltd. in any ATP agreement since 1979.

Banana Producers

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current United Kingdom position on the European Community proposal for aid to traditional African, Caribbean and Pacific banana-producing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have proposed to the Commission amendments to the proposal which link assistance to restructuring and diversification. We will support the proposal if these amendments are agreed.

TRANSPORT

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. MacGregor: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Norris: The information required is not held in the form requested.

There have been 14 questions this parliamentary session which were referred to the chief executives of the Department's executive agencies. This represents 0·84 per cent.

Red Routes, London

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of fuel pollution resulting from the introduction of red routes in London.

Mr. Norris: Estimates of the reductions in vehicle emissions are set out in section 13 of the Transport Research Laboratory report on the pilot red route scheme (project report 31, 1993), a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact on traffic volumes on the roads involved resulting from the introduction of red routes in London.

Mr. Norris: The Transport Research Laboratory's assessment of the pilot red route scheme in north and east London concluded that many vehicles had rerouted from inappropriate roads onto the red route, but that there was not a large volume of new traffic.

Airport Security

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in ensuring tighter security for passengers at United Kingdom airports.

Mr. Norris: Since the Lockerbie tragedy there have been substantial improvements in aviation security in the United Kingdom both for passengers and for staff. Further improvements are being made in baggage screening and in acounting and authorising for carriage of all hold baggage on international flights.

The Department of Transport sets training standards for staff working in civil aviation who receive terrorist warnings, and for the national aviation security programme which covers, among other things, airport authorities' contingency plans, staff instructions, training programme and exercises.

Public Transport (Gas Guel)

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to promote research and development of gas fuelling for buses and taxis.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on 21 March at col *9*.

Bus Lanes, London

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to extend the number of designated bus lanes in London.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 15 March at column *652*.

Newly Qualified Drivers

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce a probationary period for newly qualified drivers.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend announced on 9 February at columns *270-71* the steps we are proposing to take following the consultation on "New Driver Safety". We are considering the practicalities of a scheme requiring drivers convicted of certain traffic offences within a specified period of qualifying to pass a further driving test; this might involve issuing licences on a probationary basis.

We also considered the case for introducing probationary plates, but are not yet convinced of its merits; we are prepared to consider this further when full results are available of a study into "restricted" plates in Northern Ireland.

Exclusion Zones, London

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce more traffic exclusion zones in central London.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter for local highway authorities, who are responsible for local roads in central London.

Air Pollution

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of pollution caused by diesel engines relative to other forms of fuel used in transportation.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Public Transport gave to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 21 October 1993 at column *298* and the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on 21 March at column *9*.

British Rail Pension Funds

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the future of British Rail pension funds.

Mr. Freeman: Soon.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the figure Q for the elasticity of journey time for the channel tunnel rail link for *(a)* international passengers and *(b)* domestic commuters.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways has used several models when forecasting demand for domestic and international services. The information contained in these models is commercially confidential, given its relationship with marketing and pricing strategies.

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to seek powers in the legislation for the proposed channel tunnel rail link to enable the new crossings of the Medway, for the rail link and for the M2 motorway, to be built at the same time.

Mr. Freeman: I intend that the legislation for the new channel tunnel rail link, which the Government aim to have ready for introduction as soon as parliamentary time allows, should include powers for a scheme to improve the M2 motorway from junction 1 to junction 4, enabling the two new bridges across the Medway to be built concurrently.

Light Dues

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on light dues.

Mr. Norris: I am pleased to announce that light dues for 1994-95 will be frozen at the levels set in March 1993. I am able to do so largely because the three general lighthouse authorities are to contain their expenditure proposals for 1994-95 broadly within the levels set for 1993-94. This has been made possible by further savings from the automation of lighthouses and by the authorities entering into co-operative arrangements which will enable a reduction to be made of one ship in the lighthouse tender fleet.

I commend the general lighthouse authorities for taking this initiative.

Shipping (Hazardous Cargoes)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to keep shipping with hazardous cargoes away from areas of environmental sensitivity.

Mr. Norris: Measures are in place to keep ships carrying hazardous cargoes away from environmentally sensitive areas. These include "areas to be avoided" off the islands of Orkney and Shetland, around Fair Isle, and between the Smalls lighthouse and Grossholme island. In addition, there is a defined deep water route to the west of the Hebrides. Further measures to protect the coast will take account of any recommendations made by the inquiry announced to the House by the Secretary of State on 11 January 1993 under the chairmanship of Lord Donaldson of Lymington.

Greater Manchester Buses North Ltd.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Corporate Finance Services on behalf of the employee buyout team of Greater Manchester Buses North Ltd.; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have received a number of representations about the sale of both Greater Manchester Buses North and Greater Manchester Buses South recently. Amongst these was a letter about the sale of the North company from Coopers and Lybrand, Corporate Finance Services dated 15 March, to which an acknowledgement was sent on 17 March.

The Secretary of State's consent to both sales will eventually be required. In view of his quasi-judicial function in these sales it would not be appropriate for me to comment further or make a statement.

Westlink

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he expects Stanwell Buses Ltd., trading as Westlink, to be sold.

Mr. Norris: London Buses Ltd. sold Stanwell Buses Ltd., trading as Westlink, to a management buy-out team for £1·937 million on 19 January.

M1

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that a public explanation is offered for the confusion and delay which severely affected traffic on the northbound carriageway of the M1 north of junction 29 on 13 and 14 March; what action is being taken to avoid a recurrence of such an experience; and what redress those affected have available under the terms of the citizens charter.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* During the night of 13 and 14 March, changes were being made to the traffic management on the major maintenance scheme to the north of junction 30 on the M1. These changes were agreed between the resident engineer, the contractor and the police and were planned to occur during a period of light traffic flow to minimise the delays and confusion to traffic. On Sunday 13 March heavy rain and gales threatened to make the work more difficult and, with the agreement of the police, work started at 2030—earlier than planned. This decision was taken to ensure that the changes were completed before the Monday morning rush hour.

Unfortunately some inconvenience is inevitable during essential changes in traffic management. Clearly every effort was made to minimise inconvenience and delay during essential maintenance work and therefore there is no redress under the citizens charter. I am sorry that members of the public suffered delay and confusion on this scheme, which has now been completed ahead of schedule.

Driving Tests

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what percentage of people taking their driving test in March 199330 had waited more than six weeks for their test.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive Dr. S. J. Ford. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Dr. S. J. Ford to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 7 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the percentage of people taking their driving test in March 1993 who had waited more than six weeks for their test.

The Agency measures the waiting time for tests on the basis of the size of the queue waiting for a test in relation to the examiner resource available to conduct tests. It does not have statistics that measure precisely the wait experienced by individual customers. Instead we use our annual, independent customer surveys to provide insight into the experiences of customers.

The last such survey was conducted in May 1993. The sample of candidates surveyed was selected from those who had taken a test in the previous two months. The response, from nearly 2,000 driving test candidates across the country, indicated that 90 per cent. waited 6 weeks or less between the date of making the appointment and the date the test was conducted.

During January and February 1993, when customers would generally have been seeking test appointments in March, appointments were available at over 90 per cent. of our permanent centres within 6 weeks and at all permanent centres within 10 weeks, with an average of 3 to 4 weeks ahead of the date of application.

Vehicle Inspections

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) in which vehicle inspectorate testing stations the operating costs of the station exceeds the amount of revenue generated through test fees;

(2) if he will list his Department's vehicle inspectorate testing stations; in which parliamentary constituency each testing station lies; how many people are employed at each testing station; how many vehicles were tested at each testing station during the last year; and how much revenue was collected at each testing station in testing fees.

Mr. Key: I have asked the vehicle inspectorate chief executive to write to the hon. Member with this detailed information.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 4 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Questions about the Vehicle Inspectorate's test station network, income from testing, and costs.

The Inspectorate's accounts and management information for 1992-93 were sufficiently detailed to provide information on test volumes and income from testing down to district level. This is shown on the attached table.

Unfortunately information relating to the operating costs and staff at each station cannot be provided in a form that will help answer your questions. In 1992-93 VI had a district based organisation and recorded information on costs accordingly. This information was aggregated at agency level and then divided between the individual schemes, including HGV and PSV testing, for accounting purposes. This means that detailed information on costs for individual test stations is unavailable. More importantly the costs of enforcement staff based in the districts would be included in the figures and could not be separated out. For these reasons a simple list of district costs, against income generated from testing activities, would give a false impression.

VI reorganised its operational structure on 1 November 1993. The Inspectorate now has two operational divisions, Vehicle Testing and Road Transport Enforcement. The costs of each division are separately accounted for from 1 November 1993. Although VI may have interim figures for each station later this year, the new financial structure will not be fully reflected until the Inspectorate's 1994-95 accounts are published.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful at present, but if you have any additional questions please write to me.

	[1]Testing volumes by stations								1992-93		
		PSV		HGV		Trailers			Revenue	[2]Cost	
District, sub-stations and constituency	Class VII	Annual	Prohibitions	Annual	Prohibitions	Annual	Prohibitions	Total	£	£	[3]Staff
ABERDEEN											
Gordon	144	827	5	5,643	45	2,885	30	9,579	256,193	253,557	12.9
AMMANFORD											
Llanelli	116	1,738	63	5,614	198	2,245	51	10,025	338,236	331,857	12.5
Haverfordwest											
Pembroke	406	—	—	1,530	31	319	2	2,288	—	—	3.2
BEVERLEY											
Beverley	202	852	20	6,124	92	4,443	25	11,758	306,375	290,067	14.2
BICESTER											
Banbury	820	806	24	6,720	86	2,147	22	10,625	274,773	233,454	13.2
BIRMINGHAM											
Birmingham, Yardley	744	2,876	27	14,081	158	4,413	22	22,321	630,709	607,788	30.6
BISHOPBRIGGS											
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	2,249	3,569	82	12,051	357	6,775	47	25,110	648,641	659,887	32.3
Lochgilphead											
Argyll and Bute	166	—	—	458	3	112	0	739	—	—	—
BREDBURY											
Hazel Grove	366	2,454	32	16,040	425	8,447	74	27,838	748,154	601,985	33.6
BRISTOL											
Bristol, South	794	2,310	29	10,827	303	4,950	39	19,252	797,659	707,111	27.2
Calne											
Wiltshire, North	340	—	—	7,686	162	3,256	56	11,500	—	—	9.2
CANTERBURY											
Canterbury	291	605	20	4,611	88	2,088	37	7,740	216,107	285,181	14.5
CARLISLE											
Carlisle	296	853	29	4,704	110	2,921	42	8,955	356,492	329,339	8.6
Newton Stewart											
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	70	—	—	418	7	131	1	627	—	—	—
Dumfries											
Dumfries	451	—	—	2,056	39	1,200	10	3,756	—	—	4.0
Workington											
Workington	204	—	—	1,032	15	468	8	1,727	—	—	1.0
CHELMSFORD											
Chelmsford	739	1,389	22	9,508	184	2,693	54	14,589	403,423	344,189	17.2
DARLINGTON											
Darlington	537	2,011	35	12,894	269	8,882	87	24,715	628,068	506,858	24.6

District, sub-stations and constituency	[1]Testing volumes by stations Class VII	PSV Annual	PSV Prohibitions	HGV Annual	HGV Prohibitions	Trailers Annual	Trailers Prohibitions	Total	1992-93 Revenue £	[2]Cost £	[3]Staff
DERBY											
Derbyshire, South	538	1,164	18	6,810	111	4,147	43	12,831	336,378	320,251	16.9
EDMONTON											
Edmonton	2,234	2,327	33	13,599	124	3,141	23	21,481	577,375	653,890	28.7
EXETER											
Exeter	235	1,802	81	5,178	101	1,475	19	8,891	551,195	566,717	14.1
Taunton											
Taunton	77	—	—	5,964	119	2,356	34	8,550	—	—	9.0
South Molton											
North Devon	268	—	—	2,027	47	565	9	2,916	—	—	4.0
GILLINGHAM											
Gillingham	767	905	12	8,410	147	3,931	38	14,210	357,870	338,117	18.8
GLOUCESTER											
Gloucester	277	744	12	7,324	134	2,800	27	11,318	301,683	237,949	11.6
GRANTHAM											
Grantham	416	603	16	8,309	135	5,214	78	14,771	366,527	295,717	16.6
GRIMSBY											
Great Grimsby	659	673	7	5,362	54	5,207	23	11,985	287,299	241,782	12.7
GUILDFORD											
Guildford	1,235	912	42	11,604	250	2,173	28	16,244	431,307	348,303	17.6
HASTINGS											
Hastings and Rye	666	771	17	4,338	65	892	13	6,762	188,228	210,027	9.6
HEYWOOD											
Heywood and Middleton	323	2,061	57	13,720	416	5,887	53	22,517	882,085	732,747	29.6
Steeton											
Keighley	484	457	9	6,936	234	2,379	42	10,541	—	—	8.5
INVERNESS											
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	357	1,062	17	2,135	45	692	8	4,316	208,026	305,785	11.2
Forth William											
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	57	—	—	259	1	99	2	418	—	—	—
Keith											
Moray	3	—	—	992	5	676	1	1,677	—	—	1.0
Kirkwall											
Orkney and Shetland	78	—	—	223	0	50	0	351	—	—	—
Lairg											
Caithness and Sutherland	26	—	—	69	0	1	0	96	—	—	—
Lerwick											
Orkney and Shetland	102	—	—	319	2	144	0	567	—	—	—
Portree											
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	46	—	—	139	0	16	1	202	—	—	—
Stornoway											
Western Isles	17	—	—	251	1	67	0	336	—	—	0.1
Wick											
Caithness and Sutherland	78	—	—	292	2	137	0	509	—	—	1.1
IPSWICH											
Ipswich	413	741	7	7,511	122	7,318	83	16,195	401,611	338,819	17.7
KIDDERMINSTER											
Wyre Forest	454	1,105	41	9,877	173	3,785	31	15,466	536,759	460,058	18.0
Hereford											
Hereford	275	—	—	3,166	44	1,639	16	5,140	—	—	5.1
KILMARNOCK											
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	297	1,119	74	5,959	203	2,686	36	10,374	275,025	286,708	14.0
KIRKHAM											
Fylde	288	2,236	47	10,435	228	5,962	71	19,267	698,169	633,290	24.8
Barrow											
Barrow and Furness	99	—	—	644	16	444	10	1,213	—	—	1.0
Milnthorpe											
Westmorland and Lonsdale	214	—	—	3,899	105	1,852	37	6,107	—	—	8.3
LANCING											
Shoreham	438	690	10	5,434	109	1,118	6	7,805	214,281	259,846	13.7
LEEDS											
Normanton	653	2,149	22	18,384	353	10,215	102	31,878	840,436	676,916	35.7
LEICESTER											
Rutland and Melton	816	1,307	34	10,617	168	4,136	30	17,108	460,438	385,357	20.9
LEIGHTON BUZZARD											
South West Bedfordshire	636	1,019	23	7,540	116	3,453	28	12,815	323,282	270,588	15.6
LIVERPOOL											
Knowsley, North	1,015	3,163	110	16,523	654	10,778	153	32,396	874,953	686,442	34.5
LIVINGSTONE											
Livingston	237	2,558	70	10,022	208	5,396	53	18,544	598,563	578,943	24.8
Berwick-upon-Tweed											
Berwick-upon-Tweed	25	—	—	739	7	282	4	1,057	—	—	—
Charlesfield											
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	155	—	—	831	14	276	0	1,276	—	—	3.0
East Fortune											
East Lothian	51	—	—	498	9	126	2	686	—	—	1.0

District, sub-stations and constituency	[1]Testing volumes by stations Class VII	PSV Annual	PSV Prohibitions	HGV Annual	HGV Prohibitions	Trailers Annual	Trailers Prohibitions	Total	1992-93 Revenue £	[2]Cost £	[3]Staff
LLANTRISANT											
Pontypridd	167	1,897	79	7,778	239	4,144	53	14,357	485,827	492,118	21.0
Llayrystyd											
Ceredigion and Pembroke, North	154	—	—	1,342	9	220	4	1,729	—	—	1.0
Llandrindod Wells											
Brecon and Radnor	241	—	—	1,229	18	231	2	1,721	—	—	2.0
MITCHAM											
Croydon, North West	1,428	3,376	43	12,635	314	1,706	28	19,530	579,402	607,548	28.0
NEWBURY											
Newbury	649	966	17	7,232	103	2,796	22	11,785	316,984	266,810	13.1
NEWCASTLE											
Wallsend	637	2,752	39	10,548	240	4,274	61	18,551	504,777	449,119	22.1
NORTHAMPTON											
Daventry	833	761	23	8,184	140	5,961	31	15,933	394,916	324,766	17.9
NORWICH											
Norwich, North	794	840	16	7,961	74	3,316	42	13,043	339,038	361,648	18.6
NOTTINGHAM											
Broxtowe	1,208	1,470	14	8,637	99	4,008	28	15,464	410,506	483,834	26.1
PERTH											
Perth and Kinross	558	1,400	31	3,910	83	1,759	29	7,770	315,063	298,023	8.6
Kirkcaldy											
Kirkcaldy	1,025	—	—	2,377	64	690	10	4,166	—	—	3.5
Montrose											
Angus East	118	—	—	813	17	327	1	1,276	—	—	1.0
PETERBOROUGH											
Peterborough	1,065	820	20	6,453	129	4,759	47	13,293	555,770	483,491	16.4
Crimplesham											
Norfolk, North West	637	—	—	5,897	78	3,811	48	10,471	—	—	11.4
PLYMOUTH											
Plymouth, Devonport	336	1,441	33	3,067	60	603	10	5,550	287,282	372,735	10.0
St. Austell											
Truro	266	—	—	1,647	12	361	2	2,288	—	—	3.0
Redruth											
Falmouth and Camborne	881	—	—	2,090	32	308	8	3,319	—	—	4.0
PONTYPOOL											
Torfaen	800	1,253	44	5,189	157	3,375	27	10,845	276,252	250,957	11.5
POOLE											
Poole	197	1,303	15	4,628	63	1,016	21	7,243	384,110	363,457	12.1
Salisbury											
Salisbury	190	—	—	4,453	56	1,975	31	6,705	—	—	5.5
PURFLEET											
Thurrock	537	1,557	28	12,736	337	10,062	105	25,362	686,150	644,218	30.3
ROYSTON											
Hertfordshire, North	1,237	1,038	35	12,307	259	4,389	48	19,313	545,473	338,564	17.2
SHEFFIELD											
Sheffield, Attercliffe	872	1,675	3	10,591	22	5,874	3	19,040	885,579	706,009	20.0
Doncaster											
Doncaster, North	697	1,283	44	8,197	111	5,212	35	15,579	—	—	15.4
SOUTHAMPTON											
Fareham	377	1,311	37	7,184	209	3,703	56	12,877	377,712	464,469	19.1
Cowes											
Isle of Wight	215	—	—	937	19	178	1	1,350	—	—	2.0
STOKE ON TRENT											
Stafford	203	2,170	31	12,280	210	7,020	72	21,986	885,961	739,660	27.5
Shrewsbury											
Shrewsbury and Atcham	475	—	—	6,574	110	3,379	42	10,580	—	—	10.0
WALTON											
Elmet	475	1,120	14	6,298	125	2,852	28	10,912	346,923	426,136	16.0
Scarborough											
Scarborough	97	—	—	1,509	8	570	5	2,189	—	—	4.0
WOLVERHAMPTON											
Staffordshire, South	137	1,662	29	15,208	146	5,057	32	22,271	637,007	543,701	28.6
WREXHAM											
Wrexham	237	2,268	68	7,653	130	3,294	19	13,669	588,199	619,946	19.6
Caernarfon											
Caernarfon	241	—	—	2,311	43	281	5	2,881	—	—	5.0
Bromborough											
Wirral, South	429	—	—	3,353	66	2,484	29	6,361	—	—	7.5
YEADING											
Hayes and Harlington	2,127	3,471	97	15,749	416	3,934	55	25,849	720,994	763,065	35.0
	44,484	85,692	1,907	567,293	11,292	263,799	2,751	977,218	25,840,245	23,979,799	1,201.9

[1] Test includes Annual Statutory tests; retests and some prohibitions issued at the roadside.
[2] Includes the costs of roadworthiness enforcement staff based at VI Test Stations.
[3] Whole-time equivalents.

PRIME MINISTER

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister: There has been no expenditure by my office on contracts with consultants in the last five years.

Security

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the security of Government information and other assets.

The Prime Minister: In recent years, the nature of the threats to Government security has changed. While some of the traditional threats to national security may have somewhat reduced, others have not. The security of Government is also increasingly threatened by, for example, theft, copying and electronic surveillance, as well as by terrorism.

To ensure that their approach to security reflects current threats, the Government have recently completed a review of their arrangements for the management of protective security in Departments and agencies. This has recommended a new protective marking system for documents which will help identify more precisely those which need protecting, enabling them to be protected more effectively according to their value. The new system will also be more closely related to the code of practice on Government information announced in the Government's White Paper on openness.

In addition, the review has concluded that existing security measures should be examined closely to ensure they are necessary in relation to today's threats; that commercially available security equipment should be more widely used; and that personnel vetting enquiries should be streamlined particularly in routine cases. Overall, the aim is to give Departments and agencies, and management units within them, greater responsibility for assessing the nature of the risks they face and for making decisions, within a framework of common standards of protection, about the security measures they need to put in place. Substantial cost savings will result.

The first stage of the implementation of the proposals of this review will be the introduction of a new protective marking system with effect from 4 April 1994 alongside the code of practice on access to Government information. The new definitions, which will allow fewer Government documents to be classified, particularly at the higher levels, are set out. The other elements of the new approach to protective security will be put in place in due course.

The four categories of protective marking: Definitions

The markings to be allocated to any asset, including information, will be determined primarily by reference to the practical consequences that are likely to result from the compromise of that asset or information. The levels in the new protective marking system are defined as follows:

TOP SECRET: the compromise of this information or material would be likely: to threaten directly the internal stability of the United Kingdom or friendly countries; to lead directly to widespread loss of life; to cause exceptionally grave damage to the effectiveness or security of United Kingdom or allied forces or to the continuing effectiveness of extremely valuable security or intelligence operations; to cause exceptionally grave damage to relations with friendly governments; to cause severe long-term damage to the United Kingdom economy.

SECRET: the compromise of this information or material would be likely: to raise international tension; to damage seriously relations with friendly governments; to threaten life directly, or seriously prejudice public order, or individual security or liberty; to cause serious damage to the operational effectiveness or security of United Kingdom or allied forces or the continuing effectiveness of highly valuable security or intelligence operations; to cause substantial material damage to national finances or economic and commercial interests.

CONFIDENTIAL: the compromise of this information or material would be likely: materially to damage diplomatic relations (ie cause formal protest or other sanction); to prejudice individual security or liberty; to cause damage to the operational effectiveness or security of United Kingdom or allied forces or the effectiveness of valuable security or intelligence operations; to work substantially against national finances or economic and commercial interests; substantially to undermine the financial viability of major organisations; to impede the investigation or facilitate the commission of serious crime; to impede seriously the development or operation of major government policies; to shut down or otherwise substantially disrupt significant national operations.

RESTRICTED: the compromise of this information or material would be likely: to affect diplomatic relations adversely; to cause substantial distress to individuals; to make it more difficult to maintain the operational effectiveness or security of United Kingdom or allied forces; to cause financial loss or loss of earning potential to or facilitate improper gain or advantage for individuals or companies; to prejudice the investigation or facilitate the commission of crime; to breach proper undertakings to maintain the confidence of information provided by third parties; to impede the effective development or operation of government policies; to breach statutory restrictions on disclosure of information; to disadvantage government in commercial or policy negotiations with others; to undermine the proper management of the public sector and its operations.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of Tuesday 8 March, *Official Report*, column 148, if he has now considered, following his meeting of 3 March with the hon. Member for Linlithgow, the provision of water filtering and water pumping equipment to Iraq; and what action he has taken to respond to the list of pharmaceuticals required in the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris for infants with diseases related to malnutrition in the summer.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 March 1994]:* I have now written to the hon. Member following our recent meeting.

EDUCATION

Special Needs

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what statutory provisions apply to appellants' access to the minutes of special educational needs appeal hearings.

Mr. Forth: There are no statutory provisions relating to appellants' access to the minutes of special educational needs appeals hearings held by committees constituted by local education authorities in accordance with paragraph 1 of part I of schedule 2 to the Education Act 1980. There is no statutory requirement for my right hon. Friend to convene hearings before resolving appeals made to him under the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many special educational needs appeals he is currently considering; to what extent delays have been caused by the case currently before the Court of Appeal; when he expects this case to be heard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is currently considering 330 appeals under the Education Act 1981. In compliance with the recent court judgment in the case of Regina *v.* Secretary of State for Education ex parte S my right hon. Friend now copies to the parties to each appeal any independent evaluations he receives from one of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools, and invites the parties to comment. He then gives careful consideration to any comments subsequently submitted to him. This process has added several weeks to the time taken to decide appeals. My right hon. Friend is appealing against the court judgment in question. The appeal will be heard on 27 June.

Higher National Diploma

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether students who are entitled to a mandatory grant for a higher national diploma and complete each year of the course at different institutions may receive a supplementary mandatory grant for a related degree at the second institution.

Mr. Boswell: A student who has already received a mandatory award for an HND course will normally be eligible for a further, modified mandatory award for the final year or years of a designated first degree course, depending upon its duration. Local education authorities can make discretionary payments in respect of any other year of the course. A student's entitlement to a further award would not be affected if his HND course involved study at more than one institution.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the budgets of grant-maintained schools in London on a borough basis since 1992; and what this was as a percentage of each borough's schools budget.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is given in the table.

LEA name and school name	*1992-93 total budget*	*Per cent. of LEA's schools budget*	*1993-94 total budget*	*Schools budget*
Barnet				
Ashmole school	—	—	1,560,002	1·57
Bishop Douglass RC school	—	—	782,607	0·79
Dollis junior school	—	—	761,032	0·77
Finchley Catholic high school	—	—	1,507,554	1·52
Hendon school	2,439,826	2·41	3,028,952	3·06
Mill Hill GM high school	798,221	0·79	3,476,578	3·51
Osidge primary school	—	—	503,369	0·51
Queen Elizabeth GM school for boys	2,793,196	2·75	2,802,023	2·83
St. James Catholic high school	—	—	957,489	0·97
St. Mary's CE high school	—	—	1,739,907	1·75
St. Michaels Catholic grammar school	—	—	1,089,120	1·10
TOTAL	6,031,243	5·95	18,208,633	18·37
Bexley				
Barnehurst infant GM school	196,923	0·26	401,814	0·55
Barnehurst junior GM school	286,834	0·38	472,137	0·65
Bexley Erith technical GM school	—	—	1,020,078	1·41
St. Catherines RC school for girls	—	—	1,028,617	1·42
St. Columba's RC boys school	—	—	1,761,471	2·43
St. Mary's and St. Joseph's GM school	—	—	1,709,573	2·36
TOTAL	483,757	0·65	6,393,690	8·83
Brent				
Alperton high school	—	—	1,842,781	2·21
Cardinal Hinsley high school	—	—	1,227,373	1·47
Claremount high school	3,161,045	3·98	3,454,916	4·14
Convent of Jesus and Mary GM high school	—	—	2,697,063	3·23
Copland community school and tech school	3,102,659	3·91	3,217,865	3·85
Kingsbury high school	—	—	5,344,018	6·40
Oakington Manor primary school	—	—	727,025	0·87
Queens Park community school	—	—	2,532,850	3·03
St. Gregorys RC high school	—	—	1,932,523	2·31
TOTAL	6,263,704	7·89	22,976,414	27·52

LEA name and school name	1992-93 total budget	Per cent. of LEA's schools budget	1993-94 total budget	Schools budget
Bromley				
Beaverwood school for girls	2,552,722	3·88	2,406,809	3·84
Bullers Wood school for girls	2,928,520	4·45	2,694,075	4·30
Charles Darwin school	1,493,439	2·27	2,561,554	4·09
Coopers school	2,933,762	4·46	3,033,314	4·84
Crofton junior school	1,147,490	1·74	1,144,559	1·83
Hayes school	3,211,434	4·88	3,066,028	4·89
Holy Innocents Roman Catholic school	102,188	0·16	422,124	0·67
Kelsey Park school	2,045,005	3·11	2,224,322	3·55
Langley Park school for boys	2,814,775	4·28	2,878,257	4·59
Newstead Wood school for girls	1,979,519	3·01	1,943,852	3·10
Ravens Wood school for boys	2,280,066	3·47	2,333,197	3·72
St. John Rigby school	689,498	1·05	2,542,122	4·05
St. Olave's and St. Saviours grammar school	413,408	0·63	1,729,329	2·76
TOTAL	24,591,826	37·39	28,979,542	46·22
Camden				
Jews Free School	—	—	2,228,040	3·67
La Sainte Union convent school	—	—	1,856,608	3·06
TOTAL	—	—	4,084,648	6·73
Croydon				
Edenham school	—	—	2,573,840	2·83
Riddlesdown GM school	2,607,369	2·52	2,939,118	3·23
St. Joseph's college	—	—	1,649,960	1·81
Thomas More GM school	—	—	981,292	1·08
Selsdon primary school	—	—	384,867	0·42
St. James The Great RC primary school	—	—	183,652	0·20
TOTAL	2,607,369	2·52	8,712,729	9·57
Ealing				
Brentside high school	3,524,849	4·15	2,637,138	3·34
Dormers Wells first school	—	—	182,965	0·23
Dormers Wells Middle School	—	—	217,917	0·28
Drayton Manor high school	3,622,547	4·26	3,219,216	4·08
Greenford high school	2,468,886	2·91	2,916,472	3·70
Northolt high school	2,353,786	2·77	2,925,776	3·71
The Ellen Wilkinson school for girls	2,461,000	2·90	2,823,045	3·58
Wood End first school	246,307	0·29	720,628	0·91
Wood End middle school	187,339	0·22	576,885	0·73
TOTAL	14,864,714	17·49	16,220,042	20·57
Enfield				
Albany School	—	—	1,864,553	1·83
Broomfield GM school	—	—	1,743,264	1·71
Enfield grammar school	—	—	677,338	0·67
St. Ignatius college	—	—	1,577,104	1·55
St. Matthews CE primary school	—	—	99,625	0·10
The Latymer school	—	—	1,859,058	1·83
TOTAL	—	—	65,855,780	7·69
Hammersmith				
The London Oratory school	4,212,304	9·59	4,559,637	9·65
TOTAL	4,212,304	9·59	4,559,637	9·65
Harrow				
Salvatorian College	—	—	790,326	1·11
TOTAL	—	—	790,326	1·11
Havering				
Abbs Cross School	—	—	1,880,323	2·50
Sacred Heart of Mary Girls school	—	—	1,146,126	1·53
The Coopers Company and Coborn	—	—	3,443,500	4·58

LEA name and school name	1992-93 total budget	Per cent. of LEA's schools budget	1993-94 total budget	Schools budget
The Frances Bardsley school for girls	—	—	2,877,329	3·83
TOTAL	—	—	9,347,278	12·44
Hillingdon				
Abbotsfield school	—	—	1,950,200	3·48
Bishopshalt school	2,446,591	4·40	2,551,075	4·56
Charville primary school	—	—	858,178	1·53
Grange Park infant school	—	—	555,895	0·99
Grange Park junior school	—	—	578,793	1·03
Harlington community school	—	—	859,249	1·53
Haydon school	2,806,117	5·05	3,136,670	5·60
Hayes Park infant school	—	—	127,654	0·23
Hayes Park junior school	—	—	160,679	0·29
Hillside infants school	—	—	251,830	0·45
Hillside junior school	—	—	287,213	0·51
Mellow Lane school	2,676,541	4·82	2,707,249	4·84
Northwood school	2,751,228	4·95	2,465,238	4·40
Oak Farm infant school	180,818	0·33	568,784	1·02
Oak Farm junior mixed school	232,110	0·42	729,645	1·30
Queensmead school	2,341,554	4·21	2,680,510	4·79
St. Andrews CE primary school	—	—	278,195	0·50
St. Laurence CE junior school	—	—	292,482	0·52
Swakeleys school	—	—	1,959,550	3·50
The Douay Martys school	605,074	1·09	2,669,865	4·77
The Hayes Manor school	1,907,312	3·43	1,933,220	3·45
Uxbridge High school	1,749,175	3·15	2,199,164	3·93
Vyners school	2,835,642	5·10	2,099,170	3·75
TOTAL	20,532,162	36·96	31,900,508	56·97
Hounslow				
Gumley House convent school	—	—	2,634,950	3·22
Gunnersbury Catholic school for boys	—	—	2,551,931	3·12
TOTAL	—	—	5,186,881	6·35
Kensington				
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial school	2,277,844	5·97	2,729,542	8·02
St. Charles RC primary school	—	—	277,109	0·81
TOTAL	2,277,844	5·97	3,006,651	8·84
Kingston				
Beverley school	—	—	1,081,348	3·04
Holy Cross convent school	—	—	1,769,791	4·98
Richard Challoner school	—	—	1,692,418	4·76
St. Lukes CE primary school	—	—	165,760	0·47
Tiffin school	724,171	1·79	2,289,250	6·44
TOTAL	724,171	1·79	6,998,567	19·70
Lambeth				
Archbishop Tenison school	—	—	1,687,063	2·40
Bishop Thomas Grant school	—	—	2,909,556	4·14
Corpus Christi RC primary school	—	—	228,984	0·33
Dunraven GM school	—	—	3,753,813	5·34
La Retraite RC girls GM school	2,595,953	3·24	1,929,728	2·75
St. Bedes RC infant school	—	—	227,221	0·32
St. Andrews RC primary school	—	—	213,273	0·30
St. Annes RC primary school	—	—	257,674	0·37
St. Bernadette RC junior mixed school	149,253	0·19	146,022	0·21
St. Martin in the Field high school	—	—	1,196,551	1·70
TOTAL	2,745,206	3·43	12,549,885	17·86
Lewisham				
Turnham primary school	256,433	0·29	1,046,106	1·24
TOTAL	256,433	0·29	1,046,106	1·24

LEA name and school name	1992-93 total budget	Per cent. of LEA's schools budget	1993-94 total budget	Schools budget
Newham				
Stratford school	1,736,276	1·72	2,158,996	2·18
TOTAL	1,736,276	1·72	2,158,996	2·18
Redbridge				
Chadwell Heath high school	—	—	2,112,265	2·65
TOTAL	—	—	2,112,265	2·65
Southwark				
Friars primary school	—	—	140,512	0·18
Notre Dame high school	—	—	1,071,845	1·34
Sacred Heart RC school	—	—	584,563	0·73
St. Anthony's RC primary school	—	—	291,713	0·37
St. Francesca Cabrini GM school	—	—	985,427	1·23
St. Josephs RC infant school	—	—	160,086	0·20
St. Josephs RC junior school	—	—	204,961	0·26
St. Michaels school	—	—	1,094,571	1·37
The London Nautical school	1,617,778	—	1,680,059	2·10
The St. Thomas the Apostle GM college	—	—	1,212,528	1·52
TOTAL	1,617,778	—	7,426,265	9·30
Sutton				
All Saints (Carshalton) CE school	—	—	286,405	0·74
Cheam high school	2,288,669	5·15	2,736,790	7·11
Nonsuch high school for girls	2,796,337	6·29	2,407,663	6·25
St. Philomena's catholic high for girls	—	—	2,098,339	5·45
Stanley park infants school	—	—	143,928	0·37
Stanley park junior school	—	—	168,212	0·44
Sutton Grammar school for boys	1,538,913	3·46	1,556,234	4·04
The John Fisher school	1,790,211	4·03	1,840,742	4·78
Wallington high school for boys	—	—	1,670,559	4·34
Wallington high school for girls	—	—	1,882,587	4·89
Wilsons school	1,782,533	4·01	1,855,838	4·82
TOTAL	10,196,663	22·93	16,647,197	43·24
Tower Hamlets				
Raines foundation school	2,511,334	2·12	3,432,149	2·76
TOTAL	2,511,334	2·12	3,432,149	2·76
Waltham Forest				
Chingford school	—	—	1,449,403	1·71
Highams park school	2,601,374	3·04	2,959,096	3·50
TOTAL	2,601,374	3·04	4,408,499	5·21
Wandsworth				
Burntwood school	4,252,154	5·82	4,487,358	7·48
Elliott school	2,288,120	3·13	3,870,951	6·45
Ethelburga primary school	138,424	0·19	439,828	0·73
Graveney school	4,802,975	6·75	5,244,434	8·74
Hillbrook primary school	—	—	925,909	1·54
John Paul II RC school	—	—	1,633,050	2·72
Salesian college	620,018	0·85	1,653,473	2·76
Southfields school	—	—	3,656,378	6·09
TOTAL	12,101,691	16·55	21,911,381	36·51

Notes:

1. For schools that became GM in 1993-94 only the budget for that year is shown.
2. The amounts shown for total budget include annual maintenance grant, special purpose grants for restructuring, development, premises, VAT, transitional grant, section 11 grant and capital grant payable to the schools in the respective years.
3. The amounts shown as total budget for 1992-93 also include special purpose grant for travellers and displaced persons payable to the schools.
4. GM schools receive support for expenditure on items such as VAT and the transition to GM status, which form no part of an LEAs overall budget. The percentage of an LEAs total schools budget that GM schools' budgets represent do not, therefore, fall for true comparison.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the past five years.

Mr. Forth: Over the last five years, this Department has awarded 244 contracts to consultants. The total cost in each of the last five years is:

Year	*£*
1993	1,629,000
1992	1,994,000
1991	1,517,000
1990	974,000
1989	555,000

Bullying

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the number of children making complaints about bullying at school.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of state for Education what assessment there has been of the success of the "Action against Bullying" packs issued to schools in 1992.

Mr. Forth: Head teachers are responsible in law for maintaining standards of discipline and behaviour in their schools. The "Action against Bullying" packs were issued to assist them in that task. Registered inspectors carrying out inspections under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 are required to inspect and report on disciplinary arrangements within schools, including action taken against bullying.

Physical Education

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average amount of time spent in schools on physical education per week for children aged under 17 years for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available in the form requested. However, recent secondary school staffing surveys have provided information regarding the proportion of pupil periods spent on PE in maintained secondary schools in 1984, 1988 and 1992.

Proportion of pupil periods spent on PE

Percentages

	Year group				
	7	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*
1983-84	10·4	9·8	9·0	8·1	7·5
1987-88	9·4	9·3	8·3	7·9	7·3
1991-92	9·1	8·9	8·3	7·7	7·2

Source: Secondary school staffing surveys.
In junior classes in maintained primary schools in England in 1986-87, 10 per cent. of class time was spent on PE, games or swimming. Comparable data for other years is not available.

Special Educational Needs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls aged five to 16 years had a statement of special educational need for the latest available year.

Mr. Forth: A total of 171,784 pupils aged 5 to 19 had statements as at January 1993. Data for 17 to 19-year-olds is not collected separately. Figures by gender are not available.

Schools (Re-organisation and Closure)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which local education authorities have school re-organisation or closure proposals under consideration by his Department; how many surplus places will be removed by each authority as a result of their proposals; and which authorities, since the submission of their proposal to his Department, have been waiting for a decision *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months and *(e)* in excess of 12 months.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* The table lists proposals under consideration by the Department as at 18 March 1994 for the closure, alteration or establishment of county and voluntary schools, the number of places that it is proposed will be removed as a result of the proposals —where relevant and known—and the length of time the proposals have been under consideration.

LEA	*Places proposed to be removed where known*	*Proposals under consideration for:*				
		(a) Up to 3 months	*(b) 3-6 months*	*(c) 6-9 months*	*(d) 9-12 months*	*(e) In excess of 12 months*
Avon	55	—	1	—	—	1
Barking and Dagenham	—	—	1	—	—	—
Barnet	—	2	—	—	1	—
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	1	—
Bexley	—	—	1	—	—	—
Birmingham	—	—	2	—	—	—
Bradford	—	1	—	1	—	—
Bromley	—	—	2	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	30	2	—	—	—	—
Cambridge	—	3	—	—	—	—
Cornwall	—	1	—	—	—	—
Coventry	—	—	4	—	—	—
Croydon	—	7	1	1	—	—
Devon	—	1	—	—	—	—

LEA	Places proposed to be removed where known	Proposals under consideration for: (a) Up to 3 months	(b) 3-6 months	(c) 6-9 months	(d) 9-12 months	(e) In excess of 12 months
Doncaster	86	—	—	1	—	—
Dorset	—	2	—	—	—	—
Dudley	—	1	—	—	—	—
Ealing	—	—	1	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	1	—	—	—	—
Greenwich	420	—	2	—	—	—
Hackney	140	—	1	—	—	1
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	1	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	3	—	—	—
Harrow	—	1	2	—	—	—
Havering	—	3	—	—	—	—
Hereford and Worcester	46	1	—	—	—	1
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	1	—	—	—
Kensington and Chelsea	—	1	—	—	—	—
Kent	584	3	1	—	—	—
Kirklees	30	2	—	—	—	—
Knowsley	180	1	1	—	—	—
Lambeth	1,381	—	1	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	4	1	—	—	—
Leeds	195	8	—	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	3	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	130	—	1	—	—	2
Manchester	—	1	—	—	—	—
Newham	—	1	—	—	—	—
North Tyneside	292	—	—	2	—	—
North Yorkshire	114	3	—	1	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	2	1	—	—
Oxfordshire	60	2	1	—	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	—	—	1	—	—	—
Salford	—	1	—	—	—	—
Sefton	—	—	1	—	—	—
Sheffield	202	—	1	—	—	—
Somerset	—	—	1	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	3	—	—	—	—
Stockport	—	—	1	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	1	1	—	1	—
Surrey	—	3	3	—	—	—
Sutton	—	1	—	—	—	—
Tameside	—	—	1	—	1	—
Tower Hamlets	—	1	—	—	—	—
Trafford	—	1	—	—	—	—
Wakefield	1,483	—	1	—	—	—
Walsall	—	1	—	—	—	—
Wandsworth	526	1	2	—	—	—
Warwickshire	2,382	—	5	—	—	—
West Sussex	—	1	1	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	1	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	84	2	—	—	—	1

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department why applicants for the magistrates bench are invited to disclose their political leanings or affiliations.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to a reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 17 March at column. 758.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he is taking to ensure the political affiliations of the magistrates bench more closely reflect the views of the population in the areas in which they sit.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor, with his advisory committees, seeks to encourage applications from suitable people of all walks of life and political affiliations through press notices and articles, posters and leaflets and contact with employers and other organisations. Appointments are made from those considered to be suitable having proper regard to the various balancing factors such as age, gender and political affiliation so that each bench broadly reflects the community it serves. Appointments can, however, be made only from those who put themselves forward for consideration.

Liverpool County Court

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what backlog of cases are awaiting trial in the Liverpool county court; what is the average period for a case coming to trial; what were the waiting periods compared with five years ago; and what assessment he has made of the value for money provided by the system.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Liverpool county court operates a special listing system, under the control of the judiciary, which was introduced following consultation with the legal profession. The system is designed to ensure that the majority of defended civil cases proceed to trial within 35 weeks of a defence being filed. On 16 March 1994 trials were being listed 32 weeks ahead and the number of cases where a defence had been filed and the trial was due to take place within that period was approximately 5,120. In addition there were some 420 cases of a specialist nature, which fall outside the scope of the special listing system, listed for trial within the next 70 weeks, and some 200 cases awaiting entry into the system.

The earliest available information on waiting times is from 1990 when, based only on cases disposed of by trial during the months of March and September, the average waiting time was 29 weeks compared to 32 weeks in 1993. Although no specific assessment has been made of the value for money it provides, the system was last reviewed and revised in January 1992 at which time it was considered that it continued to meet its primary objective: that of minimising delay, which the report of the Reviewing Body on Civil Justice—June 1988—identified as one of the main deficiencies in civil justice.

Court Fees

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish a table of court fees in the county court and the Crown court in the years since 1964, showing the percentage increase and showing the corresponding increase in the cost of living index.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Tables of sample fees chargeable in the county courts and the Supreme Court—fees are not chargeable in the Crown court—in the years 1964, 1982 and 1994 follow. The number of fees, the number of amendments, and alterations in fee structures over the period make a direct comparison of all fees impractical. The sample of fees shown includes those which are most significant for general court users and by volume of business. All fees orders are made and published as statutory instruments.

Comparisons are shown with 1982 because until then no attempt was made to recover 'allied service' costs falling on other Departments' votes—accommodation, stationery and superannuation. From that year, following observations by the Committee of Public Accounts on this policy of limited cost recovery, the policy adopted was that fees should recover full costs except for judicial costs. The policy has now been further modified to include judicial costs among those which should be covered by fee income taken as a whole.

The rise in the cost of living index—the retail prices index—between 1964 and 1982 was 862 per cent., and between 1964 and 1994 was 1,567 per cent.

County court fees

Sample of changes to the more significant fees chargeable in the county courts in 1964, 1982 and 1994, giving percentage changes.

Fee and (fee number)	*1964*	*1982*	*Change, 1964 to 1982 per cent.*	*1994*	*Change, 1964 to 1994 per cent.*
Entering a plaint (1 in 1964, 1(i) in 1982 and 1994)	£4 maximum	£35 maximum	775	£70 maximum	1,650
Service by a bailiff (4 in 1964, 2 in 1982 and 1994)	2/-	£4	3,900	£10	9,900
Taxation of costs (20(i) in 1964, 3(i) in 1982 and 1994)	1/- for every £2	5p for every £1	100	5p for every £1	100
Enforcement of a warrant of execution against goods (37 in 1964, 4(i) in 1982 and 1964)	£3 maximum	£25 maximum	733	£50 maximum	1,567
Issue of a judgment summons (50 in 1964, 4(vi) in 1982 and 1994)	£2 maximum	£5 maximum	150	£20 maximum	900
Personal search of the Registry of County Court Judgments, per name (72(i) in 1964, 7(i) in 1982 and 1994)	2/-	£1	900	£1	900

In 1964, the County Court Fees Order in force was that of 1959 (SI 1959/1262) as amended in 1961 (twice) and 1963, the first of those amendments (SI 1961/355) affecting the sample fees above. There was a fees Order in 1982 (SI 1982/1706). That order has been further amended six times since, most recently in 1992 (SI 1992/2762).

The County Court Fees Order 1959 contained 157 separate fees, and the 1980 order 33 fees; there were 20 orders and amending orders between 1964 and 1994.

Supreme court fees

Sample of changes to the more significant fees chargeable in the Supreme Court in 1964, 1982 and 1994, giving percentage changes.

Fee and (fee number)	*1964*	*1982*	*Change, 1964 to 1982 per cent.*	*1994*	*Change, 1964 to 1994 per cent.*
Writ of summons (1)	£4	£50	1,150	£100	2,400
Setting down for trial (21 in 1964, 5 in 1982, 5f in 1994)	£6	£20	234	£50	734
Notice of appeal to the High Court (19 in 1964, 11a in 1982 and 1994)	£6	£15	150	£20	234
Filing a notice of appeal, Court of Appeal (62b(ii) in 1964, 27a in 1982, 27a(ii) in 1964)	£10	£15	50	£100	900
Taxation of a bill of costs: first £100 (81c(i) in 1964, 29b(i) in 1982 and 1994)	£5	£25	400	£25	400
Taxation of a bill of costs: over £100 (81c(ii) in 1964, 29b(ii) in 1982 and 1994)	1/- per £2	5p per £1	100	5p per £1	100

In 1964, the Supreme Court Fees Order in force was that of 1961 (SI 1961/2307) as amended in 1962 and 1963, though neither amendment affected the sample fees above. In 1982, the Order in force was that of 1980 (SI 1980/821) as amended in 1982 (SI 1982/1707). That order has been further

amended five times since, most recently in 1993 (SI 1993/3191).

The Supreme Court Fees Order 1961 contained 146 separate fees, and the 1980 order 57 fees; there were 16 orders and amending orders between 1964 and 1994.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On the best information currently available, 74 external consultancy projects were completed in 1992-93 and the total expenditure was £3·455 million. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Child Maintenance

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases of assessment for child maintenance have been dealt with in court since April 1993 in *(a)* the London borough of Newham and *(b)* Great Britain.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is readily available only for the county courts and the High Court in England and Wales. During the period April to December 1993, the number of children made subject to orders for child maintenance was:

(a) 253 in the London borough of Newham
(b) 23,235 in England and Wales.

These figures do not include lump sum and property orders which benefited children, as no separate categorisation of these cases is available.

Information relating to the magistrates courts for 1993 will not be available until May 1994.

Jurors

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many potential jurors have been discharged from jury service because of a disability in the last five years; what those disabilities were; what equipment was available to enable them to fulfil a juror's duties; and in which Crown courts these discharges occurred.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Section 10 of the Juries Act 1974 provides that if it appears to a member of the court staff that there is doubt as to the capacity of a person who attends for jury service to serve effectively, on the ground of physical disability, the person may be brought before a judge. The judge shall then determine whether or not the person should serve as a juror and, if not, shall discharge the summons. It is the policy of the Lord Chancellor's Department that any disabled person summoned for jury service should be given every assistance within reason to enable him/her to serve as a juror. However, the decision is ultimately one for the judge.

My Department does not collate data on the number of discharges from jury service under section 10 and such information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

As to the facilities available at Crown court centres the Lord Chancellor's Department has produced a digest, "Facilities for Disabled People in the Crown and County Courts" which includes information on facilities for disabled jurors. I have arranged for a copy of that digest to be placed in the Library. Courts will also make special arrangements, if possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Dampness and Condensation

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what research his Department is currently undertaking to eliminate dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock in *(a)* London and *(b)* England;

(2) what extra resources he proposes to allow local authority departments to spend in order to eradicate dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* London;

(3) if he will consult statutory housing authorities in England and Wales in order to agree an action plan to eliminate dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock.

Sir George Young: As part of the annual housing investment programme round, local authorities are required to produce housing strategies setting out their proposed programmes over a three-year period. In support of this process, authorities may carry out surveys of their stock, which may include establishing the prevalence of dampness and condensation. My Department takes these strategies into account when allocating HIP resources each year. £1·5 billion was allocated to local authorities under the programme for 1994-95. It is for individual authorities to decide how to use these and other resources to which they have access, including how much to dedicate to dealing with the problems of dampness and condensation. Matters affecting the public sector housing stock in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake a survey of statutory housing authority areas to determine the prevalence of dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock in *(a)* London and *(b)* England.

Sir George Young: The 1991 English House Condition Survey—EHCS—included an assessment of dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock. The findings will be reported in the EHCS energy report due to be published later this year.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many appeals against valuation have resulted in a movement in the valuation of a property by two bands or more *(a)* in total in England and *(b)* in each standard region since the introduction of the council tax;

(2) how many successful appeals against valuation there have been in terms of changing the banding of a property *(a)* in England and *(b)* in each standard region of England since the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Baldry: This information is currently being collected by the Valuation Office Agency for the 12-month period to the end of March 1994. A copy of the information will be placed in the Library as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many appeals there have been against council tax valuations since the council tax was introduced *(a)* in total for England, *(b)* in each standard region of England and *(c)* in each local authority area in England;

(2) how many appeals against council tax valuations are still waiting to be heard *(a)* in total for England, *(b)* in total for each standard region and *(c)* in each local authority area in England.

Mr. Baldry: I am placing in the Library a table which sets out, by valuation office region, and by billing authority, the number of proposals to alter the valuation list which were received by the end of the initial appeal period, the number that had been settled by the end of February and the number outstanding.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table setting out for each local authority in England which submits a claim for transitional relief for 1994-95, *(a)* the estimated amount of transitional relief each such authority has claimed, *(b)* the percentage of the total sum of transitional relief for England which each individual claim represents and *(c)* the estimated amount of transitional relief per dwelling in each authority which has submitted a claim.

Mr. Baldry: I will arrange for this information to be placed in the Library of the House once it is available.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's records show that 1,574 letters were received by me and Ministers in my Department during February 1994, while 2,199 were written to hon. Members.

Limehouse Tunnel Road Link

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what proportion of the dwellings on the St. Vincent estate, Limehouse, were demolished solely for the purpose of facilitating the construction of the Limehouse tunnel road link; and how many and what proportion of dwellings on the estate were demolished for other purposes; with whose agreement and with whose authority demolition took place; what was the cost of rehousing those displaced and who funded that expenditure; and what plans there are for the future use of the land now vacant consequent on demolition.

Mr. Baldry: A total of 92 dwellings were demolished for the purpose of constructing the Limehouse link, representing 36 per cent. of the units on the estate. A further 164 units were demolished for other reasons.

A total of 314 households were rehoused at a cost to the London Docklands Development Corporation of £45 million.

Demolition was carried out by the LDDC with the agreement of the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

It is intended that the land will be redeveloped largely for residential use with some commercial and retail units.

Pollution

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's assessment of safe or acceptable pollution levels; and what are those adopted by *(a)* the World Health Organisation and *(b)* the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As set out in the 1990 Environment White Paper it is the aim of the Government's pollution policy to minimise the risk of harm to human health and the environment. The World Health Organisation publishes guideline values, but not standards, for non-carcinogenic pollutants in drinking-water and air quality which are based on minimising health effects alone. There is no single principle by which pollution level standards have been adopted in the European Community.

Environmental Bulletin

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to publish a periodic environment bulletin similar to those published by the Irish Department of the Environment.

Mr. Robert Atkins: My Department publishes annual reports of progress on commitments made under the Environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance" which include detailed commitments to further action. The next report is currently at the printers.

Ecolabelling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the United Kingdom ecolabelling board will be self-financing at its current rate of progress.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board has set a target to become self financing by 1997-98. The board reviews its targets annually in the context of its corporate plan and will be discussing these with Ministers later in the year.

Dishwashers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many companies have applied to the competent bodies of other EC member states for ecolabels for dishwashers and washing machines.

Mr. Atkins: As yet, no EC ecolabels have been awarded by competent bodies in other member states. All applications for ecolabels are treated in confidence until an award is made.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many companies have applied to the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board for ecolabels for dishwashers and washing machines.

Mr. Atkins: In November, the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board awarded the EC ecolabel to three washing machines in Hoover Limited's "New Wave" range. All applications for ecolabels are treated in confidence until an award is made and as yet no further awards have been made.

Integrated Regional Offices

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the 10 new integrated regional offices will be established; where they will be located; and who in each region will be responsible for their activities.

Sir George Young: The new Government offices in the regions will open for business in April. For the foreseeable future, the functions of the new offices will continue to be carried out from the offices occupied by existing departmental regional offices. The names of nine of the 10 regional directors were detailed in the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in his reply on 8 February at columns *145-46.*

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is not held centrally by my Department and is obtainable only at disproportionate cost.

Local Authority Debt

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of debt for each local authority in Greater Manchester; and what was the figure for each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Baldry: The information is given in the table. Figures before 1987-88 are not readily available.

Debt at end of year[1]

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[2]1992-93*
Bolton	245	241	234	215	216	146
Bury	108	110	118	117	115	82
Manchester	1,138	1,096	1,129	1,275	1,382	1,326
Oldham	279	287	292	274	274	242
Rochdale	216	228	n/a	248	278	212
Salford	420	428	437	450	467	403
Stockport	151	160	163	165	156	116
Tameside	224	217	219	248	262	186
Trafford	99	118	118	113	109	81
Wigan	303	303	317	276	278	250

Sources:
[1]1987-88 to 1989-90—Outstanding loan debt, capital outturn returns.
1990-91 to 1992-93—Total external debt, borrowing and lending surveys and PWLB.
[2]The debt of most housing authorities was reduced in 1992-93 as the result of the commutation of certain loan charge grants in October 1992.

Temporary Accommodation

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families with children are living in temporary accommodation for the last available year.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not available centrally and my Department has no estimates.

Unfit Housing

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of homes occupied by families with children are deemed to be *(a)* damp and *(b)* unfit for use for the last available year.

Sir George Young: The 1991 English House Condition Survey found 1 per cent. of homes occupied by families with children in England so seriously damp that the dwelling was considered unfit for habitation in this respect. The same survey found 5·8 per cent. of homes occupied by families with children unfit on any grounds.

Bathing Water

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of United Kingdom bathing waters failed to comply with EU standards for sewage contamination for the latest available year.

Mr. Atkins: The latest bathing water results were announced on 1 December last year. They showed that in 1993 20 per cent. of United Kingdom bathing waters did not yet comply with the mandatory coliform standards of the Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC).

Refrigerant Bank

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans there are to establish a United Kingdom refrigerant bank.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to announce that a United Kingdom refrigerant bank, the Refrigerant Users Group is being launched tomorrow. RUG is being set up by the refrigeration industry with the support of Government to manage the existing stocks of refrigerants efficiently and environmentally. It is being set up as part of Halon Users National Consortium Ltd. and will have the same role for refrigerants that HUNC has performed in relation to halons. It will act as a clearing house putting those who need to continue using recycled chlorofluorocarbons in touch with those who have spare CFCs for sale. This is the first refrigerant bank to be set up in Europe.

The establishment of RUG is a vital step in allowing us to phase out CFC production by the end of this year. It will enable existing equipment to be serviced using recycled material and allow an orderly phaseout. It shows United Kingdom Government and United Kingdom industry commitment to phase out ozone-depleting substances as quickly and as safely as possible. RUG is a very good example of industry's willingness to support Government in achieving a common environmental goal.

Biotechnology

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will be replying to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology's report on Regulation of the United Kingdom Biotechnology Industry and Global Competitiveness.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to announce that we have today made a full response to the Select Committee report and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to "Independent" of 18 March. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: During February, the Department received 684 letters from hon. Members. In the same period, 526 replies were issued.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: During the period 16 March 1993 to 15 March 1994, 202 parliamentary questions were referred for answer to the Employment Service, the only agency in the Department with responsibility for replying to parliamentary questions on operational matters. This figure represents 10·1 per cent. of all parliamentary questions replied to by the Department.

North Norfolk Action

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, columns *867-68*, what was the expected expenditure on each place on North Norfolk Action and the actual expenditure in the first six months of operation; and if he will break down the expenditure to date into *(a)* provider fee, *(b)* allowances, *(c)* fares to interview, *(d)* publicity, *(e)* evaluation and *(f)* Employment Service running costs, including staff costs and payment of allowances.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Sir Ralph Howell, dated 23 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to answer your Parliamentary Question about the expected expenditure on each place on North Norfolk Action and the actual expenditure in the first six months of operation; and a breakdown of expenditure incurred to date.

The expected expenditure for North Norfolk Action was £3,263 per place. The actual expenditure for the first six months of North Norfolk Action was approximately £2,850 per place.

The expenditure to date broken down as you requested, is as follows:

	£
(a) Provider fees	187,950
(b) Allowances	85,178
(c) Fares to interview	5,632
(d) Publicity	1,500
(e) Evaluation	—[1]
(f) Running costs	58,000

[1] External evaluation starts on 22 March and is expected to cost in the region of £25,250.

I hope this is helpful.

Training

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the organisations within the Greater London area which provide training to unemployed people in workshop and craft skills and are funded from Government programmes.

Miss Widdecombe: The following is a list of the organisations requested. Training and Enterprise Councils (TECS) are responsible for planning and arranging Government funded training programmes. London TECS are currently negotiating contracts with their training providers for 1994-95.

ORGANISATIONS WITH WHOM LONDON TECS CONTRACT FOR WORKSHOP BASED TRAINING PROVISION IN ALL SKILLS AREAS

1. *AZTEC*

Craft Training

TfW

Wandsworth Training Agency, Clapham
Training and Business Factory, Clapham
Share Community, Battersea

YT

Community Industry, Battersea
S Thamos College, Putney Hill
Wandsworth Training Agency, Wandsworth

Skill Areas

TfW

Apex Trust, Wandsworth and Merton
Share Community, Battersea
Royal Borough of Kingston
Wandsworth Training Agency
North East Surrey College of Technology, Ewell
Training and Business Factory, Brixton
Sight and Sound, Central London
Pruners, Sutton
Equinox Associates, Battersea
Mari Computer Training, Wandsworth
Instant Muscle, Tooting
Kingston College of Further Education

2. *CENTEC (Central London TEC)*

YT:

Camden Jobtrain
Community Care
Motor Mechanics
Tyre Fitting
Catering—Food Preparation
Carpentry and Joining
City of Westminster College

Sound Engineering
Stage Electrics
Film and TV Lighting
Photography
Graphic Design
Recreation and Leisure Management
Engineering Technology
Video Production
Gas Installation
Construction Industry Training Board
Plastering
Carpentry and Joinery
Shopfitting
Stonemasonry
Fulham Training Workshops
Motor Vehicle
Electrical Installation
Painting and Decorating
Carpentry and Joinery
Hammersmith and Fulham
Graphic Design
Community Care
Floristry
Hotel and Catering Training Co
Food Preparation and Cooking
Food and Drink Service
Housekeeping
Reception
Kilburn Skills
Retail
Catering
Carpentry and Joinery
Painting and Decorating
Bricklaying
Kingsway Training
Graphic Design
Jewellery
Photoprocessing
New Careers Training
Carpentry
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Motor Vehicle
Community Care
Painting and Decorating
Catering
Splinters of Mayfair
Hairdressing
Training for Work
Camden Training Centre
Printing
Horticulture
Childcare
Micro-Electronics
Capital Training
Bus Driving
Hammersmith and West London College
Carpentry
Bricklaying
Hotel and Catering Training Company
Hotel and Catering
London Electronics College
Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Mike Bryon Associates
Bus Driving
Pimlico Arts and Media
Graphics/Design

3. *CILNTEC (City and Inner London North TEC)*
YT:
EMC INTEC Ltd.
Hackney College
Springboard Hackney
Road Transport Industry Training Board
Grand Metropolitan
Bracklyn Training
Construction Industry Training Board
Holloway Youth Workshops
Springboard Islington
Wells TEC
North London Garages
London Retail Meat Traders Association
TFW:
Laing Employment Training, Hackney College

4. *LETEC (London East TEC)*
Prospects (YT):
B and D Youth Training
Chamber of Commerce Training
CITB
Community Industry
Crawford Training
East London Training Group
Ford Motor Company
Havering Group Training
Havering 16 plus
Inner London Training
J. and J. Training Ltd.
J. and J. Training Ltd.
JHP Training Ltd.
JHP Training Ltd.
Joshua Galvin Hairdressing
London College of Furniture
London Borough of Newham
Mowlem Training Ltd.
Newham Building Services
Quest
Vocational Prospects
Waltham Forest Training Agencies
Advance (TfW)
Chelmer Training
East London Projects
East London Group Training
J. and J. Training Services
J. and J. Training Services
J. T. Ltd.
J.H.P. Training Ltd.
LETO Laing
Lloyds Training Services
Mowlem Training Ltd.
Network Projects Training
Newham Community College
Newham Wise Ltd.
Westminster Training and Development

5. *North London TEC*
YT and TfW:
CITB
College of North East London
Enfield College
First Rung
Harington
HESTA
Hendon College
Hotel and Catering Training Company
J. H. P. Sumlock
Key Training Ltd.
John Laing
Leaside Bus Company Ltd.
L. B. Enfield
North London Garages
Ravenswood
Sight and Sound

6. *North West London TEC*
YT and TfW:
Brent Regeneration Agency
Brent Workskills Training
Capital Training
Cathedral Employment
Chelmer Training
City Training Link
Dow Stoker Ltd. and Women Returners Ltd.
Greenhill College
Hotel and Catering Training Company
Kilburn Skills
KUDOS
London Borough of Harrow
LUYC

Manpower plc
Middlesex ITEC
National Schizophrenia
Neighbourhood English Scheme
New Enterprise Development
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital
Stanmore College
Taurus International
The Training and Business Factory
The Training Network North London Ltd.
Weald College

7. *SOLOTEC (South London TEC)*
TfW:
The Training and Business Factory
Work placements in various occupations, emphasis on job search support.
PCS Ltd
Technical and Practical in various occupations.
MacIntyre Marketing Ltd.
Horticulture
Wordpower/Number Power
NACRO
Business Administration
Carpentry/Joinery
Community Project work for people with painting and decorating and general building experience.
Carshalton College of FE
Bricklaying.
Nescot Training Group
Enterprise Rehearsal
Bricklaying
Work placements in various occupations, and job search, counselling and support.
Croydon Training Centre
Fork Lift Truck Driving.

8. *South Thames TEC*
YT and TfW:
CIRCA (Employed status YT and TC Provider)
CITB
NACRO
Lambeth College
T. and B. Factory
Cathedral
ICY
Southwark College
Community Industry
Jarvis Training Ltd.
Home Improvement Project
Lewisham College
People for Action
Greenwich Training Company
Woolwich College
Seleta (South East London Engineering Training Association)
LITS (London Industrial Training Scheme)
Ladywell Lodge (part of Lewisham Council)
Lambeth ET Scheme (LETS)
LET (London Employment Training)

9. *West London TEC*
YT and TfW:
Wempey
Ealing Tertiary College
CITB
Middlesex Training Centre
Marlborough Training Centre
Richmond upon Thames College

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Emphysema

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claims have been received for compensation arising from employment-related emphysema in each year since 1979; and how many were successful.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has no arrangements for paying compensation to people who have developed emphysema as a result of their employment. Claims for compensation against employers under civil law are a matter for the employer concerned.

Claims for industrial injuries disablement benefit in respect of emphysema are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Jobplan Workshops

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what guidance is given to the Employment Service Agency when trying to match the skills of an unemployed person attending a jobplan workshop with the employment available;

(2) what action is taken in respect of an unemployed person who refuses to accept a job or training place offered in a jobplan workshop.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mrs. Ann Clwyd, dated 23 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about Jobplan. You have asked how Jobplan can help an unemployed person match their skills with those required in the local labour market and whether any action is taken when someone refuses a job or a training place offered to them while on the Workshop.

It may help if I explain that Jobplan aims to help people who have been unemployed for a year or more to compete for jobs and opportunities. About 80 per cent. of the people who first become unemployed leave the unemployment register within a year. For those who remain unemployed, confidence and the intensity of job search can decrease. People often believe that they have few options open to them. It is therefore important that at this stage people take a fresh look at their situation and have the chance to review their strengths and skills and set themselves clear, achievable job goals that take advantage of the help available. This can be achieved on Jobplan.

Whilst on the Workshop, people are encouraged and helped to identify the skills and strengths they have demonstrated in both work and non-work situations. One of the sessions on the Workshop is devoted to examining the local labour market. The purpose of this is to tell the group about the types and numbers of jobs that are available in the area and the changing nature of work. They are then asked to consider which of their skills may be transferable and whether they might need to acquire new ones. Following this session each person has an individual guidance interview which in some cases can lead to them applying for further training.

Jobplan is run on the Employment Service's behalf by organisations from the private, public and voluntary sectors. Every Workshop leader is provided with a copy of the Jobplan Leaders manual which provides guidance on running each session.

At the end of the Workshop, everyone should be able to agree an Action Plan which sets out the steps they need to take to get

back into work. This may be making one or more job applications or applying for a training place or other opportunity. If someone is offered a job or a training place on the Workshop and turns down the opportunity to start, no action will be taken. However, we would want to discuss with the person the factors that led to their decision and see what further help we could offer. Arrangements are made for all those completing the Workshop to be interviewed at the Jobcentre when they next sign. If at that time they refuse offers of suitable employment, we would refer their case to independent adjudication authorities.

I hope this is helpful.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in jobplan workshops in the Cynon Valley and in all other Welsh constituencies since their inception.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mrs. Ann Clwyd, dated 23 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of men and women who have started on Jobplan in Wales and in the Cynon Valley since the programme started.

Jobplan Workshops are for people unemployed for a year who decline or fail to take up a job or a place on an Employment Department programme at the Restart interview. They aim to help people compete more successfully for jobs and opportunities by allowing them to review their strengths and skills, establish clear job goals and draw up an Action Plan, mapping out the steps they need to take to get them back to work. Jobplan started nationally in April 1993.

It is possible to give the information asked for the Cynon Valley, as people who live in this valley are served by two Jobcentres, Mountain Ash and Aberdare. The details for the rest of Wales are not collected on a constituency basis and therefore the figures given are for the Principality as a whole.

From April 1993 to February 1994, 406 men and 45 women have started on Workshops in the Cynon Valley. In Wales in total 9,873 people have started the Workshops, 8,402 men and 1,471 women.

I hope this is helpful.

Young People (Benefits)

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is *(a)* the youth training scheme allowance and *(b)* the income support level on severe hardship grounds for 17-year-olds and what were the equivalent figures in (i) 1990-91, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) 1992-93.

Miss Widdecombe: The figures for the youth training (YT) allowance and the income support level on severe hardship grounds for 17-year-olds for the years requested are given in the following table:

£	YT allowance	Income support level
1990-91	35·00	28·80
1991-92	35·00	[1]31·15
1992-93	35·00	33·60
1993-94	35·00	34·80

[1] 31·40 from 1 October 1991.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people stopped claiming unemployment benefit in 1993-94; and of those, how many entered full-time or part-time employment.

Miss Widdecombe: Detailed information is not available on the destinations of the 4·4 million claimants who left unemployment during the year ended February 1994. However, past survey evidence indicates that the majority of people who leave claimant unemployment go into jobs.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Youth Training

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to increase youth training scheme allowances for 17-year-olds.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to increase minimum youth training allowances. Minimum YT allowances are set at levels which reflect the fact that trainees are involved in the learning process.

Employers and training providers benefit from considerable Government investment in the training of young people. Because of this, they are encouraged to pay trainees more than the specified minimum rates of allowance wherever possible and many do so.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* None.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Divisions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) what consideration he is giving to the difficulties experienced by hon. Members at 7 Millbank in reaching the Lobbies within the eight minutes allowed before Divisions;

(2) if he will bring forward an amendment to Standing Order No. 37 to extend the time allowed to hon. Members to reach Division Lobbies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The situation is being carefully monitored, but I have at present no plans to bring forward an amendment to Standing Order No. 37. As the hon. Member may be aware, Madam Speaker has discretion to extend Division times in the event of any difficulties in reaching the Lobbies.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Lorrain Osman

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations were made to the British Government by the Malaysian Government about the case of Lorrain Osman;

(2) on what occasions the case of Lorrain Osman was discussed with the Malaysian Government.

Mr. Goodlad: It is established practice that details of our relations with other Governments are confidential.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether Her Majesty's Government received representations between 1983 and 1993 from the Government of or Ministers in Malaysia in relation to Mr. Lorrain Osman; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether representations were made to Her Majesty's Governmment by the Malaysian authorities concerning the murder in Hong Kong of Jalil Ibrahim; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* Yes. However, it is established practice that details of our relations with other Governments are confidential.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons documents concerning the murder of Jalil Ibrahim were adjudged by him to be irrelevant to the defence of Mr. Lorrain Osman; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* It was the divisional court, not the Secretary of State, who made this judgment in respect of the "Jalil Documents" in Lorrain Osman's seventh application for Habeas Corpus.

Non-Proliferation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reconciliation of Her Majesty's Government's policy on the exports of high-technology conventional weapons with its policy on non-proliferation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We support the export of British equipment, including high technology conventional weapons, where this is compatible with our political, strategic and security interests. This is based on the right of all nations to self-defence, in accordance with article 51 of the UN charter. As part of our objective to prevent destabilising accumulations of arms, we observe strict responsibility and restraint in our exports of arms and actively encourage other suppliers to do likewise.

Missile Technology Control Regime

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent changes relating to the missile technology control regime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the missile technology control regime plenary meeting in Interlaken, 29 November to 2 December 1993, member states agreed that export controls on sensitive items should be maintained, and introduced clarification of some listed export items. They undertook to redouble efforts to persuade potential exporter countries outside the regime to abide by MTCR guidelines. In recent months Russia, Brazil and South Africa have also made significant progress towards adoption of MTCR guidelines. The meeting welcomed Argentina and Hungary as new members.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those states that have indicated adherence to the terms of the missile technology control regime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following are member states of the missile technology control regime—MTCR.

Argentina
Austria
Australia
Belgium
Canada
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Italy
Japan
Luxembourg
Portugal
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Republic of Ireland
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States

Several other states have declared their adherence to the MTCR guidelines, or are making progress towards meeting them, including:

Brazil
China
Czech Republic
Indonesia
Romania
Russia
South Africa

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will abide by the opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal status in international law of the United Kingdom nuclear weapons policy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not prepared to conjecture about what conclusions the International Court of Justice might reach on this issue.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to other Commonwealth countries in respect of their making submissions to the International Court of Justice on the legality of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We will be making our own submission to the International Court of Justice on this question, and the subject has been discussed with other states in the course of normal diplomatic exchanges.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will define the terms "strategic" and "sub-strategic" as currently used by his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: These terms relate to the type of action to which a nuclear weapon would contribute. Sub-strategic weapons provide the ability to take action more limited than a strategic strike.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the referral to the International Court of Justice for clarification of international law as regards nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave him on 1 February, at column *605*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part Her Majesty's Government will play in European Union submissions to the International Court of Justice as to the legality of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The submission of statements to the International Court of Justice is a matter for individual member states.

European Union

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which countries where the European Union takes on the responsibility of representing individual countries of the European Union those countries do not have direct representation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The European Union does not have a legal personality. In particular it does not represent individual member states. Under article J.5.1 of the Treaty on European Union the presidency is responsible for representing the European Union on issues of foreign and security policy where member states have an agreed policy. This sometimes involves the presidency taking action in a third country where not all the member states have diplomatic representation. In those countries where the presidency itself does not have a diplomatic mission, another member state acts on the presidency's behalf.

The presidency also represents the European Union where necessary in business under the justice and home affairs pillar. In matters of Community competence—example trade—which require action in third countries, the European Commission can represent the member states. On 1 July 1993 consular guidelines agreed by member states came into effect. Subject to local circumstances nationals of a member state who require consular assistance in a country or place where that member state has no accessible consular or diplomatic representation may seek the help of a permanent diplomatic or consular post of another member state.

North Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the International Atomic Energy Agency visit to North Korea to conduct nuclear safeguards inspections on facilities, pursuant to resolutions of the United Nations Security Council; what consultations he has had with the United States Government over these nuclear inspections; and if he will make a statement on the application of United Kingdom non-proliferation policy to *(a)* the Koreas, *(b)* Taiwan and *(c)* Japan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Despite a written agreement of 15 February, North Korea did not allow International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to undertake some crucial parts of their inspection earlier this month. Consequently the agency was unable to verify that no diversion of nuclear material from the civil nuclear fuel cycle has taken place in the last year. We shall continue to work closely with the United States Administration on this issue. We expect all countries which are members of the non-proliferation treaty, or which have concluded safeguards agreements, to abide fully by their obligations not to develop nuclear weapons.

Food Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the EC proposal for increasing the number of member states required to block a decision makes an exception in the case of decisions affecting the price of food.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The number of votes required for decisions taken by qualified majority voting in the Council is laid down in article 148 of the treaty of Rome. A decision on the amendment of article 148 in the context of enlargement is still under negotiation in the Council. Council decisions on prices under the common agricultural policy are decided by qualified majority voting under article 43. There has been no proposal to amend this practice.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his departmental policy on the use by Ministers of his Department of Foreign and Commonwealth Office letterheaded paper to correspond to hon. Members on the Conservative and Unionist party strategy for the forthcoming European elections; and if he has had any discussions with his departmental accounting officer on this issue.

Mr. Hurd: My special adviser's office recently used Foreign and Commonwealth Office paper by mistake for a letter on the Conservative approach to the European elections. I have assured the permanent Under-Secretary that this will not happen again.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Turkey

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of how many Kurdish journalists and Kurds involved in the distribution of newspapers he has received representations that they have been unlawfully killed in the last three years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are aware of such unexplained killings, but have not received representations about specific cases. We hope that the Turkish authorities will vigorously investigate these crimes so that those responsible can be brought before the courts.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the use of the anti-terror department against elected members of the pro-Kurdish Democracy party in Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We understand that Democracy party deputies were detained by anti-terrorist police after the National Assembly voted to remove their parliamentary immunities following a request by the public prosecutor that they be tried for alleged offences related to terrorism. The Turkish Prime Minister has said she will investigate allegations that the police acted improperly. We shall continue to make clear to the Turkish authorities the importance we attach to their permitting the non-violent expression of political beliefs.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to supplies of food and medical supplies to Kurdish areas of Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have no information about this, which is a matter for the Turkish authorities.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions the Council of Ministers has held recently on allegations of abuse of the human rights of Kurds committed by Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Council of Ministers has not recently discussed allegations of human rights abuse in Turkey. European Union Foreign Ministers raised human rights with the Turkish Foreign Minister on 8 November 1993. At the Human Rights Commission in Geneva recently the European Union expressed concern at the situation in Turkey. I stressed our concerns when I met the Turkish Minister for Human Rights in London earlier this month.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held in the Council of Europe regarding the possibility of the expulsion of Turkey from that body, in respect of abuse of human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Council of Europe regularly discusses human rights in a number of countries including Turkey. There has been no discussion of Turkey's expulsion.

China

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what complaints he has received recently regarding the detention of foreign visitors on religious grounds by the Chinese Government.

Mr. Goodlad: A number of non-governmental organisations and others have brought to our attention the detention last month of ten religious believers, including seven foreigners, in Henan province in China. We understand that all the detainees have now been released.

Norway

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the terms agreed between the EU and Norway on the latters proposed accession to the Community with particular reference to their effect on the common fisheries policy and access by EU members to the North sea.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Norway agreed its terms of accession with the European Union at the 15-16 March Foreign Affairs Council. On the details of the terms, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) on 21 March at col. *11*. The agreement reached on Norwegian accession does not change the existing rules of the common fisheries policy. European Union countries' access to waters, including the North sea, is unaffected. Reciprocal arrangements for access to resources fully respect the principle known as relative stability, that is, the agreed allocation of fishing opportunities according to historical patterns.

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money has been received from the United Nations to pay for *(a)* Operation Hanwood, *(b)* Operation Cheshire and *(c)* Operation Grapple; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The names "Hanwood, Cheshire and Grapple" are national terms to describe participation by British armed forces in UN operations in the former Yugoslavia. The terms are not used by the UN. The UN has made payments to cover United Kingdom troop costs for both Operation Hanwood—the field ambulance which withdrew from Croatia in September—and Operation Grapple—The United Kingdom operation in Bosnia—as one payment for the total United Kingdom troop contribution to UNPROFOR.

Operation Cheshire describes RAF participation in the Sarajevo airlift. The United Nations does not refund costs to any of the participants who are carrying in humanitarian supplies on behalf of UNHCR.

UNPROFOR Croatia—UNPROFOR I—began in February 1992. In the first six months United Kingdom's participation in UNPROFOR II was at no additional cost to the United Nations; the operation was placed on United Nations assessed contributions on 1 April 1993.

Reimbursements from the United Nations to date are as follows:

FY 1992-93

UNPROFOR I payments for troop costs for the period to 31 July 1992
Total £191,663·25

FY 1993-94 to date

UNPROFOR I payments for troop costs March 1992 to March 1993
£1,667,909·09

UNPROFOR I and II payments for troop costs April-November 1993
£13,439,501·66

UNPROFOR II rations for the period April-September 1993
£2,013,288·19

UNPROFOR II payment for helicopter services April-September

1993
£979,273·70
Total £18,099,972·64

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the meeting between United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Serbian President in Belgrade on 15 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* Mrs. Ogata received assurances from President Milosevic that he would use his influence with the Bosnian Serbs over access to Maglaj. The situation has now improved and the first United Nations aid convoy to reach the town since October arrived on 20 March. Mrs. Ogata also expressed her concern at the continued human rights abuses in Banja Luka. We look to the Serb authorities to act on these concerns.

EC Accession Treaty

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what dates he expects *(a)* the deliberations of the formal Council of Ministers of the European Community concerning an accession treaty to be completed, *(b)* publication of the draft text and *(c)* introduction of the relevant treaty for treaty ratifications.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 22 March 1994]:* The draft treaty is due to be published in early April. If the European Parliament gives its assent to accession during their session of the week beginning 2 May, the treaty will be signed in that month. It will then be open for ratification by member states and applicant states.

Palestine

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Palestine.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 22 March 1994]:* Some of the precautionary measures enforced by the Israelis in the occupied territories following the Hebron massacre are still in place, including a curfew in the Hebron area and the closure of the occupied territories. We supported United Nations Security Council Resolution 904 which called for protection of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories. The resolution also calls for the implementation without delay of the declaration of principles signed last year by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Sir John Wheeler: Two hundred and twenty letters were received of which 161 were replied to.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions in the past five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on the ground of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers." I also seek to comply with Madam Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers to oral questions.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for the past 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Sir John Wheeler: During the period 1 January 1993 to 31 December 1993 71 questions were referred for answer by a Departmental agency. This represents 4·7 per cent. of parliamentary questions asked.

Wild Birds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list details of all current licences issued to kill wild bird species, including the premises and the wild bird species concerned.

Mr. Tim Smith: The details of all current licences issued by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to kill wild bird species, including the premises and the wild bird species are as follows:

Licence and expiry date of licence	*Wild bird species and maximum number permitted to be killed under the licence*	*Premise of licence and location covered by licence*
Belfast International Airport 30 April 1994	Lapwing (20)	Preserving air safety within the perimeter of Aldergrove Airport
Belfast International Airport 30 April 1994	Black Headed gull (20)	Preserving air safety within the perimeter of Aldergrove Airport
Belfast International Airport 30 April 1994	Golden Plover (20)	Preserving air safety within the perimeter of Aldergrove Airport
River Faughan Anglers 30 June 1994	Cormorant (10)	Protection of migratory fish smolts at the River Faughan, County Londonderry
River Faughan Anglers 30 June 1994	Cormorant (5)	Protection of salmon smolts at the River Bundennett, County Tyrone and County Londonderry

Licence and expiry date of licence	Wild bird species and maximum number permitted to be killed under the licence	Premise of licence and location covered by licence
Bann System Ltd. 30 June 1994	Cormorant (10)	Protection of salmon smolts at the Lower Bann and tributary rivers
Shanes Castle Estates Co. Ltd. 30 June 1994	Cormorant (10)	Protection of salmon smolts at Shanes Castle, Antrim
J. T. Lawrence 2 April 1994	Cormorant (5)	Preserving fish stocks at Lough Doo Fishery, Portaferry, County Down
Warrenpoint, Rostrevor and District Angling Club 2 April 1994	Cormorant (5)	Protection of trout stocks at Mill Dam and Donaghaguy Reservoir, Warrenpoint, County Down
Castlewellan and Annsborough Angling Club 5 April 1994	Cormorant (5)	Protection of fish farm (stocking of trout) at Ballylough Lough and Ballywillwill Lough, County Down
T/A Alpha Pest Control/Services March 1995	Starling	Preventing the spread of disease or preserving public health—all of Northern Ireland
T/A Alpha Pest Control/Services 23 March 1995	Sparrow and Feral Pigeon	For the purposes of preventing the spread of disease or preserving public health—all of Northern Ireland

Fair Employment

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of legally qualified staff employed by the Northern Ireland office and the Northern Ireland Departments, listing the branches in which such staff are employed and the number in each; how many people there are in each case whose perceived religious affiliation is (i) Protestant, (ii) Roman Catholic, (iii) not determined; how many came from outside Northern Ireland; and how many of the latter were born (1) in the rest of the United Kingdom and (2) in the Republic of Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The total number of qualified legal staff currently employed by the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland departments is 147. The table lists the branches in which such staff are employed and the number in each.

Branch	Number of Staff
Northern Ireland Office, London	1
Northern Ireland Office, Belfast	4
Crown Solicitors Office	42
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	37
Northern Ireland Compensation Agency	10
Police Authority for Northern Ireland	3
Department of Finance and Personnel Solicitor's Office	35
Office of Law Reform	2
Legislative Counsel	7
Northern Ireland Land Registry	5
Equal Opportunities Unit	1

The use of community background monitoring information in the Northern Ireland civil service is governed by a code of practice, agreed with staff representatives, under which such information can be used only for the purposes of monitoring the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland civil service policy on equality of opportunity and to meet statutory requirements under fair employment legislation.

Disaggregation in the detail sought would be contrary to the code of practice, and could contravene the confidentiality requirements contained in regulations made under the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. However, of the 147 staff currently employed in a legal capacity 83 are perceived as Protestant and 52 as Roman Catholic. The perceived religious affiliation of 12 cannot be determined. Of these, eight are assessed as being from outside Northern Ireland including five from the United Kingdom and one from the Republic of Ireland.

Purchasing Health Boards

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each purchasing health board in Northern Ireland, the figures for revenue funding in 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95, and the estimated figures for 1995-96 and 1996-97; and if he will indentify the changes for each health board's revenue budget resulting from the replacement of the resource allocation working party system of determining funding allocation.

Mr. Ancram: The revenue resources—exclusive of capital charges—allocated to health and social services boards for the purchase of health and social care for the years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 are shown in table 1. The figures for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are provisional and as funding for subsequent years is dependent upon the outcome of future public expenditure surveys, no estimates can be provided for 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Table 1

Board	1992-93 £000	1993-94 £000	1994-95 £000
Northern	188,159	200,204	223,093
Southern	148,705	162,906	170,601
Eastern	409,657	390,289	395,372
Western	137,825	148,927	155,453

Following the discontinuance of provider-based funding from April 1992, boards are now funded as purchasers of services for their resident populations. Under the new funding approach, the resource adjustments effected to determine the allocations in table 1, are as follows:

Table 2

Board	*1992-93 £000*	*1993-94 £000*	*1994-95 £000*
Northern	38,654	1,832	16,970
Southern	14,533	3,871	4,218
Eastern	[1]53,318	[1]8,856	[1]4,741
Western	4,392	3,153	4,331

[1] Figures denote a reduction in Eastern Boards share of resources.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) on 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *491-92*.

NHS Specialists (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were not on waiting lists for treatment but waiting to see a specialist in the national health service for each quarter in the last two years.

Mr. Ancram: The number of people waiting for first out-patient appointment in Northern Ireland at the end of December 1993 was 79,813. This information is available only from the last quarter of 1993.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will publish Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary report on the RUC.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Copies of the 1993 inspection report, which is the first RUC inspection report to be published, have today been placed in the Library. I welcome the report and will be considering its recommendations carefully. I am grateful to Her Majesty's inspectorate for the report and am pleased to note that overall he regards the force as efficient.

HMIC's inspections offer the opportunity of professional examination of policing policies and priorities and this inspection focused specifically on areas selected for their contribution to efficient and effective operational policing.

The publication, for the first time, of this report is entirely in line with both the Government's and the Chief Constable's clear commitment to more openness.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the administrative costs of the electricity share offer and the trade sale of the generating stations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The costs to the Government of the electricity share offer and sale of the generating stations in Northern Ireland are estimated as follows:

	£ million
Underwriting	2·9
Selling and broking commission	1·5
Advisers fees	14·5
Marketing	1·4
Receiving bank	1·7
Share information office, printing and other logistical costs	2·0
Total	24·0

These costs represent about 3 per cent. of the total proceeds due from the sale of the generating stations, the sale of shares in the electricity share offer and the repayment of debt which together are estimated at £780 million. The costs exclude stamp duty and VAT on services provided to the Government which are not net costs to the Exchequer, and incentives on employee and individual shareholdings. The figures include expenditure incurred from April 1991 to the end of January 1994, but do not include costs incurred in previous years primarily on the restructuring of the industry which amounted to about £3·1 million.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* While there are a number of regulatory authorities in Northern Ireland, none of them are self-financing.

However, the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency—DVTA—of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has a regulatory function and is required to recover total costs through fees and charges. The agency was established on 1 April 1992. Running cost for 1992-93 was £5·4 million and it is estimated to be £5·8 million for 1993-94. The staffing complement at the date of its establishment was 257 and is currently 253.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The information is as follows:

Home Civil Servants

Grade	*Number employed*	*Percentage female*
Grade 1	1	—
Grade 2	2	—
Grade 3	4	—
Grade 4	2	—
Grade 5	10	—
Grade 6	4	—
Grade 7	26	23
Senior Executive Officer	4	75
Senior Information Officer	1	—
Senior Research Officer	1	—
Higher Executive Officer (Development)	4	25
Higher Executive Officer	20	60
Administration Trainee	2	50

Grade	Number employed	Percentage female
Research Officer	1	100
Executive Officer	28	54
Senior Personal Secretary	7	100
Typing Manager	1	100
Administrative Officer	19	58
Personal Secretary	15	100
Administrative Assistant	9	56
Typist	16	100
Catering Manager 1	1	—
Catering Manager 3	1	—
Support Manager 3	1	—
Chef 1	4	50
Support Grade Band 1	6	—
Support Grade Band 2	7	43
Industrials (Non-craft)	16	75
TOTAL	213	52

Northern Ireland civil servants non-industrial

Grade	Number employed	Percentage female
Head of Service	1	—
Permanent Secretary (G2A)	6	—
Under Secretary (G3)	31	—
Unified Grade 4(G4)	3	—
Assistant Secretary (G5)	116	10
Senior Principal (G6)	31	—
Principal (G7)	404	14
Accountant Grade 7	2	50
Deputy Principal	665	25
Accountant Deputy Principal	4	—
Staff Officer	1,008	42
Staff Officer (A)	11	18
Staff Officer (Accountant)	20	15
Administration Trainee	6	17
Executive Officer	1,399	57
EOI (Accountant)	5	40
Auditor (SO) MIIA or BATS	10	20
Auditor (SO) MIIA or BATS	22	27
Auditor Deputy Principal MIIA and BATS	12	8
Social Security Officer 1	906	69
Executive Officer 2	1,503	67
Administrative Assistant	3,218	75
Administrative Officer	3,526	72
Social SecurityOfficer 2B	1,809	72
Social Security Officer 2A	375	66
Administrative Assistant	2	50
Accommodation Manager (Enniskiln)	1	100
Chief Executive	1	—
Chief Agricultural Economist (G5)	1	—
Deputy Chief Agricultural Economist (G6)	2	—
Principal Agricultural Economist (G7)	5	40
Senior Agricultural Economist	3	—
Assistant Agricultural Economist	1	100
Chief Executive Valuation and Lands Agency	1	—
Chief Executive	3	—
Senior Deputy Agricultural Officer (G5)	2	—
Deputy Chief Agricultural Officer (G6)	3	—
Agricultural Inspector Grade I	23	4
Agricultural Inspector Grade II	72	10
Agricultural Inspector Grade III	158	30
Inspector Group 4	84	—
Agricultural Inspector Grade IV	4	25
Inspector Group 5	7	—
Post-mortem Room attendant	4	—
Inspector Group 3	34	—
Inspector Group 2	107	2
Inspector Group 1	133	9
Food Technology Technician	6	17
Chief Alkali and Radiochemical Inspector	1	—
Alkali and Radiochemical Inspector	4	—
Director of Works Service DOE (G4)	1	—
Chief Architect (G5)	1	—
SUPT Architect (G6)	2	—
PPTO (Architect) (G7)	23	—
SPTO (Architect)	22	9
HPTO (Architect)	5	40
SPTO (Architectural Assistant)	23	—
HPTO (Architectural Assistant)	27	—
PTO (Architectural Assistant)	47	4
HPTO (Maint Tech Architect)	1	—
PTO (Maint Tech Architect)	8	—
DIR Estate Services (G4)	1	—
Chief Executive (IDB)	1	—
Divisional Director	3	—
Principal Auditor (G7)	2	—
Senior Auditor H and SS (Acc)	2	—
Auditor II and SS (Acc)	5	60
Assistant Auditor	2	—
Audit Assistant DHSS	4	75
Assistant Divisional Director	3	—
Chief Auditor (G5)	1	—
Principal Auditor LG (G7)	2	—
Auditor LG	4	—
Assistant Auditor LG	2	—
Senior Audit Assistant LG	3	33
PPTO (Building Surveyor) (G7)	1	—
SPTO (Building Surveyor)	4	—
HPTO (Building Surveyor)	3	—
PTO (Building Surveyor)	3	—
Career Adviser	4	25
Senior Careers Officer	16	56
Careers Officer	105	60
Catering Adviser	1	100
Catering Manager 2	1	100
Catering Manager 3	1	100
Divisional Manager Belfast (G5)	2	—
Chief Civil Engineer (G5)	3	—
Divisional Manager (G6)	8	—
OPS Director Water (G5)	1	—
Superintendent Civil Engineer (G6)	8	—
PPTO Civil Engineer	73	—
SPTO (Civil Engineer)	183	2
HPTO (Civil Engineer)	91	7
Graduate Trainee Civil Engineer	23	17
SPTO (Civil Engineering Assistant)	43	2
HPTO (Civil Engineering Assistant)	202	3
PTO (Civil Engineering Assistant)	525	4
TGI Trainee Civil Engineering Assistant	8	8
O Level Trainee Civil Engineering Assistant	61	4
Chief Clerk of Works (SPTO)	4	—
Clerk of Works 1 (HPTO)	20	0
Clerk of Works 2 (PTO)	88	—
Manager/Warden	1	—
Assistant Manager Warden	1	—
Director of Conservation	1	—
HPTO (Senior Warden)	2	—
PTO, Warden	11	—
TGI (Assistant Warden)	12	25
Chief Dental Officer	1	—
Dental Officer	4	—
Dental Surgery Assistant	3	100
Development Executive	14	56
Deputy Development Executive	2	50
Assistant Development Executive	2	—
Assistant Secretary Statistician (G5)	1	—
Senior Principal Statistician (G6)	1	—
Principal Statistiscian (G7)	17	29
Deputy Principal Statistician	31	55
Senior Assistant Statistician	17	29

Grade	Number employed	Percentage female
Assistant Statistician	12	25
Assistant Secretary Economist (G5)	1	0
Special Economist (G6)	1	0
Principal Economist (G7)	8	13
Deputy Economist	7	29
Senior Assistant Economist	7	29
Assistant Economist	7	43
Senior Assistant Economist	7	29
Assistant Economist	7	43
Director Environmental Services (G4)	1	—
Director Environmental Protection (G5)	1	—
Chief Environmental Health Officer (G6)	1	—
Senior Environmental Health Officer (G7)	2	—
Environmental Health Officer	2	50
Estates Superintendent HPTO	1	—
Controller (CTO) (G6)	1	—
Chief Examiner (CTO)	2	—
Senior Examiner	1	100
Deputy Crown Solicitor (G4)	1	—
Chief Inspector (Health and Safety) (G5)	1	—
Deputy Chief Inspector (Health and Safety)	2	—
Principal Inspector (Health and Safety)	10	—
Inspector (Health and Safety)	7	14
Inspector 2 (Health and Safety)	3	—
Fire Officer 1	2	—
Senior Fire Officer	1	—
Fire Officer	4	—
Fire Officer 2 (PTO)	2	—
PTO4 Drilling Rig Supervisor	2	—
Chief Fisheries Officer	1	—
Deputy Chief Fisheries Officer	2	—
Senior Fisheries Officer	3	—
Fisheries Officer 1	12	—
Fisheries Officer 2	10	—
Area Foreman (PTO)	6	—
Technical Grade 1 (DANI)	26	—
Chief Forest Officer (G5)	1	—
Forest Operations Officer	1	—
Divisional Officer (G7)	2	—
Forest Officer I	11	—
Forst Officer II	11	—
Forest Officer III	21	—
Forest Officer IV	24	4
Area Forest Engineer	3	—
General Manager TC (G7)	1	—
Senior Instructional Officer	41	—
Higher Instructional Officer-NIO	2	—
Higher Instructional Officer	49	4
Instructional Officer 1	275	5
SPTO Graphic Designer	1	—
HPTO Graphic Designer	1	—
Audio Visual Technician	1	—
PTO Graphic Designer	5	—
Training Service Manager	31	13
Principal Inspector	1	100
Senior Inspector	7	29
Principal Photographer	1	—
PTO Supervisor (Historic Monuments)	1	—
PTO Senior Supervisor (Historic Monuments BD.B)	1	—
Senior Photographer	1	—
Custodian (Historic Monuments)	1	—
Photographic Officer	1	—
Assistant Draughtsman Illustrator	1	—
Photographer	1	—
Field Monument Warden	3	33
Senior Imports Inspector	4	—
Imports Inspector	12	—
Senior Industrial Accountant	2	—
Industrial Accountant (G7)	9	22
Management Accountant	1	—
Assistant Industrial Accountant	2	—
Deputy Director Information Services (GR5)	1	—
SP Information Officer (G6)	2	—
Principal Information Officer (G7)	6	—
Deputy Principal Information Officer	11	46
Information Officer	5	60
Chief Inspector (G3)	1	—
Deputy Chief Inspector (G4)	1	—
Staff Inspector (G5)	6	17
Inspector (G6)	—	—
Senior Housing Inspector (HPTO)	49	31
Housing Inspector 2 (PTO)	1	—
Investigation Officer	1	—
PRO (Interior Designer)	4	—
PPTO (Landscape Architect)	1	3
SPTO (Landscape Architect)	2	50
SPTO Landscape Architect	1	—
HPTO (Landscape Architect's Assistant)	1	—
PTO (Landscape Architect's Assistant)	7	43
PTO Development Control Inspector	10	—
PTO Senior Photographer	1	100
TGI Photographer	1	—
Chief Law Clerk	6	17
Registrar Lands Tribunal	1	—
Senior Law Clerk	14	57
Law Clerk 1	40	55
Law Clerk 2	5	60
1st Legislative Draftsman (G2B)	1	—
2nd Legislative Draftsman (G3)	2	50
Librarian	2	—
Assistant Librarian	5	80
Deputy Director MGT Training	1	—
Senior MGT Training Adviser	1	—
Management Training Adviser	1	—
Chief Mapper	2	50
Superintendent Mapper	5	40
Senior Mapper	13	54
Technical Grade 1	85	44
Mapper	41	59
Technical Grade 2	24	38
HPTO Ferry Manager	1	—
Ship's Captain	1	—
DDEE Harbour Master/Foreman Works	1	—
Ship's Engineer	2	—
Ship's Mat	1	—
Director of OSNI	1	—
Deputy Director Ordinance Survey (G6)	1	—
PR Mapping and Charting of (G7)	3	—
Senior Map and Charting Officer	6	—
Higher Map and Charting Officer	17	—
Mapping and Charting Officer	128	6
Map and Charting Technical Grade 2	10	10
Map and Charting Technical Grade 1	29	21
Map and Charting Technical Grade L	2	—
Senior Meat Inspector	12	—
Meat Inspector	91	10
Poultry Meat Inspector	26	23
PTO Electrical Engineer Assistant	10	—
G/T Electrical Engineer	1	—
Trainee Electrical Engineer Assistant	7	14
Superintendent M & E Eningeer (G6)	2	—
PPTO (M & E Engineer) (G7)	20	—
SPTO (M & E Engineer)	12	—
HPTO (M & E Engineer)	9	22
Grad TR M & E Engineer	3	—
TR Mechanical Engineer Assistant	2	—

	Number employed	Percentage female
SPTO (M & E Engineering Assistant)	33	—
HPTO (M&E Enginering Assistant)	56	—
PTO (M&E Engineering Assistant)	110	—
PTO4 (M&E Engineering Assistant)	1	—
PTO (Service Engineer)	3	—
SPTO (Superintendent of Works)	2	—
HPTO (Superintendent of Works)	1	—
PTO (Superintendent of Works)	6	—
Chief Medical Officer	1	—
Deputy Chief Medical Officer	2	50
Principal Medical Officer	4	—
Senior Medical Officer	9	44
Medical Officer	16	31
Medical Officer (PT-Time)	3	—
PTO Materials Testing TH	2	—
Chief Nursing Officer	1	—
Principal Nursing Officer	1	—
Nursing Officer	4	75
Nursing Grade G	1	100
Nurse Grade F	1	100
Nurse Grade C	2	100
Senior Assistant Director DPP	2	—
Superintendent Office Machines	1	—
Assistant Supervisor Office Machinery	1	—
Support Manager 2	4	75
Support Manger 3	38	47
Support Grade Band 1	561	56
Support Grade Band 2	683	42
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer (G5)	1	—
Senior Principal Pharmaceutical Officer	1	—
Principal Pharmaceutical Officer (G5)	2	—
Pharmaceutical Officer	1	—
Director T and C Planning (G4)	1	—
DV Planning Officer (G5) BF	1	—
Assistant Director Planning (G5)	1	—
DV Planning Officer (G6)	5	—
Superintendent Planning Officer (G6)	2	—
PPTO Planning Officer	17	23
SPTO (Planning Officer)	47	11
HPTO (Planning Officer)	39	33
GRAD TR Planning Officer	1	—
HPTO (Planning Assistant)	41	17
PTO (Planning Assistant)	54	22
Trainee Planning Assistant	12	58
Chief Education and Training Officer (G7)	1	100
Education Officer HOD2	1	—
Education Officer HOD1	3	33
Senior Teacher	2	50
DC ED and Training Officer (NIO)	1	—
Teacher	12	50
HPTO Prison Industries	3	—
PTO (Prison Industries)	1	—
Chief Examiner (G7)	1	—
Deputy Chief Driving Examiner	1	—
Deputy Chief Examiner (SPTO)	3	—
Supervising Examiner	2	—
District Examiner	14	—
PTO Vehicle Driving Examiner	119	—
Senior Driving Examiner	3	—
Driving/Traffic Examiner	9	—
Chief Psychologist (GR6)	1	100
Senior Psychologist	1	—
Higher Psychologist	2	—
Principal Psychologist	1	100
Curatorial Grade A (G5)	1	—
Curatorial Grade B (G6)	1	—
Curatorial Grade C (G7)	4	50
Curatorial Grade E	14	28
Curatorial Grade F	4	50
Conservation Grade F	5	20
Superintendent Quantity Surveyor (G6)	5	—
PTO (Quantity Surveyor) (G7)	14	—
SPTO (Quantity Surveyor)	11	9
HPTO (Quantity Surveyor)	6	—
GRAD TR Quantity Surveyor	1	—
SPTO (Quantity Surveying Assistant)	11	—
HPTO (Quantity Surveying Assistant)	13	—
PTO (Quantity Surveying Assistant)	10	10
Senior Enforcement Officer	2	—
Enforcement Officer	6	17
PRO Supervisor (Roade)	41	—
Director of Roads Service (G4)	1	—
Deputy Chief Scientific Officer (G5)	2	—
SP Scientific Officer (G6)	17	—
Principal Scientific Officer (G7)	74	8
Senior Scientific Officer	136	20
Higher Scientific Officer	142	22
Scientific Officer	176	35
Brucella Tester	13	69
Assistant Scientific Officer	229	44
PTO4 Supervisor	6	—
Security Guard	7	—
Security Officer	7	—
SPTO Health and Safety Adviser	3	—
HPTO Safety Advisory Officer	15	—
Chief Inspector (SSI)(G4)	1	—
Assistant Chief Inspector	3	—
Inspector (SSI)	13	38
Head Legal Services (G3)	1	—
Deputy Head of Legal Services	1	—
Assistant Solicitor (G5) NS	24	—
Deputy Registrar Land Reg	1	—
Senior Legal Assistant	83	41
Legal Assistant	32	81
SPTO (Prison Transport)	1	—
Supplies Officer	1	—
SPTO (Supplies)	1	—
HPTO (Supplies)	4	—
PTO Supplies	16	6
Stores Officer (Grade C)	5	—
PTO Stores Liaison Officer	6	—
Chief Structural Engineer UN GR 5	1	—
Superintendent Structural Engineer (G6)	1	—
PPTO Structural Engineer	4	—
SPTO Structural Engineer	11	—
SPTO (Structural Engineering Assistant)	2	—
HPTO (Structural Engineering Assistant)	7	—
PTO (Structural Engineering Assistant)	13	—
Superintendent Systems Analyst (G7)	7	—
Senior Systems Analyst	71	17
Systems Analyst	151	21
Programmeer/Analyst	152	27
Programmer	124	22
SW Course Student (IT)	21	38
Assistant Programmer	7	28
Principal Transport Manager	1	—
Area Transport Manager	2	—
Assistant Area Transport Manager	3	—
Fleet Centre Manager	1	—
PTO Workshop Supervisor	4	—
Chief Typing Manager	11	100
Typing Manager	110	100
Typist	1,133	99
Senior Personal Secretary	36	100
Personal Secretary	196	100
Assistant Commissioner	3	—
District Valuer (G6)	10	—
Senior Valuer (G7)	26	—
Valuer I	63	—
Valuer II	54	26
Senior Valuation Assistant	12	—
Valuation Assistant	41	10
DC Veterinary Officer (G5)	2	—
SP Veterinary Officer (G6)	5	20
Divisional Veterinary Officer	24	4
Veterinary Officer (G7)	80	27
Chief Veterinary Research Officer (G5)	1	—
Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer	2	—
Senior Veterinary Research Officer 1 (G6)	3	—
Senior Veterinary Research Officer 2	6	17
Veterinary Research Officer (G7)	15	13
PTO Water Supervisor M&E	7	—

	Number employed	Percentage female
Director Water Service (G4)	1	—
HPTO (Water Supervisor)	4	—
PTO (Water Supervisor)	141	—
Assistant Supervisor Water (Personnel)	3	—
HPTO Projects Officer	1	—
Chief Inspector Trading Standards (G7)	1	—
Deputy Chief Trading Standards Officer	2	—
Area Inspector	7	—
Senior Inspector	1	—
Trading Standards Inspector	15	—
Principal (Work Study) (G7)	1	—
HPTO (Word Study Office)	1	—
Senior Work Study Officer	2	—
PTO (Work Study Officer)	14	—
Senior Telecommunications Engineer (SPTO)	2	—
Telecommunications Technical Engineer I	12	—
Telecommunications Technical Engineer II	19	—
Telecommunications Engineering Technician	76	—
PTO	4	—
PTO Model Maker	1	—
Under Secretary (Personnel Appointments)	1	—
Director Management Training (PA)	1	—
Management Training Advisor	2	—
Temporary Veterinary Officer	24	21
Investigation Officer (PA)	6	—
Principal Librarian (PA)	1	—
Total Non-Industrials	24,895	51
Industrials		
Craft	629	0·2
Non-Craft	3,798	2
Total Industrials	4,427	2
Overall NICS Total	29,322	44

Housing

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each council area and each Housing Executive district the number of *(a)* applicants by each category used by the executive and *(b)* the number of transfer applications by category.

Mr. Tim Smith *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I have, however, been advised by its chief executive that the number of applicants by category, for each council area and Housing Executive district, is as follows:

Applications by category at 28 February 1994

Council area	NIHE district	A	B
Belfast	Belfast 1	192	516
	Belfast 2	165	606
	Belfast 3	502	420
	Belfast 4	281	559
	Belfast 5	149	391
	Belfast 6	85	476
	Belfast 7	327	955
Region	Belfast	1,701	3,923
North Down	Bangor	147	719
Ards	Ards I	138	364
	Ards II	48	219
Castlereagh	Dundonald	42	163
	Newtownbreda	73	348
Lisburn	Lisburn	158	495
	Dunmurry	74	238
	Poleglass	70	257
Down	Downpatrick	150	696
Region	South East	900	3,499
Banbridge	Banbridge	48	255
Newry and Mourne	Newry I	85	339
	Newry II	93	452
	Kilkeel	—	—
Armagh	Armagh	84	411
Craigavon	Craigavon	4	172
	Lurgan	57	366
	Portadown	71	341
Region	South	442	2,336
Ballymena	Ballymena	144	691
Antrim	Antrim	95	555
Newtownabbey	Newtownabbey I	66	361
	Newtownabbey II	44	362
Carrickfergus	Carrickfergus	99	469
Larne	Larne	51	305
Moyle	Moyle	28	150
Ballymoney	Ballymoney	12	260
Coleraine	Coleraine	85	642
Region	North East	624	3,795
Derry	Londonderry I	256	492
	Londonderry II	128	367
	Londonderry III	171	224
Limavady	Limavady	79	300
Magherafelt	Magherafelt	64	325
Strabane	Strabane	81	349
Omagh	Omagh	54	461
Cookstown	Cookstown	28	212
Dungannon	Dungannon	53	364
Fermanagh	Fermanagh	71	441
Region	West	985	3,535
Outside Northern Ireland		349	678
Northern Ireland Total		5,001	17,766

Transfer applications by category at 28 February 1994

Council area	NIHE district	Priority transfer	C
Belfast	Belfast 1	158	422
	Belfast 2	119	540
	Belfast 3	118	314
	Belfast 4	109	380
	Belfast 5	145	444
	Belfast 6	79	405
	Belfast 7	135	609
Region	Belfast	863	3,114
North Down	Bangor	122	429
Ards	Ards I	84	309
	Ards II	10	148
Castlereagh	Dundonald	66	258
	Newtownbreda	85	262
Lisburn	Lisburn	75	435
	Dunmurry	45	238
	Poleglass	10	164
Down	Downpatrick	83	435
Region	South East	580	2,678
Banbridge	Banbridge	60	302
Newry and Mourne	Newry I	62	250
	Newry II	39	269

Council area	NIHE district	Priority transfer	C
	Kilkeel	—	—
Armagh	Armagh	74	303
Craigavon	Craigavon	15	113
	Lurgan	58	312
	Portadown	62	287
Region	South	370	1,836
Ballymena	Ballymena	177	480
Antrim	Antrim	128	263
Newtownabbey	Newtownabbey I	129	367
	Newtownabbey II	69	327
Carrickfergus	Carrickfergus	90	286
Larne	Larne	62	219
Moyle	Moyle	7	128
Ballymoney	Ballymoney	32	250
Coleraine	Coleraine	147	514
Region	North East	841	2,834
Derry	Londonderry I	264	303
	Londonderry II	119	287
	Londonderry III	161	264
Limavady	Limavady	47	222
Magherafelt	Magherafelt	52	191
Strabane	Strabane	102	304
Omagh	Omagh	34	393
Cookstown	Cookstown	30	163
Dungannon	Dungannon	49	282
Fermanagh	Fermanagh	50	364
Region	West	908	2,773
Outside Northern Ireland		194	434
Total	3,756	13,669	

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for council districts of *(a)* Coleraine, *(b)* Magherafelt and *(c)* Limavady the number of Housing Executive dwellings let in each of the last three years and the current year to the latest available date to each category of applicant; and how many applicants housed in each category were resident outside the council area in which they were housed.

Mr. Tim Smith *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I have, however, been advised by its chief executive that the number of dwellings let over the past three years and up to September 1993 in the current year is as follows:

Housing executive dwellings let by category

Period	A	B	PT	C
	Coleraine district council area			
1990-91	143	236	83	103
1991-92	146	190	88	62
1992-93	146	121	69	30
1993-94[1]	72	62	31	17
	Magherafelt district council area			
1990-91	67	82	23	53
1991-92	63	61	15	37
1992-93	61	50	17	47
1993-94[1]	24	27	7	19
	Limavady district council area			
1990-91	88	57	17	62
1991-92	101	38	29	61
1992-93	90	26	17	44
1993-94[1]	45	10	7	10

[1] To September 1993. Collated by the Housing Executive on a 6-monthly basis and are the latest available.

A—priority applications.
B—based on points.
PT—priority transfers.
C—Non priority transfers.

The information on the number of applicants in each category in a particular district council area who were resident outside the area, is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues during February.

Mr. Redwood: The number of letters received from hon. Members by myself and my ministerial colleagues during February was 320. The number of responses sent to hon. Members in the same period was 396.

(The figure of 396 also includes responses to correspondence received from hon. Members in the latter part of January.)

Prostate Cancer Screening

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to improve prostate cancer screening for men.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are no plans to introduce a national screening programme for prostate cancer. Current evidence does not suggest that any such programme would achieve a demonstrable improvement in health by increasing the length and quality of life.

The value of available techniques for the early detection of prostate cancer is kept under review. We are aware of some local research into this issue.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total of capital allocations *(a)* in total, *(b)* for education, *(c)* transport, *(d)* social services and *(e)* for other services, to each county council in Wales and in total for (i) 1979-80, (ii) 1982-83, (iii) 1985-86 and (iv) each year since 1988-89;

(2) what was the total of capital expenditure on other services for each Welsh local authority, and in total for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown between (i) county councils and (ii) district councils in Wales;

(3) what was the capital allocation for each local authority in Wales, and in total, for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(4) what was the total capital allocation for housing to each Welsh district council and in total for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Member has requested a large volume of statistical information. I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what advertising his Department has initiated of the process of schools in Wales opting out of local authority control;

(2) how much money has been spent on advertising costs of the process of schools becoming grant-maintained in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department has not been involved in any advertising campaigns in respect of grant-maintained status.

Eisteddfod

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evaluation there has been of the attraction to tourists of the annual international eisteddfod at Llangollen; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Llangollen international eisteddfod is an important annual event which benefits tourism. In 1993 the international eisteddfod achieved ticket sales of 115,600.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evaluation there has been of the attraction to tourists of the annual Urdd national eisteddfod; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Urdd eisteddfod is an important annual event which attracts upwards of 80,000 visitors each year. While most of these come from within Wales, the Urdd eisteddfod plays a significant part in attracting tourists to the particular locality that it visits each year.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evaluation there has been of the attraction to tourists of the annual national eisteddfod; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The national eisteddfod is an important annual event which attracts upwards of 135,000 visitors each year. Figures for 1993 suggest that some 5 per cent. travelled from outside Wales.

Drws-y-Nant Improvement Scheme

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when work will commence on the Drws-y-Nant area of the Bala to Dolgellau road; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 3 February 1994, *Official Report,* column 863.

Tai Cymru

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the capital expenditure of Tai Cymru and housing associations in Wales on administration in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1992-93 Housing for Wales incurred capital expenditure on administration of £98,800. Information on individual housing associations is not readily available.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the subject of reductions in the hill livestock compensatory allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Since the announcement of the 1994 HLCA rates on 30 November, nine organisations and individuals have made representations to me on this subject.

Police

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received during the last six months on the question of amalgamation of Welsh police forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: This is a matter for the Home Office, but I have received one representation from Cwmbran community council.

Hospitals

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals are currently managed by health boards in Wales; what percentage of total bed provision these hospitals represent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In Wales, 76 hospitals, 50 per cent. of total beds, are managed by health authorities, 81 hospitals, 50 per cent. of total beds, by NHS trusts. On 1 April 1994, 10 further NHS trusts will be established taking the total of NHS trust-managed hospitals to 127, 73 per cent. of total beds.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the average waiting time for appeals against valuation to be heard since the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Redwood: A figure cannot yet be given because many appeals are being cleared by the Valuation Office without a valuation tribunal hearing.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appeals there have been against council tax valuations since the council tax was introduced.

Mr. Redwood: Some 55,855 at 28 February.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many successful appeals against valuation have resulted in a change in the banding of a property since the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Redwood: Some 13,088 appeals have so far led to property banding changes.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appeals against council tax valuations are still waiting to be heard.

Mr. Redwood: At 28 February, 39,545 banding proposals awaited resolution

Further Education

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish guidelines for the development of further education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Wales wrote to the chairman of the Further Education Funding Council for Wales on 27 May 1992 to provide broad guidance on the functions of the council—on Government policies which are relevant to the exercise of those functions and on particular matters to which the council should have regard. That guidance has been supplemented by further indications of the Government's policies for the further education sector in the annual letter sent to the council notifying it of expenditure provision for the following financial year. Copies of the letters have been placed in the Library of the House.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from those involved in agriculture in Wales on the designation of sheep scab as a non-notifiable disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A number of representations have been made for the Government to impose statutory controls in respect of sheep scab. However, this is a disease which can be controlled readily by individual farmers, who are well aware of the preventive measures and procedures needed to deal with it. Most of the detailed measures on the control of sheep scab were removed in July 1992. The Government have already announced that they will complete this process, and have no other plans to require the notification of sheep scab.

South Glamorgan County Council

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his office received a copy of the report prepared by the auditors Coopers and Lybrand on the debts owed to and outstanding insurance claims of South Glamorgan county council; if he will place a copy of the report in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: This is a matter for South Glamorgan county council and its auditors. My Department has not been sent a copy of the report.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1985 there have been no official visits by Welsh Office Ministers or officials using the Malaysian airline MAS.

Agricultural Diversification

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives the Welsh Office has set up to assist diversification for those engaged in agriculture in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Farmers wishing to diversify may qualify for assistance from a number of sources. The Wales tourist board provides assistance for farm tourism developments in Wales under the provisions of section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. The Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales operate the rural conversion grant scheme which assists with the conversion of redundant buildings in rural areas with the aim of bringing them back into productive use.

Financial assistance is also available under the DRIVE scheme—development of rural initiative, venture and enterprise—which is designed to stimulate private sector activity in deprived rural areas.

Osteoporosis

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding has been made available in each of the past five years to health boards for screening of osteoporosis; how many women in Wales have been screened for osteoporosis in each of the past five years; how many clinics in health boards and trust board areas exist for the specific purpose of screening for osteoporosis; how many women have been diagnosed as suffering from osteoporosis in the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is no national population screening programme for osteoporosis, and therefore no central funding, as there is not yet evidence to show that such a programme would be effective. Health authorities are responsible for assessing need and for ensuring that suitable diagnostic services for individual women are made available.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations relating to future funding provision he has received from voluntary organisations in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have received 28 representations from voluntary organisations in Wales regarding future funding provision.

F. L. Steelcraft

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what grants were made to F. L. Steelcraft and F. L. Steelcraft Ltd. of Borth, Aberystwyth, Wales from public funds; and on what dates payments were made to these companies.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Wednesday 16 March 1994, *Official Report*, column 695.

Head Teachers, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the Federation of Clwyd Primary Headteachers to discuss the allocation of rate support grant to Clwyd county council.

Mr. Redwood: Under long-standing arrangements the formula for distributing revenue support grant is agreed with the local authority associations and ratified by the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. A meeting would not be appropriate.

Beaches (Sellafield Discharges)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the implications for his plans to encourage greater tourism in Wales of contamination of north Wales beaches from radioactive pollution discharges from Sellafield.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Details of the latest recorded levels of radioactivity on the north Wales coast can be found in the "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report", No. 38, 1992, published by the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. A copy of the report is available in the Library of the House. The report indicates that the levels of radioactivity on north Wales beaches are not significant and are well within internationally agreed limits. It is not expected that this will have a detrimental effect on the tourist industry.

Water Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his response to the publication on 17 March of the Welsh region National Rivers Authority reports on ferriginous minewater impacts in Welsh coalfields.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the press release I issued on 15 March, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Revenue Funding Figures

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each purchasing health authority in Wales, the figures for revenue funding in 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95, and the estimated figures for 1995-96 and 1996-97; and if he will identify the changes for each health authority's revenue budget resulting from the replacement of the resource allocation working party system of determining funding allocation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested in respect of the revenue funding of each purchasing authority in the period 1992-93 to 1994-95 together with projections of allocations in the years 1995-96 and 1996-97 is as follows:

Revenue allocation[1]

	1992-93	*[2]1993-94*	*[2]1994-95*	*Projected [2][3]1995-96*	*Projected [2][3]1996-97*
Clwyd	176·861	177·062	182·184	184·662	187·163
East Dyfed	107·960	108·857	111·951	112·062	112·172
Gwent	199·564	189·955	196·175	197·490	198·814
Gwynedd	105·782	109·701	114·998	115·946	116·902
Mid Glamorgan	243·622	247·241	255·927	257·231	258·544
Pembrokeshire	47·941	48·350	49·959	50·218	50·479
Powys	60·534	63·842	64·092	63·244	62·387
South Glamorgan	209·111	214·001	221·564	221·169	220·767
West Glamorgan	160·939	161·338	166·403	166·811	167·220

[1]Allocations prior to deduction of the hospital and community health element of GP Fundholder budgets.
[2]Allocations from 1992-93 onwards reflect reductions in respect of the costs of education and training when responsibility for the purchase of education and training from education providers pass to central control.
[3]Projected allocations based on latest resource planning assumption which, for planning purposes only, reflect 0·5 per cent. per annum real terms growth.

Collection and processing of cross-boundary data used for the revenue formula assessment by the resource allocation working group was discontinued when the weighted capitation formula for allocating health authority revenue funding was introduced in 1991-92. The identification of differences between notional allocations under the previous methodology and allocations made to authorities under the current methodology therefore cannot be provided other than at disproportionate cost.

Avian Piscivores

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many licence applications he has received for the killing of cormorants or goosanders to prevent serious damage to fisheries in the last year; how many have been granted; how many are still to be determined; and which river or locality is involved in each case.

Mr. Redwood: The Department has received two applications relating to the river Usk, and one each for the river Wye, the river Dovey and Llyn Cefni on Anglesey. All five applications have been rejected. Two applications for the Usk have yet to be determined.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the report on the basis for policy relating to avian piscivores which was commissioned by the National Rivers Authority and its subsequent position statement on cormorants and sawbill ducks, dated 1 March.

Mr. Redwood: The report provides a valuable contribution to the debate on the controversial issue of the effect of bird predation on freshwater fisheries, and identifies the need for further research in this field. The report has only recently been published, and interested parties will be considering its recommendations and the National Rivers Authority's position statement.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the past five years.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 22 February 1994, *Official Report*, columns *144-45*.

Specialist Appointments

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were not on waiting lists for treatment but were waiting to see a specialist in the national health service for each quarter in the last two years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Carmarthen on 15 March, *Official Report*, column *632*.

Particulate Emissions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he plans to take to reduce levels of PM10 particulate emissions from exhaust fumes in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for roads and traffic, 21 March, *Official Report*, column *100*.

Accounting Officer Directions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *417*, if he will make a statement on the circumstances which led to the final directions, the sums of public money involved, and in what ways his Department informed hon. Members and the Committee of Public Accounts of these directions.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* I understand that on both occasions urgent decisions were required in respect of the Welsh development agency's investment in the Parrot Corporation.

In 1985 Treasury approval for a £750,000 guarantee from the Welsh development agency to the Parrot Corporation was given on condition that it would be used as a facility of last resort. In October 1985 an immediate decision was required in order to ensure that refinancing negotiations which were under way at the time did not collapse and the then Secretary of State authorised the accounting officer to waive the condition.

In April 1988 another immediate decision was required and the then Secretary of State authorised the accounting officer, in the absence of Treasury authority, to approve funding of £58,500 by the WDA to enable the agency to take up its share of a rights issue in order to allow the agency to maintain its shareholding and to remove a contingent liability.

On both occasions the circumstances described were considered to fall within the provisions of paragraph 11 of the then accounting officer memorandum, that is, issues not of formal propriety or regularity but more widely of prudent and economical administration. This did not require notification to the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Department drew the circumstances to the attention of the National Audit Office in the course of a subsequent inquiry.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cocoa

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much financial assistance has been given by the Government to *(a)* the international cocoa gene bank in Trinidad, *(b)* by the CATIE cocoa gene bank in Costa Rica, *(c)* the international cocoa germplasm database at Reading, Berkshire and *(d)* the international cocoa quarantine station at Reading, Berkshire in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: MAFF has not provided financial assistance to any of those bodies. I refer the hon. Member, however, to the answer given on 21 March by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, at column *26*.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will ensure that the Forestry Commission will maintain its position in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission manages over 24,000 hectares of woodland in Yorkshire and Humberside; it expects to sell about 10 per cent. of this under the current disposals programme.

Less-favoured Area Farms

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many livestock units on average are considered necessary for a less-favoured area farm in England to be classified as a full-time commercial farm in 1964, 1973, 1979 and according to the most recent information available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Livestock units are not used as a means of classifying farm size.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many less-favoured area farms in England of fewer than eight, eight to 16, 16 to 28, 28 to 40, 40 to 60, 60 to 100, 100 to 200 and 200 livestock units and over draw more than 25 per cent., 50 per cent., 75 per cent. or the full 100 per cent. of their total income from the farm business; how many farmers in total, for each of the size brackets, have secondary employment; and how many have secondary employment which contributes over 50 per cent. of their total income.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is not available in the form requested. Some information on the incomes of farmers from both farm and non-farm sources is published in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom".

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many contracts her Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the past five years.

Mr. Jack: As far as the annual cost of consultants is concerned I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 10 February 1994 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *429-30*.

There is no central record of the numbers of contracts prior to 1990-91. For the remaining years the approximate numbers are as follows:

Financial year	Approximate number of contracts
1990-91	34
1991-92	71
1992-93	111

Avian Piscivores

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will place in the Library a copy of the advice note dated 12 October 1993, issued by her Department to the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, on the consultation procedures for the licensed killing of birds under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Soames: No. It has never been the practice to disclose internal memoranda issued within the Department.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the Government expects any maternal or horizontal transmission of BSE to have on the epidemic itself.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There is no unequivocal scientific evidence so far of the occurrence of either maternal or horizontal transmission of BSE. If either is occurring it is happening so infrequently that it is undetectable against the current background level of disease caused by contaminated feed. It is clear that although maternal transmission, if it is occurring, would increase the cumulative total of BSE cases, on its own it would be insufficient to perpetuate the epidemic under British farming conditions. The effect of horizontal transmission on the BSE epidemic would depend on the frequency and circumstances of its occurrence.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Waldegrave: We received 116 letters from hon. Members during February; 92 of these have been answered and we are in the process of responding to the remaining 24.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what evidence he has as to the effect on the quality of service to the public of market-testing and privatisation of civil service activities since November 1991.

Mr. Waldegrave: Departments estimate that quality of service will improve in over a third of activities which have been included in the competing for quality programme for 1992-93 and will be maintained in the remainder.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the evidence which led to his estimate of the savings from the market testing of civil service activities.

Mr. Waldegrave: The estimate of savings made on 4 November 1993 and published in the citizens charter second report on 16 March was based on reports made by Departments on their expectation of future performance of a service, and set against costs currently incurred.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the decision was taken to allow direct contracting out of civil service activities without an opportunity for an in-house bid to be considered.

Mr. Waldegrave: Contracting out for strategic or policy reasons has always been an option, as the White Paper, "Competing for Quality" (Cm 1730), made clear.

Government Publications

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what role he has in monitoring Government public relations, advertising, press releases and publicity for accuracy and honesty and to ensure that it is not knowingly misleading.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. Responsibility for these matters rests with the appropriate departmental Minister.

Departmental Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what property, leased or owned for the purposes of his Department, is not currently occupied.

Mr. David Davis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 18 March, *Official Report*, column *868-69*.

In addition to the information provided by Property Holdings in respect of the common user estate, the Cabinet Office also occupies property on its own departmental estate. The Cabinet Office has no departmental property which is not currently occupied. The Civil Service college, an agency of the Office of Public Service and Science, has one students accommodation block vacant, undergoing refurbishment.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office has two warehouse properties surplus to its requirement. One is currently for sale, the other is being prepared for sale.

The Central Office of Information has no property which is currently unoccupied.

Disabled People

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Waldegrave: The most recent figures are:

	Registered disabled	Percentage of total staff
Cabinet Office (including OPSS and agencies)	23·5	1·0
Her Majesty's Stationery Office	50·5	1·7
Central Office of Information	5·0	1·0

Part-time staff are counted as half units.

SCOTLAND

Maritime Borders

16. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made to the European Commission with regard to the impact of the maritime borders aspect of Interreg 2; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: We have already responded positively to the proposals in the European Commission's Green Paper to extend Interreg to include maritime boundaries. I am currently considering the more detailed proposals announced recently for an Interreg 2, and their implications for Scotland.

A90

17. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent upgrading the A90 Aberdeen to Perth road to dual carriageway in *(a)* 1980 to 1989 and *(b)* in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The sums spent since 1979 on upgrading the A90 between Perth and Aberdeen amount to £138 million. The details are as follows:

Details of sums spent on upgrading the A90

	£ million
1979-80 to 1988-89	87·5
1989-90	13·9
1990-91	8·0
1991-92	3·4
1992-93	11·1
1993-94 (to December 1993)	14·8

Forestry Commission

18. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Forestry Commission review group has now reported to Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The forestry review group submitted its report to Ministers on 28 February, and we are now considering it carefully.

Local Government Reform

19. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends next to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss his proposed local government reforms.

Mr. Lang: The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities continues to have a policy of not co-operating with the Government on local government reform. Until that policy is revoked, meetings between Ministers and COSLA on the subject are unfortunately not possible.

20. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what opinion polling he has commissioned to test the acceptability among the Scottish electorate of his proposals to re-organise local government.

Mr. Stewart: Extensive public consultation over the past two and a half years has demonstrated strong support for a single-tier structure of local government in Scotland.

Off-licences

21. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had on the proposals to allow off-licences in Scotland to open on Sunday; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Over the last year, my right hon. Friend has received 30 representations from organisations and individuals concerning off-licenses in Scotland. Seven organisations and nine individuals have expressed support for the proposal to open on Sundays while two organisations and four individuals wish the existing prohibition retained.

Smoking

22. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effects of smoking on the health of Scots.

Mr. Stewart: It is estimated that each year some 10,600 Scots die as a result of smoking and around 33,500 people are admitted to national health service hospitals in Scotland because they have an illness attributable to smoking. It is the major cause of lung cancer. It is also a major risk factor for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and other illnesses.

Monklands District Council

23. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives from Monklands district council to discuss local government employment practices.

Mr. Stewart: Monklands district council has made no request to my right hon. Friend for a meeting on the subject of local government employment practices.

Bail

24. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken to stop perceived abuse of bail in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Reducing bail abuse is a high priority for us. We have commissioned major research into bail decision making and the report of the research should be available in the next few weeks. We have also taken steps to improve statistical information on bail abuse so that we have a better understanding of both the nature and the scale of the problem.

We are considering with the Crown office, the police and the courts what further legislative and administrative action may be necessary for Scotland.

Health Care, Glasgow

25. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next be meeting the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss health care in Glasgow.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State regularly meet representatives from all health boards to discuss health provision issues. There are no immediate plans for further meetings at present.

A77

26. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of progress of discussions with Strathclyde regional council regarding the upgrading of the A77 Ayr to Glasgow route.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been able to make available to Strathclyde regional council sums totalling £28·7 million over the next three years, to enable them to proceed with the Ayr road route project. Strathclyde regional council will now be able to enter into a joint contract with the Scottish Office to undertake this project.

Local Government Reorganisation

27. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the cost of local government reorganisation.

Mr. Stewart: The transitional cost of local government reorganisation is estimated at between £120 million and £194 million for a 30 council structure. These costs will be offset by ongoing annual savings of between £16 million and £60 million. Costs will be fully recouped within three to six years.

School Buildings, Grampian

28. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received for additional capital grants for school buildings in Grampian.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the current financial year, four representations have been received from the hon. Member, and one each from my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) and from the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), concerning the need for additional capital consent allocations for school building work in Grampian region.

Electronics Industry

29. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take further steps to encourage the growth of new locally owned software and electronics firms in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Yes. The Government are actively working to put in place the infrastructure and to encourage the investment needed to ensure growth in the software and electronics sectors in Scotland.

The Scottish Office Industry Department, the Enterprise Network and educational institutions are working in partnership with industry-led bodies such as the Scottish Electronics Forum on a number of programmes which will improve competitiveness. Within that overall framework particular attention is given to the needs of new and growing businesses.

Countryside (Access)

30. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote access to the countryside.

Sir Hector Monro: The responsibility for promoting access to the countryside lies with Scottish Natural Heritage and the local authorities. The former is conducting a general review of access to the countryside and has undertaken a public consultation exercise on this. I look forward to receiving its report and recommendations in due course.

Inward Investment

31. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his plans for the encouragement of investment from north America and south-east Asia to Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: On the Government's behalf, Locate in Scotland is continually promoting Scotland as a location for inward investment. Through its field organisations in north America and south-east Asia, Locate in Scotland undertakes a continuous programme of contacts with appropriate companies in targeted industrial sectors.

Economy

32. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Cumnock, Carrick and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 23 February at column *289*.

Labour Statistics

33. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many men were in full-time jobs in Scotland in 1979; and how many there are in such jobs at the present time.

Mr. Stewart: Information on male full-time employment is not available for 1979. The total number of male employees, in December 1979, was 1,196,900. In December 1993, the latest date for which information is available, there were 982,900 male employees, of whom 882,100 were full-time.

Community Care

34. **Ms Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of community care arrangements in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Considerable progress has been made in developing procedures to ensure that the needs of vulnerable people and their carers are identified and that assistance is arranged where appropriate taking account of the choice of the individual. Local authorities, health boards and housing agencies were working together in all areas to deliver the objectives of the policy.

Steel Industry

35. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the steel industry.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about the steel industry over the past few years. Most of these have concerned the closure of the Ravenscraig steel plant in 1992.

Inshore Fishing Fleet

36. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to provide further assistance to the Scottish inshore fishing fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The fishing industry in Scotland benefits from a range of public support, including financial support from the European Union. Consideration is being given to future arrangements for such support, by preparation of a United Kingdom sectoral plan for fisheries.

Secondary Schools

37. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many secondary pupils are currently being educated in *(a)* comprehensive schools, *(b)* independent schools, *(c)* special schools and *(d)* other schools; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provisional information on the numbers of secondary pupils in Scotland at September 1993 is given in the table. All education authority and grant-aided secondary schools in Scotland are non-selective.

	Numbers
Education authority and grant-aided secondary schools	311,898
Independent schools	19,979
Education authority and grant-aided special schools and departments (pupils aged 12 and over)	4,450
TOTAL	334,450

Health Service

38. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairmen of the health boards in Scotland to discuss the health service in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State met health board chairmen on 25 February 1994.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average cost of each appeal against council tax evaluations in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available centrally.

Renewables Obligation

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many projects bidding for support under the Scottish renewables obligation came under each of the five technology bands specified in the SRO order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I understand that the Office of Electricity Regulation has received 190 applications across all types of renewable energy technology expected to be supported under the Scottish renewables obligation. Further information about these applications is a commercially confidential matter for the Office of Electricity Regulation.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he will apply to projects which pass the technical and economic appraisals, in determining which ones will be awarded contracts under the Scottish renewables obligation order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: This is a matter for the two Scottish public electricity suppliers on which the obligation will be placed by the order which I expect to make in the autumn. However, I understand that they expect to contract with the projects offering the cheapest price per unit of electricity generated to the required level of capacity in each technology band as defined in the order.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: My Department has commissioned a total of 339 consultancy assignments since the start of the 1989-90 financial year. The total cost in each of the last five years was given in my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 21 February 1994, at columns *51-52*.

Ferry Services

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to set targets for Caledonian MacBrayne for 1994-95.

Mr. Lang: I have decided to set the following targets for Caledonian MacBrayne for the year 1994-95. The company will be required to achieve as a financial target that fares income should meet at least 60 per cent. of operating costs including depreciation charged on a replacement cost basis and provision for an 8 per cent. foregone rate of return on capital. As an efficiency target, the company will be asked not to exceed a maximum unit cost of £0·86 million per passenger car unit capacity kilometre. As a quality of service target the company will be asked to achieve a figure of 96·5 per cent. of sailings arriving on time, excluding sailings which are delayed or cancelled for safety reasons, for example, adverse weather conditions. I consider that the setting of these targets will provide a clear framework for the operation of the company in 1994-95, consistent with the objectives of securing continued improvement in operational efficiency and standards of service.

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for shipping subsidies for sea transport services in the Highlands and Islands in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Subject to parliamentary approval of the estimates, I propose to make available in 1994-95 total subsidy provision of £15·673 million. The deficit subsidy for Caledonian MacBrayne will be £5·742 million. For services to Orkney and Shetland, tariff rebate subsidies of up to £8·557 million will be made available. Up to £1·374 million will be available for other coastal shippers operating on the West Coast of Scotland.

The level of provision proposed for Caledonian MacBrayne for 1994-95 reflects a reduced requirement for revenue deficit subsidy from the 1993-94 level, following the introduction of new financial arrangements for the company and an expected improvement in trading performance and operational efficiency. Capital grants of up to £7·3 million will also be made available to the company in 1994-95 for expenditure on the new vessel currently under construction for the Ullapool-Stornoway route.

The increased level of financial support for services to Orkney and Shetland which I made available in 1993-94 is maintained.

Prisoners (Christmas Leave)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he uses when deciding which prisoners may be granted Christmas leave; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its Chief Executive Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 23 March 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question on the criteria he uses when deciding which prisoners are to be granted Christmas leave.

Prisoners and Young Offenders who have been allocated Security Category D, the lowest category, and are detained at open establishments or Training for Freedom Hostels attached to prisons are eligible for consideration for Christmas leave. Decisions on individual cases are a matter for Governors of each establishment who take into account the following:

1. The nature of the offence.
2. The prisoner's attitude to the offence.
3. The prisoner's conduct and industry during the preceding 6 months.
4. The home conditions and stability of the prisoner's relationship with his family.
5. The views and likely effect on known victims and the community.

Egg Consumption

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the figures for egg consumption in Scotland for each year since 1988.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 March 1994]:* Estimates of household consumption of eggs are provided by the national food survey. The estimates exclude eggs used in manufacturing or catering and institutions.

Number per person per week

	Per cent.
1988	3·62
1989	2·82
1990	2·61
1991	2·17
1992	2·28

Poultry

Mr. Martin Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many poultry birds were slaughtered in each year since 1988 in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 March 1994]:* Estimates of the number of poultry slaughtered in Scotland each year are:

	Thousands
1988	68,002
1989	66,056
1990	68,258
1991	67,301
1992	70,208
1993	77,899

Freight

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all instances where a freight flow has been transferred from road to rail transport in Scotland during the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* The information requested is not available centrally.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give details of all awards made by his Department under the freight facilities grant scheme over the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give details of the total amount spent by his Department on awards under the freight facilities grant scheme over the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will give details of the number of applications for awards under the freight facilities grant scheme that have been rejected over the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* The Scottish Office has made awards to four new projects totalling £3,455,034 under the freight facilities grant scheme since March 1984. The details of the projects are as follows:

Company	*Location*	*Facilities*
Deanside Transit Ltd.	Hillington, Glasgow	Warehousing and bulk handling facilities
John G. Russell	Gartcosh, Glasgow	Coal containers and handling equipment
British Alcan	Fort William	Rail facilities and averages for the handling of alumina
Caledonian Paper plc	Irvine	Siding, track and handling facilties for timber and china clay

Over the past 10 years a total of £3,627,704 has been paid out under the FFG scheme. This includes the awards of to the four projects detailed and the balance of awards made prior to 1984. During this period three applications, which did not meet the schemes' criteria for eligibility, have been rejected.

The Government recognise that the carriage of freight by rail usually offers environmental advantages over other transport modes, and it is our policy that freight should use rail wherever it makes good economic sense to do so. To give rail a competitive edge the Government are enhancing the freight facilities grant scheme from 1 April 1994. These enhancements include the extension of the areas of capital expenditure which may be eligible for grant, and the simplification and improvement of procedures for applicants. We hope that the revisions will lead to renewed interest in the scheme in Scotland.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Incapacity Certificates

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security under which Act of Parliament or regulation a person against whom a certificate of permanent incapacity is issued is refused access to the reason for the granting of such a certificate.

Mr. Scott: The legislation governing the issue of medical evidence of incapacity for work by general practitioners to people claiming social security benefits is contained in the Social Security (Medical Evidence) Regulations 1976.

Self-employed Persons

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate, on the same basis as the answer given on 3 November 1983, *Official Report*, column *452*, to the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), on self-employed persons, what would be the class 2 national insurance constribution necessary to meet the cost of extending unemployment benefit to self-employed people.

Mr. Hague: If title to unemployment benefit were to be extended to the self-employed, the class 2 contribution rate for 1994-95 would have to rise to £7·75, an increase of £2·10 over the proposed rate of £5·65 a week.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reasons Mrs. Netta Black of Ardoch crescent, Stevenson, Ayrshire received a request from the Child Support Agency that her late husband pay for the upkeep of his daughter.

Mr. Scott: Owing to a clerical error, the Child Support Agency wrote to Mrs. Black on 17 February 1994. An apology was made to her on 7 March and the case was closed. There has been no further contact between the agency and Mrs. Black.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list to-date the number of letters his Department's Child Support Agency has sent apologising to widows for inadvertently sending letters to them demanding money from their late husbands to pay for the upkeep of their children; and how many apologies are still on file waiting to be sent.

Mr. Scott: The Child Support Agency does not maintain statistics of such cases.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the reasons for a letter from the Child Support Agency being sent to Miss Hayley Lidster of Godlys, Mid Glamorgan concerning child support.

Mr. Scott: A letter from the Child Support Agency to a client with a similar name was delivered in error to Miss Lidster. The agency subsequently sent letters of apology to both the people involved.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases pursued by the Child Support Agency have resulted in the payment of maintenance to the parent with care in *(a)* Newham and *(b)* Great Britain.

Mr. Scott: Figures are not available for the number of maintenance assessments made in Newham. National figures were given by Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency in her reply to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) on 4 March, *Official Report*, column *38*.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parents previously in receipt of benefits have had their income raised above entitlement to benefit as a result of a maintenance assessment by the Child Support Agency in *(a)* Newham and *(b)* Great Britain.

Mr. Scott: Information is not collected separately for Newham. National figures are being collected but are not yet available.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parents in receipt of benefits have had their benefit reduced due to their failure to provide the Child Support Agency with the required information about the absent parent in *(a)* the London borough of Newham and *(b)* Great Britain.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency resulting in the assessment of a minimum award this assessment has not been pursued because the absent parent is exempt from payment.

Mr. Scott: Such information is not collected.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision the Child Support Agency has for the use of interpreters during CSA interviews where one or both parents does not have English as a first language; and in how many instances interpreters have been used.

Mr. Scott: Child Support Agency local offices are co-located with Benefits Agency offices. There is an inter-agency agreement which provides for CSA clients to have the same access to interpreters during interviews as BA customers. BA policy is to provide a linguistic service to customers for whom English is not their first language. Guidance, including a code of practice, has been issued to all district managers. The service may be provided by BA interpreters, BA bilingual staff, community interpreters or other commercial interpreters. No records are kept to show in how many instances interpreters have been used.

National Insurance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the combined rate of employer/employee national insurance contributions necessary to achieve balance in the national insurance fund in 1994-95.

Mr. Hague: It is estimated[1] that a treasury grant equivalent to 16 per cent. of expected benefit expenditure will be needed to balance the national insurance fund in 1994-95[2]. If the grant was not available a combined employer/employee contribution rate of between 23·2 and 23·9 per cent.[3] would be needed to raise the same level of income.

[1] Estimates are based on the November 1993 FSBR assumptions.

[2] The Government Actuary recommends planning for an end year balance equivalent to 2 months' benefit expenditure.

[3] The contribution percentages vary according to whether there was an increase in the main primary or main secondary percentage rate, or a combination of both.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing how many claimants of invalidity benefit had the cases reviewed between 1 April 1993 and 1 October 1993; and in each year prviously to 1990; what number of such cases for each period had either *(a)* a reduction or *(b)* a withdrawal of invalidity benefit; and how many new claims of invalidity benefit were accepted for each period.

Mr. Scott: Detailed information about adjudication officers' decisions which review entitlement to invalidity benefit is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. We estimate that between 1 April 1993 and 30 September 1993, across all benefits for incapacity[1], some 35,000 disallowances[2] were made on the ground that the claimant was not incapable for work. Estimates for earlier years are not available. Available information about new spells of invalidity benefit entitlement is in the table.

[1] Sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance, and people claiming these benefits but receiving only national insurance credits with or without income support.

[2] Based on a 5 per cent. sample of cases referred to the Benefits Agency Medical Service, rounded to the nearest thousand.

Spells of invalidity benefit entitlement commencing

Period	*Number*
2 April 1990 to 30 March 1991	288,000
1 April 1991 to 4 April 1992	323,000

Note: Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of existing recipients of invalidity benefit in *(a)* London and *(b)* Lewisham who will be disqualified under the new capacity test.

Mr. Scott: Numbers cannot be reliably estimated at this stage, but our current estimate is that around 200,000 of the people who initially transfer to incapacity benefit from invalidity benefit may fail to satisfy the test within the first two years. This estimate cannot be broken down by district.

Some of these people would have been excluded from benefit by existing medical controls but will be excluded at an earlier stage by the new medical test. Around 100,000 people a year are found capable of their own or an alternative occupation by the existing medical controls. This includes people claiming sickness benefit, severe disablement allowance and income support because of incapacity for work, as well as invalidity benefit.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people in receipt of invalidity benefit in *(a)* London and *(b)* Lewisham for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 22 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about Invalidity Benefit (IVB) recipients in London and Lewisham.

The information is not available in the format requested. This is because Benefits Agency (BA) district boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries.

The Agency's Lewisham and Brixton District is not only responsible for Lewisham postal addresses but also for some adjacent areas. Information about those customers resident in the Lewisham postal area could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. I have, therefore, provided at Appendix 1 the number of people claiming IVB in the Lewisham and Brixton District.

Information relating to the numbers of IVB customers is collected by each District. However, separate statistics for IVB

customers were not maintained by Districts until May 1991. I am, therefore, only able to provide information for the Lewisham and Brixton District from that date.

In addition, the figures include some customers who have claimed but are not actually receiving IVB. This is because there are circumstances in which although there is an underlying entitlement to IVB, because a higher overlapping benefit is in payment no IVB is actually paid. The figures were obtained from a 100 per cent. clerical count of cases in the District Office.

BA District generally comprise of a District Office and one or more Branch Offices. Although a number of BA Districts deal only with London postal addresses, others consist of offices both inside and outside the London postal area. I am, therefore, unable to provide the information in the exact format requested.

However, I have provided at Appendix 2 a table showing the number of customers in receipt of IVB in respect of the former Greater London Council geographical area. These figures are based on a 1 per cent. sample of customers. The figure given for 4 April 1992 is the latest date for which figures are available.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix 1

Number of IVB customers in the Lewisham and Brixton district

Year and month	*Total*
1991	
May	5,058
June	5,047
July	4,937
August	4,411
September	5,103
October	5,014
November	4,864
December	4,905
1992	
January	5,043
February	5,090
March	5,041
April	5,177
May	5,151
June	5,341
July	5,608
August	5,569
September	5,717
October	5,911
November	5,824
December	6,017
1993	
January	6,092
February	6,179
March	6,035
April	6,166
May	6,165
June	6,131
July	6,192
August	6,345
September	6,510
October	6,544
November	6,272
December	6,628
1994	
January	6,705
February	6,415

Appendix 2

Number of IVB recipients in the former greater London council area

Date	*Number of recipients*
2 April 1983	54,000
31 March 1984	57,000
30 March 1985	61,000
5 April 1986	64,000
4 April 1987	67,000
2 April 1988	73,000
1 April 1989	77,000
31 March 1990	84,000
30 March 1991	97,000
4 April 1992	109,000

Social Fund

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the 1994-95 gross budget for the discretionary parts of the social fund will be.

Mr. Scott: The social fund gross discretionary budget for 1994-95 will be £353 million. Some £97 million will be allocated to grants, £255 million to loans and £1 million will be held as a contingency reserve. The new allocations represent an overall increase of £7 million over the gross budget set at April 1993.

Details of individual district budget allocations have been placed in the Library.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

	Number of Contracts	*Cost (£ million)*
1988-89	746	49·5
1989-90	683	43·3
1990-91	952	83·2
1991-92	933	69·7
1992-93	1,025	100·9

Domestic Fuel (VAT)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what calculations he has made of *(a)* the amount that value added tax at 8 per cent. on fuel will add to the cost of each unit of electricity consumed and *(b)* the number of units on which 50p will pay the additional VAT.

Sir John Cope: I have been asked to reply.

The answers would depend on the particular electricity company, and factors such as whether standard tariff or economy 7 tariff is used.

The Government have made available a substantial package of help, which will cost up to £1,250 million a year from April 1996 onwards.

Pensioners and disabled people are likely to find, on average, that this extra help from the Government will broadly cover all changes in the price of fuel, including VAT, over the course of this Parliament.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

The Solicitor-General: The information is set out in the table.

Department	1989-90 £		1990-91 £		1991-92 £		1992-93 £		1993-94 £	
Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers	—		—		—		—		—	
Crown Prosecution Service	620k	(7)	477k	(7)	471k	(12)	560k	(24)	[1]539k	(33)
Serious Fraud Office	270k	(3)	171k	(4)	88k	(2)	112k	(9)	[1]126k	(5)
Treasury Solicitor's Department	[2]5·0k	(2)	Not Known		54k	(6)	335k	(8)	428k	(14)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent the number of contracts that year.
[1] Figure not yet complete.
[2] Approximate figure.

DEFENCE

Asbestos

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the outcome of his Department's case against Shipbreaking Industries Ltd. regarding asbestos pollution; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department's case against Shipbreaking Industries Ltd. regarding asbestos pollution was rejected by the court in January 1993. The recently reported out of court settlement between my Department and Shipbreaking Industries Ltd. related to a dilapidations claim and not asbestos pollution.

Malaysia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of the arms purchases by Malaysia from Britain following the agreement reached by the then Secretary of State for Defence, the former right hon. Member for Ayr, with the Malaysian Government in 1988.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 21 February, *Official Report,* columns *69-70.*

Nuclear Warheads (Transport)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if police chief constables are informed of the movement of nuclear warheads through their area of jurisdiction.

Mr. Hanley: Civil police forces are always notified at least 24 hours in advance of nuclear weapon convoy movements through their area of jurisdiction.

Common New Generation Frigate

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to ensure that all naval ship yards have the opportunity to submit tenders to build the common new generation frigate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Following competition, GEC with a consortium of BAe defence systems and services division and others have been selected as the United Kingdom member for the Franco/British/Italian joint venture company to design and build the three first of class ships, one for each participating nation. All United Kingdom shipyards with the capability will be offered the opportunity to compete for the build of follow-on ships of this class and, in order to assist them, we are seeking arrangements for them to be provided with progressive and timely access to design information.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the current progress of the Anglo-French-Italian common new generation frigate programme.

Mr. Aitken: Good progress continues to be made on Project Horizon, the common new generation frigate. We continue to seek a collaborative way forward for the anti-air warfare system for the ship. Following a competition, GEC with a consortium of BAe defence systems and services division and others have been selected as the United Kingdom member for the international joint venture company which will design and build the three first of class ships, one for each participating nation. We still intend to contract two competing international consortia to conduct competitive project definition for the frigate's combat management system later this year.

Conversion Units

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on future developments for *(a)* the Tornado operational conversion unit, *(b)* the Jaguar operational conversion unit at RAF Lossiemouth and *(c)* the operational conversion unit for Nimrods based at RAF Kinloss.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans to change the location or role of the Tornado, Jaguar and Nimrod operational conversion units.

Nuclear Weapons Co-operation (France)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards nuclear weapons co-operation with France following the recent publication by the French Government of a white paper on defence.

Mr. Aitken: We are already engaged in a very constructive dialogue with France on defence nuclear matters, and we welcome the French Government's commitment, as expressed in their recent white paper, to deepening these important exchanges.

Asia '94 Exhibition

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice he has given to United Kingdom defence manufacturers intending to visit the DSA '94 exhibition in Kuala Lumpur.

Mr. Aitken: The Defence Export Services Organisation has advised companies and the Defence Manufacturers Association that normal trade promotion with Malaysia should continue.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the past five years.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) on 31 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *551*.

Defence Costs Study

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, columns *342-43*, how many progress reports have been produced by the defence costs study teams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have seen a total of 43 such reports to date.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether there will be any change to front-line capabilities resulting from the defence costs study; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what criteria will be used to assess the impact of the defence costs study on front-line capabilities; and if he will make a statement;

(3) which MoD personnel will be involved in assessing the impact of the defence costs study on front-line capabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The aim of the defence costs study is to safeguard our front-line operational capability. All proposals emerging from the study will be assessed with this criteria in mind, drawing on the advice of the appropriate personnel, in the MOD and the services.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what detailed proposals to make radical changes in procurement policies and practices have been considered as part of the defence costs study; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what detailed proposals to achieve reductions in the costs of his Departments' estate and property have been considered as part of the defence costs study; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what detailed proposals for reducing the costs of third and fourth-line repair have been considered as part of the defence costs study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Separate study teams have been established to examine each of these areas in detail. They have yet to report, but are considering a range of proposals relevant to their respective remits. Decisions on their final recommendations will be announced in due course.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made as to whether it is possible to achieve a significant reduction in the costs associated with spares, procurement and stock holding without having any impact on front-line capabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We shall make an assessment of this when we have received the final reports from the relevant defence costs study teams.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to include examination of *(a)* Army support infrastructure, and *(b)* Air Force support infrastructure as part of the defence costs study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Both areas are being examined within the scope of existing studies.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the review of the programme for market testing and contracting out has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Work is continuing in this area as part of the defence costs study.

Repairs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sections of *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Navy and *(c)* the Air Force are responsible for (i) third-line repairs and (ii) fourth-line repairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for third and fourth-line repairs within the services lies with the following:

(a) The Chief of Fleet Support is responsible overall within the Navy. Third line—generally docking and essential defect work—ship repair work is normally undertaken by the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation at Portsmouth, the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth, or sub-contractors. Fourth-line ship repair—refit work—is carried out by the royal dockyards or by the equipment manufacturers.

CFS is also responsible on a tri-service basis for third and fourth-line repair work undertaken on helicopters either by the Department's own workshops or in industry. Work is also undertaken on equipment such as vehicles and armaments either within the Department's own workshops, third line, or by industry, fourth line.

(b) The director general of equipment support, Army, is responsible for advising on the allocation of work, normally through the Army Base Repair Organisation, a Defence agency which provides third and fourth-line support to the Army both through its own engineering workshops and through industry.

(c) The director general of support management, RAF, is responsible for the allocation of work, and the raising of requisitions for contracts with industry.

Third-line repair work is carried out by the Maintenance Group Defence Agency, whose chief executive is the AOC maintenance units, headquarters RAF support command. Fouth-line repair work is carried out by industry.

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the current funding situation for British military participation in UN operations in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In accordance with long-established inter-departmental arrangements, the MOD recovers the cost of United Kingdom participation for peacekeeping

operations in the former Yugoslavia from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The cost of military participation in UN operations in the former Yugoslavia is currently estimated at £81,000,000 for financial year 1993-94. This expenditure is partly offset by reimbursement from the United Nations which so far total £18,100,000 in 1993-94.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 24 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will extend legal aid to those wishing to present appeals to *(a)* the employment appeals tribunal and *(b)* employment tribunals.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Civil legal aid is already available, subject to the normal means and merits tests, for those appearing before the employment appeals tribunal. There are no plans to extend civil legal aid to industrial tribunals. However, legal advice and assistance under the green form scheme is available to those who are financially eligible.

Mr. Justice Wood

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the basis of the Lord Chancellor's professional differences with Mr. Justice Wood.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No. It would not be right for me to comment on the relationship of the Lord Chancellor, as head of the judiciary, and any judicial officer.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who is the press spokeswoman who advised the press of the Lord Chancellor's views about Mr. Justice Wood's stewardship of employment appeal tribunal applications; and what was the basis on which this was done.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's head of information advised those members of the press who approached her concerning Sir John Wood's stewardship of the employment appeals tribunal. In each case, she was asked to comment on correspondence between the Lord Chancellor and Sir John in 1993 in which the Lord Chancellor had drawn Sir John's attention to the rule 3 procedure by which the EAT was able to deal with the mounting backlog of cases in the employment appeals tribunal.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what reason was given by Mr. Justice Wood for his retirement as president of the employment appeals tribunal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am not aware of the reason for Mr. Justice Wood's retirement.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what occasion and by what method the Lord Chancellor asked Mr. Justice Wood to reconsider his decision to permit appellants to the employment appeals tribunal the facility of advancing their cases at preliminary hearings; what were his reasons for doing so; and what response was made.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am not in a position to comment on private communications between the Lord Chancellor and judges.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representation he has received from *(a)* Lord Justice Purchas, *(b)* other judges and *(c)* the judge's representative body about his relationship with Mr. Justice Wood, prior to the latter's retirement as president of the employment appeals tribunal; and what action he has taken.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Judges

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on his powers and his practice in discussing with judges their stewardship of cases in relation to cost, conduct and the legal principles involved.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No; I have no such powers.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what guidance he gives to judges about dismissing employment appeals on the basis of written submissions only.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None; the procedure is prescribed in the statutory rules.

Land Registry

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what changes he proposes to make to Her Majesty's Land Registry trading fund's external financing limit for 1993-94.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The external financing limit for 1993-94 for Her Majesty's Land Registry trading fund will be reduced from £0 million to minus £29 million. This results from increases in fee income, efficiency and lower capital expenditure.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the 12-month period 1 March 1993 to 28 February 1994 13 parliamentary questions to my Department were referred to one or other of the Department's agencies for answer. This figure represents 1·79 per cent. of the total number of parliamentary questions to my Department for answer in the same period.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of

Procedure for Ministers". I also seek to comply with the Madam Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers to oral questions.

Child Witnesses

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures are being taken by courts in Wales to protect child witnesses with particular reference to the use of screens, television link equipment and pre-recorded interviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In Wales, TV links and video playback equipment are in place at the following crown court centres; Caernarfon, Cardiff, Mold, Newport, and Swansea. Arrangements can be made for screens to be available at all Crown court centres and county courts in Wales if required. All magistrates courts in Wales have access to screens and video playback equipment, and may use the TV links in place at Crown court centres.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which courts in Wales have child liasion officers to protect child witnesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is a designated child liaison officer for every crown court centre, including the following in Wales: Caernarfon; Cardiff; Carmarthen; Dolgellau; Haverfordwest; Merthyr Tydfil; Mold; Newport; Swansea, and Welshpool.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by the Lord Chancellor and by him in February.

Mr. John M. Taylor: During the month of February 1994 the total number of letters received and dispatched to hon. Members by the Lord Chancellor and myself was as follows:

	Number
Total received	748
Total dispatched	423

PRIME MINISTER

Education Standards, Barnet

Q10. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit the London borough of Barnet to discuss education standards.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so, but I am aware of the improved GCSE results in all the secondary schools in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Seals

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *414*, how the embassy in Moscow raises the issue of seal pup slaughter in Russia; and what action will be taken to raise the matter of the killing of seals on the shores of the Caspian sea.

The Prime Minister: The embassy in Moscow continues to raise the subject of public concern over seal hunting with the Russians during meetings with appropriate officials. The issue was most recently discussed with the chairman of the sub-committee on science in the Russian Parliament. The embassy is also seeking an early opportunity to raise the subject of hunting in the Caspian sea with officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column 148, what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with water pump and water filter manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies about supplies of medicines and equipment to authorities in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The Prime Minister: None. Our substantial aid to Iraq is organised through the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations, not through manufacturers directly.

Mr. Justice Wood

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from *(a)* individual judges and *(b)* the judge's representative body about the Lord Chancellor's relationship with Mr. Justice Wood, prior to the latter's retirement as president of the employment appeals tribunal; and what action he will take.

The Prime Minister: None.

Security and Intelligence Agencies

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Prime Minister what provision is being sought in the 1994-95 supply estimates for the security and intelligence agencies.

The Prime Minister: The 1994-95 supply estimate for class XIX, vote 2 "Cabinet Office: security and intelligence services", published today, fulfils the commitment I gave on 24 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *52*, to bring together the aggregate expenditure of the security and intelligence services into a single vote.

Total provision sought for 1994-95 is £881·486 million, around 8 per cent. below forecast outturn for 1993-94. Provision for these services is planned to decline by around a further 5 per cent. in cash terms by 1996-97.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total numbers of prisoners in custody in England and Wales, on *(a)* 1 June 1979, *(b)* 1 June 1983, *(c)* 1 June 1987 and *(d)* 1 April 1992, and on the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 24 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what were the total number of prisoners in custody in England and Wales, on (a) 1st June 1979, (b) 1st June 1983, (c) 1st June 1987 and (d) 1st April 1992, and on the latest date for which figures are available.

The readily available information for the historical prison population is for the last day of each month. It is given in the attached table for the day preceding the date requested and for Tuesday 22 March 1994.

Prison population in England and Wales: 1979-94

Date	*Number of persons*[1]
31 May 1979	42,369
31 May 1983	43,473
31 May 1987	49,255
31 March 1992	47,746
22 March 1994	48,378

[1]Includes prisoners held in police cells.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total numbers of prisoners in custody in England and Wales on the first day of each month from May 1992 until the latest month for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 24 March 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what were the total numbers of prisoners in custody in England and Wales, on the first day of each month from May 1992 until the latest month for which figures are available.

The readily available information for the historical prison population is for the last day of each month. It is given in the attached table for the day preceding the date requested and for Tuesday 22 March 1994.

Prison population including those held in police cells, England and Wales, April 1992—March 1994

Last day of each month	*Total population*
1992	
April	47,738
May	46,696
June	46,832
July	46,875
August	46,350
September	45,835
October	43,905
November	43,064
December	40,606
1993	
January	41,561
February	42,882
March	43,195
April	43,391
May	43,585
June	44,246
July	44,830
August	45,633
September	46,211
October	46,886
November	47,153
December	45,214
1994	
January	46,902
February	47,945
22 March	48,378

Campsfield Detention Centre

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visits have been made to the Campsfield detention centre by officials of his Department since 18 February; and what was discussed with the management of the centre.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is a permanent team of seven Immigration Service staff at the Campsfield House detention centre responsible for local operational matters and monitoring the performance of the managing contractor, Group 4 Total Security Ltd. The team is supplemented if necessary. In addition, since 18 February 1994, weekly visits have been made to Campsfield House by senior Immigration Service officials to consider with Group 4 Total Security Ltd. all aspects of domestic and operational management of the centre.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many detainees have been moved from Campsfield detention centre since 18 February; and how many of them have been *(a)* released, *(b)* moved to other detention centres and *(c)* moved to prison.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since 18 February a total of 82 detainees have been moved from the Campsfield House immigration detention centre.

Of these, 26 have been given temporary admission to the United Kingdom, 10 have been transferred to other immigration detention centres and 11 to prisons. The remaining 35 were removed from the United Kingdom.

Immigration Detainees

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training is given to Group 4 staff in the care and welfare of immigration detainees.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All Group 4 Total Security Ltd. staff employed under contract to provide detention management services receive a minimum of 15 days' initial training on all aspects of health and safety, race relations, domestic management and the duty of care

towards immigration detainees. A refresher course is provided after one year's service and at yearly intervals thereafter.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigration detainees were on hunger strike on 18 March; and how many in each centre were involved in this form of protest.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of immigration detainees refusing meals on 18 March 1994 were as follows:

Location	*Number*
Campsfield House detention centre	82
Haslar holding centre	37
Harmondsworth detention centre	16
HMP Canterbury	18
HMP High Down	6
HMP Birmingham	3
HMP Blakenhurst	3
HMP Bullingdon	2
HMP Pentonville	2
Total	169

Royal Family (Car Parking)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidance to chief constables that police officers should not work on car parking supervision duties for members of the royal family except in cases dealing with security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No. Chief officers are well able to deal with these matters sensibly without the need for central guidance.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* spouses and *(b)* children have been allowed to enter the United Kingdom since he announced that couples who had been separated for five years and couples with children could apply for their cases to be reviewed; how many cases are currently awaiting decision; if he will reduce the current limits to cases being reviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the changes to the operation of the primary purpose rule in June 1992.

Information on total acceptances for settlement of spouses and children in the 12 months ending 30 June 1993 is published in table 3 of the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 33-93 "Control of Immigration: Statistics —First and Second Quarters 1993". It is planned to publish information for the second half of 1993 around the end of April.

The available information on cases awaiting a decision is for entry clearance applications in the Indian sub-continent. Information on such applications by spouses and children outstanding at 31 December 1992 is published in table 2.3 of Home Office command paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1992" (Cm 2368). Summary information on such applications outstanding at 30 June 1993 is published in tables 8 and 9 of the bulletin. Corresponding information in respect of entry clearance applications outside the Indian sub-continent, or of applications made after entry, is not separately identified in available statistics.

We have no plans for further changes to the operation of the primary purpose rule.

Copies of the publications are in the Library.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a citizens charter applying to those who are subject to immigration control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A number of steps have already been taken to carry through the principles of the citizens charter in the immigration field, including the publication of the Immigration Service (ports) operating plan. The programme is founded on delivering a high quality public service which maintains firm controls on immigration.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, to the latest available date, the numbers in all queues who have applied to all British posts on the Indian sub-continent; what is the current average waiting time in each queue; and if he will list the comparable figures for the same period a year ago.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the following table.

Number of persons awaiting first interview and waiting times (in months) to first interview[2] in the settlement queues in the Indian sub-continent, as at 31 December 1992 and 1993.

Queue[1]	*31 December 1992*		*31 December 1993*	
	Number awaiting first interview	*Waiting time to first interview (months)*	*Number awaiting first interview*	*Waiting time to first interview (months)*
Bangladesh (Dhaka)				
Queue 1	522	3	[3]—	[3]—
Queue 2	1,830	6	[3]—	[3]—
Queue 3	252	7	[3]—	[3]—
Queue 4	293	9	[3]—	[3]—
India (Bombay)				
Queue 1	—	—	—	—
Queue 2	124	4	90	4
Queue 3	351	7	304	7
Queue 4	239	10	268	10
India (New Delhi)				
Queue 1	—	—	1	—
Queue 2	298	3	305	3

Queue[2]	31 December 1992 Number awaiting first interview	31 December 1992 Waiting time to first interview (months)	31 December 1993 Number awaiting first interview	31 December 1993 Waiting time to first interview (months)
Queue 3	246	7	207	8
Queue 4	117	10	109	10
India (Madras)[4]				
Queue 1-4	21	0·5	28	2
India (Calcutta)				
Queue 1-4	—	—	—	—
Pakistan (Islamabad)				
Queue 1	45	3	82	3
Queue 2	844	3	1,257	3
Queue 3	224	6	241	6
Queue 4	901	9	763	9
Pakistan (Karachi)				
Queue 1-4	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

[1]No queuing system is in operation in Karachi as all applicants are contacted by letter requesting specific details before a decision is reached.
[2]The number of months which the last applicant interviewed had waited for his/her first interview.
First-time settlement applicants:
[3] Queue 1: persons with a claim to the right of abode.
dependant relatives over 70 years old.
special compassionate cases.
Queue 2: Spouses.
Queue 3: Fiance(e)s.
other applicants for settlement.
Queue 4: re-applicants.
[4]All applicants seeking settlement are placed in the same queue.
[5]Figures for Dhaka at 31 December 1993 are not yet available. Waiting times at 30 June was published in table 10 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Issue 33/93, *Control of Immigration: Statistics—First and Second Quarters 1993".*

Chelmsford Prison (Drugs)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many incidents of drug abuse were discovered in Chelmsford prison in each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the different types of drugs that have been found in Chelmsford prison in each year since 1990;

(3) how many visitors to Chelmsford prison have been found to be in possession of illegal drugs while visiting Chelmsford prison each year since 1990; and what subsequent action was taken against them;

(4) how often cells and other parts of Chelmsford prison are searched for drugs by staff and sniffer dogs; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what action is being taken to seek to reduce the incidence of drug abuse within Chelmsford prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Simon Burns, dated 24 March 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your five recent Questions about drugs at Chelmsford prison.

The number of unauthorised drug finds at Chelmsford, including materials used in connection with such drugs in each of the years since 1990 was 64, 61, 68, 66 respectively. So far this year there have been seven finds.

Details of the type of drugs found at Chelmsford were not recorded before 1991. Since then 156 finds have involved cannabis, five of cocaine, five of heroin and one each of mescaline, opium, LSD and amphetamine. There were seven finds in which the drugs were either unprescribed medication or discovered in the visits area and not tested.

Records of visitors to Chelmsford found in possession of controlled drugs were not kept before 1993. Since then 14 visitors were arrested by the Police and one was warned by staff. Details of the action subsequently taken by the police or courts are not readily available.

An average of 130 cells containing approximately 190 inmates, and all other areas such as workshops, are routinely searched every month. In addition special searches are carried out when it is suspected that a prisoner may be in possession of drugs. Searches using dogs were carried out in 1990, 1991 and 1993.

An x-ray machine was installed in 1993 to examine visitors baggage. The Police are called if anyone is found attempting to bring drugs into the prison. It is open to the Governor to then require that visits to the prisoner concerned will be restricted and allowed only under closely supervised conditions. He may also exclude such visitors from visiting the prison.

Any inmate with a drug addiction problem is offered a seven day detoxification programme and counselling by trained Health Care Staff, on being received at the prison. Counsellors from the National Children's Society run a "Drugwatch" group three times a week for an average of six inmates and appropriate treatment is offered by the Medical Officer.

Reducing drug misuse is one of the Prison Service's top priorities. We shall reduce the opportunities for prisoners to obtain drugs by improving detection. The use of x-ray machines has already helped and greater use of information has enabled resources to be targeted on potential offenders. The new clause being introduced in the Criminal Justice Bill will allow prisoners to be tested for drugs. We also aim to reduce the demand for drugs in prisons. Our new Drug Strategy will provide improved support and treatment for those misusing drugs, including drug support units to help prisoners who wish to break the habit.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken to reduce the number of asylum applicants held in custody; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Only a very small proportion of people who have sought asylum are detained. The available information shows that on 17 March 1994 a total of 654 people who had sought asylum at some stage, including those awaiting removal or the determination of an appeal, were held in detention. It is Immigration Service policy to grant temporary admission wherever possible, and detention is authorised only where there is no other alternative and where there are good grounds for believing that the person will not comply with the terms of temporary admission. Account is taken of all relevant circumstances, including the means by which the person arrived in this country, any past immigration history and the person's ties with the United Kingdom.

Detained cases are reviewed regularly and if there is any indication that asylum is likely to be granted then the person is released immediately.

One of the aims of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 is to ensure that asylum applications are resolved more quickly. The Act provides that anyone who is refused asylum may appeal against the decision, and that those who do appeal may seek bail from the independent appellate authorities.

Prison Places

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total numbers of prison places in England and Wales on *(a)* 1 June 1979, *(b)* 1 June 1983, *(c)* 1 June 1987 and *(d)* 1 April 1992 and on the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Ian Dunbar to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 23 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of prison places in England and Wales.

The readily available information on prison places before September 1990 was collected on the last day of each month. The table gives the certified normal accommodation (CNA), that is uncrowded capacity, for the days preceding those requested and for Tuesday 22 March 1994.

Date	*CNA*
31 May 1979	37,890
31 May 1983	38,775
31 May 1987	41,688
31 March 1992	45,469
22 March 1994	47,463

Bodies, Gloucestershire

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that Gloucestershire police have all the necessary resources to pursue inquiries relating to the identification of the nine bodies so far recovered in Gloucester, and the unearthing of any further bodies and the bringing to justice of the persons responsible.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Police grant, at the rate of 51 per cent. of final expenditure, will be paid on the costs of the investigation. It is open to Gloucestershire Police Authority to apply for a special payment of grant over and above this, if it considered that the financial burden would threaten the efficiency of the force.

Form RPF37

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many copies of form RPF37 his Department issued in 1993; and how many are held in stock.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of copies of form RPF37 issued to electors is not collected centrally. HMSO currently holds 135,000 copies of form RPF37 in stock. Additionally, copies of the form are held by local electoral registration officers and by British consulates abroad.

Casinos

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to alter the rules and regulations governing applications for casino licences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no plans to alter the rules governing how applications for casino licences are made. We have under review the Gaming Clubs (Permitted Areas) Regulations 1971 which prescribe the areas of England and Wales in which casinos are permitted.

Category A Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of category A prisoners, *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held in prisons in England and Wales as of 1 March; and if he will list the category of offence of which such inmates were convicted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 24 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of category A prisoners, men and women, being held in prisons in England and Wales. You also requested information about the category of offence of which such inmates were convicted.

The following table gives the figures for sentenced and unsentenced category A prisoners as at 1 March 1994:

	Sentenced	*Unsentenced*	*Total*
Male	501	137	638
Female	2	1	3
Total	503	138	641

The offences of which these prisoners were convicted or stand charged include murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, serious sexual offences, robbery, firearms offences, offences involving explosions or explosives and serious drugs-related offences.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's

agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985 including this year to date on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Howard: The available record covers the period since 1991. It shows that two Home Office officials took MAS flights on three occasions between June and September 1991 at a total cost of £6,132.

Dianetics and Scientology Mission

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the recruitment of young people and their involvement in the activities of the Dianetics and Scientology Mission of Bournemouth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have not been able to trace any recent representations on this matter.

Prison Escapes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates have escaped from prison in England and Wales during each of the last five years; and how many of such escapees are still at large.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 24 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the Office, to reply to your recent Question asking for details of the number of inmates who have escaped from prison in England and Wales during each of the last 5 years and the number of such escapees still at large.

The following table lists the number of prisoners who have escaped and the number still unlawfully at large:

Year	*Number of escapes*	*Number of inmates unlawfully at large*
1989	161	7
1990	195	2
1991	303	10
1992	254	30
1993	204	21

Isle of Man Companies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what exemptions from the requirements to file are enjoyed by companies registered in the Isle of Man.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Companies registered in the Isle of Man are governed by Manx legislation. I understand that under Isle of Man company law the requirement that a copy of the balance sheet of public companies should be filed in the Isle of Man companies registry with each annual return does not extend to private companies.

Custodial Sentences

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners from *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside are currently serving custodial sentences in prisons in Wales; and if he will give for each prisoner, the length of their sentence, when they were committed and the nature of their offence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 24 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many prisoners from *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside are currently serving custodial sentences in prisons in Wales; and if he will give for each prisoner, the length of their sentence, when they were committed and the nature of their offence.

The information available on where prisoners originate is for the county of the sentencing court. The latest provisional statistics are for 31 December 1993. On that date 3 inmates who had been sentenced by courts in South Yorkshire were held in Prison Service establishments in Wales. Of these, one was serving a life sentence for murder (sentenced in July 1983), one was serving a sentence of 5 years 6 months for indecent assault (sentenced in July 1993) and one was serving a sentence of 2 years 5 months for an offence which is not separately coded (sentenced in November 1992).

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Howard: Records show that between 1 April 1993 and 21 March 1994, 492 parliamentary questions tabled to my Department were referred to the chief executive of an agency. This figure represents approximately 12 per cent. of the total number of parliamentary questions to the Home Office.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Howard: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". In replying to oral questions I seek to comply with Madam Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers.

Legal Aid

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what account he has taken of the research evidence provided by Professor Lee Bridges and the University of Warwick on the projected cost to the legal aid budget of provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill;

(2) if he will list all aspects of increased costs and reduced costs to public funds that his Department estimates will arise from his proposed changes to the right to silence;

(3) if he will publish a full breakdown of the cost implications in respect of legal aid that his Department estimates will arise from his proposed changes to the right to silence *(a)* at the police station and otherwise prior to court appearance and *(b)* in court.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answers 22 and 23 March 1994]:* I am aware of the article by Mr. Lee Bridges, which speculates on possible costs arising from implementation of the provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill concerning the drawing of inferences from the silence of an accused person under police questioning or at court.

The Government do not expect these provisions to have any significant financial effects.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spends on child care provision for the under-fives and out-of-school provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if he will make a statement on child care.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The information requested is not available centrally. The only information on child care provision held within the Home Office relates to provision made for departmental staff.

TREASURY

VAT on Fuel

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to end VAT avoidance by advance payment of fuel bills in the event of any further additions to the VAT rate in April 1995.

Sir John Cope: I have no plans to bring forward any such proposals.

Financial Services Act 1986

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many traders are monitored by each of the authorised bodies under the provisions of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Nelson: The numbers of entries recorded on the Securities and Investments Board central register on 18 March 1994 were:

	Numbers
Members of Self-Regulation Organisations	
FIMBRA	5,752
IMRO	1,144
LAUTRO	613
SFA	1,306
(less double counting)[1]	(194)
Total regulated by SROs	8,621
Directly authorised by SIB	67
Certified by recognised professional bodies	
Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales	5,172
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland	476
Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland	197
Chartered Association of Certified Accountants	994
The Law Society	7,303
The Law Society of Scotland	908
The Law Society of Northern Ireland	452
Insurance Brokers Registration Council	1,404
Institute of Actuaries	35
Total authorised under s15	16,941
Other authorised persons	
Authorised in other Member States[2]	3
Insurance companies[3]	217
Friendly Societies[4]	216
(less double counting)[5]	(446)
Totals of authorised persons and registered exempt firms	25,619

[1] Some firms are members of more than one SRO.
[2] Authorised by virtue of s31 of the FSA.
[3] Insurance companies authorised by virtue of s22 of the FSA.
[4] Friendly societies authorised by virtue of s23 of the FSA.
[5] Europersons, insurance companies and friendly societies are members of SROs and some firms moving between categories (eg RPB and SRO) may be temporarily authorised twice.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what part the United Kingdom is taking, directly or indirectly, in discussions on reconstituting the ERM or operating an informal ERM; what undertakings, assurances and understandings, express or implied, have been given by Her Majesty's Government to the European Commission or monetary authorities or other EEC Governments concerning the relationship between sterling and the ecu; and to what extent the change in the value of sterling against the ecu in the 11 months to January 1994 is a reflection of such undertakings, assurances and understandings.

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom will continue to play a full and active part in discussions on monetary co-operation in stage 2 of economic and monetary union. But our policy on the exchange rate mechanism is well-known. We cannot consider rejoining the ERM until there is greater convergence between the monetary policies appropriate for all Community economies and we should need to be satisfied that the system would be operated for the benefit of all its members. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have made clear that sterling will not rejoin the ERM in this Parliament.

The Government have given no undertakings, assurances or understandings express or implied concerning the relationship between sterling and the ecu to any person or institution. Sterling's exchange rate against the ecu reflects day-to-day market trading in all of the Community currencies.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Angling

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to encourage young people to take up angling as a sport.

Mr. Brooke: This is a matter for angling's governing bodies. Most of my Department's funding for sport is made

through the Sports Council. Its annual grant to angling's governing bodies is intended to enable the promotion of angling and to increase participation levels.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to use part of the proposed millennium fund to fund projects put forward by angling organisations; and what plans he has to inform such organisations of the availability of these funds.

Mr. Brooke: Decisions on funding projects to mark the year 2000 and the beginning of the third millennium will be the responsibility of the Millennium Commission. Angling organisations may also be eligible to apply for lottery funds from the four national sports councils. All distributors of national lottery funds are expected to publish guidelines for applicants during the summer.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1992, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Brooke: No Minister or official has travelled on MAS on official business since the Department was formed in April 1992.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list for the past 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Brooke: In the last 12 months my Department received 832 written questions. Of these, 20 were referred to agency chief executives for reply. This represents just over 2 per cent. of the total.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Technology Foresight

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration the panels to be set up under the technology foresight programme will be giving to the potential environmental impacts of the areas of technology to be investigated.

Mr. David Davis: Each of the 15 sector panels established under the technology foresight programme will take account of environmental and other relevant factors in assessing market and technological opportunities over the next 10 to 20 years. In addition, one of the sector panels has the specific task of undertaking foresight into agriculture, natural resources and all aspects of environmental protection.

Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *767-68*, regarding advertising campaigns by the Cabinet Office, what is *(a)* the budgeted and actual cost of each campaign listed for 1993-94 and *(b)* the budgeted cost of each campaign listed for 1994-95.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested for 1993-94 is set out in the following table. The budget for 1994-95 will be finalised shortly.

Campaign	*Budgeted Cost*	*Actual Cost*
OPSS		
Publicity for 1993 Charter Mark Winners[1]	—	311,747
Promotion of the 1994 Charter Mark Scheme[1]	—	66,383
Charterline Advertising[1]	—	542,010
Civil Service College		
Promotion of courses and other activities	352,000	342,000
HMSO		
Promotion of publications, videos and IT product range	1,105,000	1,344,000
Promotion of HMSO's status as a British Standards Institution Agent	—	57,000
Strengthening of awareness of HMSO in central and local government, the health service and public utilities	125,000	101,000

Notes:

[1] There was no separate budget for advertising for the three OPSS campaigns. Advertising was included in the overall budget for each of the projects.

[2] HMSO's financial year ends on 31 December and the figures quoted relate to the calendar year 1993.

TRANSPORT

London Buses

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to offer the 10 London Buses' operating companies for sale.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to offer the 10 London Buses' operating companies for sale.

Mr. Norris: I am today announcing the launch of the sale of London Buses' operating companies. I am sure that the innovation and market responsiveness of the private sector will result in great improvements to our bus services. The quality of service and the cost-effectiveness of London's bus service has improved considerably since the private sector began to compete for contracts in London. Privatisation of the London Buses' operating companies will capitalise on those achievements and bring further benefits to both taxpayers and passengers.

I recognise the popularity of the traditional red bus. I have therefore decided that the purchasers of the London Buses' companies will be required to retain the red livery on the routes which they operate in Central London.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many different and distinct bus liveries he expects will be adopted in London subsequent to privatisation of bus routes; what requirement there is by him on London Transport that buses serving any one route will all be of the same livery; and whether the rules on code of practice concerning advertising on buses will be the same as, or similar to, those of London Buses Ltd. and its predecessors.

Mr. Norris: It is not possible to say at this stage how many different bus liveries there will be in London in the future. However, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the question from my hon. Friends, the Members for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) and for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), in which I gave the assurance that steps are being taken to ensure that the red bus will remain a familiar sight on London's streets after the privatisation of the London Buses Ltd. subsidiary companies. It would be for London Transport to consider whether there is a need to ensure that buses serving the same route have the same livery. The code of practice covering advertisements on buses after privatisation will be consistent with that which currently applies.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are being made for lost property on privatised London bus routes; and how they will differ for the public from those now obtaining under London Transport.

Mr. Norris: The current arrangements for dealing with lost property on London's buses are set out in the route contracts under which bus operators, both public and private, run services on behalf of London Transport. There are no plans to alter those arrangements as a result of the privatisation of the London Buses Ltd. subsidiary companies.

Severance Payments

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the provisions he has made in the forthcoming financial year for severance payments; and if he will list the sums and the vote and subhead from which it will come.

Mr. Norris: The size of any provision needed for severance payments for the Department and its agencies for the financial year 1994-95 is still being considered.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by locations, agency or division the numbers of grades and costs of his staff who have been given severance pay-offs this financial year; and from which vote and subhead the money to finance such payments was made.

Mr. Norris: The severance payments made so far in this financial year for DOT(C) and its agencies are as follows:

	Number of staff	*Grade*	*Total cost (£)*	*Location*
Department of Transport (Central) (DOT(C))[1]	24	G3 and below	211,523	Mainly London
Transport Research Laboratory (TRL)[1]	78	G6 and below	560,024	Crowthorne
Driver Vehicle Operators Information Technology (DVOIT)[2]	25	SEO and below	1,170,914	South Wales
Driving Standards Agency (DSA)[3]	49	Senior Driving Examiner and below	344,291	All regions
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)[4]	16	Grade 5 and below	431,641	South Wales
Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency (VI)[5]	9	SPTO and below	218,627	All regions

[1] The money to finance the DOT(C) and TRL payments will come from class IV vote 2 running costs subhead A1.
[2] The money to finance these payments will come from class VI vote 2 running costs subhead K1.
[3] The money to finance these payments will come from class VI vote 3 running costs subhead H2.
[4] The money to finance these payments will come from class VI vote 4 running costs subhead A1.
[5] VI is off vote. Money to finance these payments is subject to the provisions of the Trading Fund Act.

Heavy Goods Vehicle Operators

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the present enforcement regime to deal with heavy goods vehicle operators who do not hold a current heavy goods vehicle operator's licence.

Mr. Key: I am satisfied that enforcement against illegal HGV operators has a sufficiently high priority within the Department's enforcement programme. Also that enforcement resources are being directed against making it increasingly difficult for people who do not hold a goods vehicle operator's licence and show a disregard for the requirements of operator licensing to continue to operate outside the licensing system.

The Department is committed to dealing with the problem of illegally operated heavy goods vehicles and its enforcement resources are being co-ordinated and directed against the problem. The problem is also one of concern to other regulatory and enforcement authorities. Enforcement resources are therefore being co-ordinated and directed against it with some success through the work of the Department's illegal operations working group. The working group was formed in response to concerns expressed by the traffic commissioners about unlicensed operators and in particular a concern about drivers and operators who continue to operate having had their licences revoked.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is not available in precisely this form. The entertainment budget for all

Ministers offices in 1993-94 is £16,000 which covers the cost of all ministerial and departmental entertainment for official purposes.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Norris: The code of practice will reinforce and build on my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information.

Both the Department and its agencies already do much to keep the public informed, by way of publishing "popular" policy documents and background papers. They also aim to answer written inquiries from the public within 15 working days, a target which is within the 20 working day period set by the code.

Operational details concerning implementation of the code will be announced nearer to the time of the launch.

Staff Records

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the staff attendance records, including sickness absence, of his Department's staff, stored on computer, are covered by the Data Protection Act 1984; and if access to the information so stored is allowed to the individuals concerned.

Mr. Norris: Computerised attendance records relating to staff sick absences within the Department of Transport are registered under the Data Protection Act. The information is made available, on written request, to the individuals concerned.

London Traffic Emissions

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of traffic emission in central London he estimates comes from *(a)* buses, *(b)* licensed taxi cabs and *(c)* local authority service vehicles.

Mr. Norris: Figures on the performance of local authority service vehicles are not collected separately. For buses and taxis, we estimate the relative contributions to all central London traffic emissions to be as follows:

	Buses per cent.	*Taxis per cent.*
CO_2	14	11
CO	2	1
Hydrocarbons	7	5
NO_x	19	3
Particulates	33	11

Note: Figures are approximate only, but have not been rounded so that comparisons may be made.

Public Transport

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has commissioned on the use of London buses, licensed taxis and local authority service vehicles, examining such factors as average trip length, average daily mileage, time spent in taxi ranks, bus stops or equivalent and average fuel consumption.

Mr. Norris: The Department has conducted a number of surveys which provide information on the use of London buses and licensed taxis. These include the 1991 London area transport survey, the annual inquiry of public service vehicle operators, the London journey time survey and the national travel survey. Detailed data on taxi usage were also collected in a 1989 research project.

In addition, London Transport and London Buses Ltd. conducts surveys which provide estimates of bus use, average waiting times and fuel consumption. There is no information available on local authority service vehicles and no recent data on taxi fuel consumption.

Municipal Airports

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines or instructions have been issued to local authorities about the sale of municipal airports.

Mr. Norris: Sales of local authority airports are not subject to my right hon. Friend's consent, and no guidelines or instructions have been issued on the subject. Local authorities will be aware of the strong presumption in favour of disposing of public sector assets by open competition.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now intends that the franchising director will publish his programme for franchising of rail passenger services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has instructed the franchising director to formulate and submit to him by 5 April a programme for franchising BR's passenger services consistent with meeting the Government's targets of commencing the competitive process for the first six franchises by the end of 1994, awarding the first six franchises by the end of 1995, and securing that 51 per cent. or more of the railway passenger services currently operated by BR are provided under franchise agreements by 1 April 1996. Subject to my right hon. Friend being satisfied with the franchising director's programme I expect it to be published shortly thereafter.

Central Line

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to make an announcement about the proposed closure of the Central line between Epping and Ongar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Secretary of State for Transport will announce his decision on this proposal after the statutory procedures, which are currently under way, have been concluded.

Rail Privatisation

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what indications there are from previous privatisations of transport industries that passengers will benefit from the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* British Airways has been transformed into one of the world's leading airlines since privatisation, with passengers benefiting from its commitment to high standards

of service. Privatisation of bus companies has resulted in greater efficiency for bus and coach services, more choice, more bus miles run, and lower cost to the taxpayers. The best way to achieve our objectives of improving the quality of the service for rail users is to provide similar approaches and opportunities for our railways.

Roads

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost per mile for *(a)* porous asphalt road surface material and *(b)* concrete surfaces for (i) single carriageway road, (ii) two lane dual carriageway roads, (iii) three lane dual carriageway roads and (iv) four lane carriageway roads.

Mr. Robert Key *[pursuant to his reply, 7 March 1994, c. 1]:* The cost information is as follows:

It should be noted that these costs are not comparable since the porous asphalt is basically a surfacing material and contributes little to the overall strength of the road whilst the concrete surfaced road provides both a running surface and the main vehicle carrying system. Because the use of porous asphalt has only recently been permitted on trunk roads, there is not a lot of cost data on which to base estimates for its use at the moment so the estimated costs given can only be taken as indicative. The concrete costs should also be regarded as indicative since they will vary according to site and choice of pavement design.

	Approximate cost/mile	
	Porous asphalt £	*Typical concrete road* £
Single carriageway	90,000	450,000
2 lane dual—all purpose	180,000	900,000
—motorway	220,000	1,100,000
3 lane dual—all purpose	250,000	1,260,000
—motorway	275,000	1,380,000
4 lane dual—all purpose	—	—
—motorway	345,000	1,750,000

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My ministerial colleagues and I received 814 letters in February from hon. Members, to which we have replied.

EC Majority Voting

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what undertakings were given by the Government in 1973 on majority voting in the EC; and if he will make it his policy that the present blocking minority of two major and one minor member states will not be abandoned unless agreed by the British people in a new referendum.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In its White Paper entitled "The United Kingdom and the European Communities" —Cmnd 4715 of July 1971—which set out the terms of the United Kingdom's accession to the Community, the Government said:

"All the countries concerned recognise that an attempt to impose a majority view in a case where one or more member states considered their vital interests to be at stake would imperil the very fabric of the Community."

We have no intention of holding a referendum on the issue of qualified majority voting.

COCOM

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government have put to the intergovernmental co-ordinating committee of western nations on technology transfer—COCOM—meetings to decide upon a successor regime to COCOM; with which non-governmental organisations his Department has discussed this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British officials have participated in a series of intergovernmental meetings to discuss new multilateral arrangements to promote transparency and responsibility in the transfer of arms and sensitive dual-use goods. In the course of these meetings they have put forward a number of proposals designed to balance concerns about potential threats to security with the need to avoid unnecessary burdens on industry. Additionally, British officials have proposed, and partners have accepted, that existing controls on arms and related items should be maintained after the end of COCOM on 31 March if the new arrangements are not in place by then.

My Department has had no formal discussions on this issue with non-governmental organisations. However, my officials have discussed it informally with academics and representatives of other non-government bodies in the course of their regular contacts.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Mrs. Timmreck

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the reasons for excluding Mrs. Timmreck from continued residence on St. Helena.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Immigration is a matter for the Government of St. Helena. On 19 Janaury 1994 the acting governor of St. Helena, exercising the power vested in him by section 10(1) of the Immigration Ordinance 1972, issued an exclusion order against Mrs. Timmreck, a Uruguayan citizen, because he was satisfied that it was not in the public interest that she should enter the island, on which she was not at the time resident.

Israr Ahmed

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reasons for the disparity between his letter of 7 March concerning Israr Ahmed—ref. GV100/20467 and A515109—that Israr Ahmed's application had been referred by the post in Islamabad to the Home Office on 22 November and the letter from the Immigration and Nationality Department of the Home Office, dated 9 March, informing the sponsor in the United Kingdom that Israr Ahmed's application had been refused by the entry clearance officer in Islamabad.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The migration and visa correspondence unit's letter to the hon. Member dated 7 March said, correctly, that Mr., Israr Ahmed's application had been referred to the Home Office. The Home Office's subsequent letter to his sponsors, dated 9 March, said that the application was to be refused and that the ECO in Islamabad would so inform him. It did not say that the ECO had already done so. There was thus no discrepancy between the two.

General Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *474-77*, on matters discussed and decisions taken at the General Affairs Council on 7 and 8 March, what formal votes were taken.

Mr. Heathcoat Amory: There were no formal votes on matters discussed in the Council. Details of "A" points approved by the Council, as published in the Council secretariat press release issued after the Council meeting, will be placed in the Library, for this and all future Council meetings.

South Africa (Mercury Waste)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have received regarding the local pollution effects of the processing of mercury wastes at the Thor recycling facility at Cato Ridge, South Africa, arising from the treatment of mercury-contaminated wastes imported from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received representations from Greenpeace—as part of its "Wasting the World" campaign—and from Mr. Fred Kockott of Environmental Press Service, South Africa. In his letter of 8 November, Mr. Kockott referred to a petition being given to Her Majesty's Government but extensive inquiries have failed to locate such a document.

DEFENCE

Loan Guarantees

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will draw up proposals to offer small and medium-sized defence contractors loan guarantees for commercial ventures; and what co-ordination his Department has with the Department of Trade and Industry's loan guarantee scheme for the support of such contractors.

Mr. Aitken: We have no plans to draw up such proposals. The rules of the scheme operated by the Department of Trade and Industry draw no distinction between defence contractors and other eligible companies. The operation of that scheme is not a matter on which either my Department or the Department of Trade and Industry see a need for co-ordination between them.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Hanley: My Department answers parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". My ministerial colleagues and I also seek to comply with Madam Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers to oral questions.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is a matter of public record.

Ex-Service Men

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ex-service men remain unemployed after *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months and *(c)* one year following the end of their military service.

Mr. Hanley: Long-term statistics of this nature are not available. But data obtained from voluntary post-exit returns which ex-service personnel are encouraged to complete, indicates that some 80 per cent. of service leavers are employed or otherwise engaged in their chosen activity, such as further or higher education, within three months of discharge.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list details of accidents involving low-flying military jets over Humberside and the three counties of Yorkshire in each year since 1990 and the current year to date in which the deaths of civilian pilots and/or passengers in other aircraft were involved; and if he will make a statement about the settlements made to the bereaved civilian families.

Mr. Hanley: There have been no low-flying military jet accidents involving the deaths of civilians in the area, and for the period, stated.

Nuclear Warheads (Transport)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what statutory provisions govern the applicability of speed limits to vehicles carrying nuclear warheads.

Mr. Aitken: Vehicles carrying nuclear warheads are subject to the same statutory provisions governing speed limits as other heavy goods vehicles.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Hanley: My ministerial colleagues and I received 638 letters from, and wrote 629 letters to, hon. Members during February 1994.

Service Personnel (Social Functions)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the rules relating to attendance of serving members of the armed forces at social functions organised by hon. Members.

Mr. Hanley: Rules set out in Queen's regulations prohibit members of the armed forces from taking an active part in the affairs of any political organisation, party or movement. Provided that service personnel do not infringe these rules, they may attend social functions organised by hon. Members.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the establishment of a nuclear weapons safety group by his Department as recommended in the Oxburgh report.

Mr. Hanley: The nuclear weapon safety group was established in January 1993.

Sir Peter Harding

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he was first informed that the position of Sir Peter Harding as Chief of the Defence Staff might be compromised.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence first became aware of the circumstances which lead up to the resignation of Sir Peter Harding on Saturday 12 March.

Menwith Hill Station (Visits)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers of *(a)* elected members of local authorities and *(b)* officials of local authorities who have been permitted to visit any part of the Menwith Hill station during the past five years.

Mr. Hanley: A number of elected representatives from local authorities in the vicinity of Menwith Hill, and their officials, have been to the station in the last five years, for social events or for local planning reasons. Detailed records of exact numbers are not, however, available for the period in question. Such visits have not included any briefing on the role of the station or any access to operation areas.

EMPLOYMENT

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *644*, if *(a)* where applicable, he will place in the Library the results of any market research relating to the campaigns and *(b)* he will publish (i) the number of people attending the new horizons events, (ii) the number of responses from employers to the workstart campaign, (iii) the number of people who took up the jobfinders grant, (iv) the number of places offered by employers in the work trials and the take-up by unemployed people and (v) the number of people and voluntary organisations taking part in the community action programme during this financial year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: When the results of the market research are available, I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library. The answers to the remaining questions are:

(i) To date the number of people who have attended the new horizons events is 7,800. (ii) As a result of the workstart campaign there have been in excess of 1,200 inquiries from employers. (iii) The jobfinder's grant was launched on 7 February 1994 in the east and west midlands. Up to 11 March 373 people had received grants. (iv) To the end of January 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, 11,319 unemployed people had taken part in a work trial. Figures on the number of work trials offered by employers are not collected. (v) To the end of February 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, 11,728 people had taken part in community action. Figures for the number of voluntary organisations taking part in community action are not available.

Mr. J. C. Shaw

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from Mr. J. C. Shaw of Shaws, Master Bakers, Liverpool; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I received a letter from Mr. Shaw yesterday and will reply shortly.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of the new Inter-TEC comparison quartile tables for the year ending 12 September 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: Inter-TEC comparison tables for 1992-93 were published on 13 September 1993. A copy is available in the Library.

I intend to publish full-year comparisons for 1993-94 this summer. I do not plan to publish in-year tables because uneven flows of information during the year can distort comparisons of performance.

Careers Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what date applicants to become providers in the careers service will be required to express an interest in order to be considered.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has invited initial expressions of interest by 31 March regarding careers

service provision in England from April 1995 onwards. We will continue to respond to any subsequent requests until mid-April. No organisation or individual will be prevented from submitting a bid to run a Careers Service through failure to express interest. Bids themselves are likely to be invited by the autumn.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is inviting *(a)* private and *(b)* state schools to consider applying to become providers of the careers service.

Miss Widdecombe: Bids to provide careers service in England will be welcome from any organisation, including schools, that believes it can meet the high standards and other requirements set out by the Department.

Miners (Redeployment and Retraining)

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what financial assistance he has made available to training and enterprise councils to help with the redeployment and retraining of miners from *(a)* Colgrave, *(b)* Silverhill, *(c)* Bevercotes, *(d)* Cripstone, *(e)* Calverton, *(f)* Rufford, *(g)* Annersley/Bentink, *(h)* Manton and *(i)* Ollerton.

Miss Widdecombe: The amount of financial assistance being made available through training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service is given in the following table:

Collieries	*Indicative budgets £ million*
Cotgrave	1·7
Silverhill	2·2
Bevercotes	2·2
Clipstone	2·7
Calverton	2·0
Rufford	2·2
Annesley	1·9
Manton	1·4
Ollerton	1·9
Total	18·2

The budgets above were made available to TECs and the ES. They are also inclusive of training for work allowances.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry Privatisation

15. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she next intends to meet employees of the Forestry Commission to discuss forestry privatisation in England and Wales.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have no plans to meet representatives of the Forestry Commission's employees.

The commission's senior staff regularly meet the trade unions representing its employees to discuss a range of issues.

Animal Transportation

16. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the current progress towards securing an improvement in the welfare of live animals in transit.

27. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she has taken to persuade the EC properly to regulate the transport of live animals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There has been no resolution as yet of the differences that emerged at the Agriculture Council in December, when my right hon. Friend refused to accept measures which did not offer sufficient safeguards for animal welfare.

Farm Workers

17. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she last met representatives of the rural, agricultural and allied workers group of the Transport and General Workers Union to discuss the welfare of farm workers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I last met representatives of the TGWU in January 1994.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

18. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will report on progress on the introduction of the new environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Jack: Six new environmentally senstive areas were launched last week. They are in the Blackdown hills, Cotswold hills, Dartmoor, Essex coast, Shropshire hills and the upper Thames tributaries.

Nutritional Requirements

19. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has for introducing an independent commission of experts to ensure that agricultural products reflect nutritional requirements.

Mr. Soames: I have no such plans.

Animal Welfare

20. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to improve the welfare of animals at slaughter.

Mr. Soames: We shall implement the new EC directive and remaining agreed Farm Animal Welfare Council recommendations as soon as possible.

Milk

21. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has to ensure that major ex-farm purchasers of milk will be subject to regulation against uncompetitive practices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: After the end of the milk marketing scheme, milk purchasers will be subject to normal competition rules.

The restriction on the powers of the Director General of Fair Trading to make monopoly references of the wholesale of milk will be removed.

Farm Incomes

22. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the change in farmers' income over the last year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth).

Fruit Farmers

23. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received about the problems facing British fruit farmers; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I have received a number of representations from consumers, growers and hon. Members, principally about the future of our unique apples; especially the Cox. We believe that many of the difficulties faced by this sector are attributable to the current EC regime for fresh fruit and vegetables, which we believe should be reformed.

Moorland Scheme

24. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to promote the new moorland scheme.

Mr. Jack: The new moorland scheme has not yet been approved by the European Commission. As such, the details of the scheme cannot yet be finalised. When Commission approval is received we will issue a press notice on the scheme and advise farmers how they can obtain further details.

Bananas

25. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will announce her decision on the future of the single European market for bananas.

Mr. Jack: The European Community regime establishing the single market for bananas came into force on 1 July 1993. No decision on its future is called for from my right hon. Friend.

Common Agricultural Policy

26. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions she has had concerning the unpublished European Commission report on the reform of the common agricultural policy; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This internal European Commission study has yet to be completed and published. Publication is a matter for the Commission and if it decides to make the study available, I will read it with interest.

Wild Birds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give specific details of all current licences issued to kill wild bird species including details of the premises and the wild bird species concerned.

Mr. Soames: The details requested are as follows:

Number of licences currently in force by MAFF region

Species	*Type of premises*	*Northern*	*North East*	*North Mercia*	*South Mercia*	*East Midlands*	*Anglia*	*South East*	*South West*	*Wessex*
Bullfinch[1]	Farm	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Brent goose	Farm	—	—	—	—	14	5	30	—	—
Cormorant	Fishery	7	—	4	2	—	1	3	—	—
Heron	Fishery	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	—
Goosander	Fishery	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Blackbird	Farm	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Canada goose[2,3]	Farm	—	3	7	4	6	4	8	—	1
Greylag goose[3]	Farm	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Coot[3]	Farm	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Wigeon[3]	Farm	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Feral pigeon[4]	Factory	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
House sparrow[4]	Factory	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—

[1] Excludes the general licence issued to kill bullfinches in selected counties as the returns of action taken are not yet available.
[2] Includes the pricking of eggs.
[3] These birds all have an open season when they may be killed without a licence. The licences shown are to kill during the closed season.
[4] A general licence has been issued to kill these birds throughout the year. The licences shown are to use methods otherwise prohibited under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Fishery Protection

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she will continue to use the Royal Navy to undertake fishery protection duties; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Fishery Protection Squadron of the Royal Navy has provided a tried, trusted and highly professional service for many years. It commands a great respect from both our fishermen and those from other member states. The use of the Royal Navy to enforce fisheries legislation has none the less been one of several services subject to detailed scrutiny by the Ministry as part of its contribution to the Government's "Competing for Quality" programme. Significant changes have been made to improve further the cost-effectiveness of the Fishery Protection Squadron. Consequently, a further contract has been negotiated enabling the Royal Navy to continue to undertake surface surveillance and fisheries enforcement for the next five years. During that period, the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the Royal Navy's execution of this task will continue to be subject to review.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the dates Ministers or officials from her Department, including her Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985 including this year to date on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to her Department.

Mr. Jack: Until a few years ago Ministry policy was to arrange all overseas travel for Ministers and officials on British airlines, or their reciprocal carriers, at commercial rates. We employ agents to place such bookings and, with the opening up of all Government activities to greater commercial exposure, they now have instructions to provide us, on each occasion, with the most suitable and economic route using the most appropriate airline.

No detailed records of airlines used are kept centrally, as outside agents are used to book seats using the most suitable and economic route with the appropriate airline.

Our agents are unable to provide us with the information required in the detail requested. Our overall impression is that the Malaysian airline MAS has been used very infrequently, if at all, for MAFF air travel in the period concerned.

Wine Standards Board

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the remit of the Wine Standards Board; and in what ways it has changed over the last 10 years.

Mr. Jack: The Wine Standards Board's remit is to enforce the European Community wine regulations at production, import, export and wholesale level within the United Kingdom. This function has not changed over the last 10 years.

Plant Health Campaign

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *384*, if she will place in the Library copies of any report prepared by the plant health and seeds inspectorate on the effectiveness of the plant health campaign.

Mr. Jack: Some 121,000 leaflets, posters and newsletters, dealing with plant health issues have been distributed. The plant health and seeds inspectorate has not prepared a formal report on whether recipients found this material effective or not. Our inspectors gauge its effectiveness from their knowledge of the general awareness of growers and the public about plant health issues. For example, the position was reflected by the good attendance at growers' meetings to discuss the single market plant health regime.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by her private offices in 1993-94.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The cost of purchases of alcoholic drinks for use in entertainment by Ministers and their private offices is included in the overall administrative costs for the Department which is published in the departmental report.

Deep-sea Fish

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research is being conducted into the habits of reproduction and spawning of the Grenadier and other very deep-sea fish; and what assessment has been made of over-fishing of vulnerable deep-sea species.

Mr. Jack: Scientific advice collected by the European Commission in June 1993 suggested that deep-water species have slow rates of reproduction, high ages at first maturity and slow growth rates. These characteristics make them particularly vulnerable to over-exploitation. Experience elsewhere has shown that fishing can quickly reduce deep-water stocks to a low level.

Other work on the subject includes a NATO advanced research workshop on deep water fisheries of the north Atlantic which took place earlier this month and an International Council for the Exploration of the Seas study group on the biology and assessment of deep-sea fishery resources which will meet in August this year. The work is expected to provide a basis for advice on the management of such resources.

Angling

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies her Department has initiated to investigate the causes of the decline of fish catches by anglers over the last two fishing seasons.

Mr. Jack: The regulation and management of salmon and freshwater fisheries in England and Wales is primarily the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority. I understand that it has undertaken a number of local studies in response to concerns expressed by anglers in particular areas about the perceived decline in catches of fish.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received from angling organisations and fishery proprietors concerning the incidence of cormorants eating up freshwater fish stocks; and what proposals she has to solve the problem.

Mr. Soames: The following bodies have expressed their concern to the Ministry about the predation of fish by cormorants:

Atlantic Salmon Association
British Field Sports Society
Kingfisher Angling and Preservation Society
Orpington and District Angling Association
Salmon and Trout Association
Wye Salmon Fishery Owners Association

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Ministry is a licensing authority for the killing of cormorants where evidence of serious damage to a fishery has been provided. The Ministry considers each application on its merits and is advised by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, the Ministry's wildlife advisers. In addition, the Ministry consults English Nature. Together with other Government Departments and interested bodies, the Ministry is reviewing its research and development programme on piscivorous birds to inform policy better.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many confirmed cases of BSE cattle there have been on Ministry experimental farms in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* The information requested as at 22 March 1994 by year of report is as follows. For convenience, the animals involved in the study to determine whether maternal transmission of the disease takes place are shown separately.

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Confirmed BSE cases in maternal transmission study[1]	0	0	2	8	11
Confirmed cases of BSE on other experimental farms[2]	4	1	0	9	7

[1] The number of cases of BSE in this group reflects the age of the animals and the peak age of onset of disease in the epidemic. Due to the nature of the study the role played by maternal transmission will not become clear until the study is complete.

[2] These herds are run as commercial herds and have a varying incidence of the disease according to the management practices used and, where applicable, the history of the animals before purchase.

Avian Piscivores

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will review her Department's policy on the licensed killing of fish-eating birds as a result of the report on the basis for policy on avian piscivores, commissioned by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* The Ministry's policy on the licensed killing of fish-eating birds is kept under continual review. The report commissioned by the National Rivers Authority on avian piscivores will be taken into account as part of the process. The Ministry is reviewing its research and development requirements on piscivorous birds and the NRA is being invited to participate.

Agricultural Tenancies

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will make a detailed response to the proposals for agricultural tenancy reform.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I welcomed the agreements reached by the industry last December on proposed reforms.

We are now finalising details so as to be ready to introduce legislation along those lines as soon as parliamentary time is available.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Andrew Robathan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress she has made on reaching a conclusion on woodlands owned by the Forestry Commission in England; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The report of the Forestry Review Group was submitted to Ministers on 28 February.

Ministers are considering the Forestry Review Group's report carefully and will make an announcement in due course.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the guidelines used by his Department as to whether ATP should be paid directly to a foreign Government or a private firm.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: ODA grant aid goes to recipient Governments who then make it available both to public or private sector institutions on agreed terms. Guidelines on the terms on which aid funds are to be passed on—on-lent—by the central Government to such institutions are set out in a technical note. There are no specific guidelines for on-lending under the aid and trade provision scheme. Under ATP ODA has not routinely insisted that aid funds be on-lent on commercial terms to ensure the concessionality is captured by the recipient Government. Each project is considered individually. Account is taken of requests from the central Government for the concessionality to be captured by the central Government in some other way, or for it to be passed on to the institution concerned.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions in the last 10 years on which ATP provision has been made directly to a private company and not to the foreign Government concerned.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Ukraine

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many management training projects are currently being supported by the know-how fund in the Ukraine.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Management training is an important element in many know-how fund projects in Ukraine. A list of all current know-how fund projects there is being placed in the Libraries of the House.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the current budget is for the know-how fund in the Ukraine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1993-94 the know-how fund is likely to spend about £3·5 million in Ukraine. We expect

to continue to provide assistance, mainly but not exclusively, in the agricultural, financial services, small business, and energy sectors.

International Tropical Timber Agreement

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the reduction in the rate of tropical deforestation which is likely to result from the new international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is not possible to make such an estimate. The international timber trade is only one of many factors which influence the rate of tropical deforestation. The new international tropical timber agreement contains enhanced provisions for working towards the target of the year 2000 for all internationally traded tropical timber to come from sustainably managed forests.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money from the United Kingdom Exchequer was spent on the renegotiation of the international tropical timber agreement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration contributed £64,280 towards the costs of the second preparatory conference for the renegotiation in Quito in January 1992. The travel and subsistence costs of ODA staff attending meetings related to the renegotiation were £34,681. Details of other administrative costs could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sleeping Accommodation

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what plans the Committee has to make bedrooms available to hon. Members on the occasion of all-night sittings following proceedings on Consolidated Fund Bills; and how many bedrooms could be made available in this way.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Committee has no such plans. As was stated in the reply given on behalf of the Commission to the hon. Member on 15 December 1993 at column *640*, there is no intention to alter existing arrangements.

Westminster Gym

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee, pursuant to his answer of 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *512-13*, if he will give details of space allocated and rent and other charges paid per annum by the Westminster gym.

Mr. Ray Powell: Some 350 sq m in the basement of 1 Canon row are allocated to the Westminster gymnasium. No rent or other charges are levied.

Disabled Visitors

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee, pursuant to the answer from the chairman of the Administration Committee to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *61*, if he will make a statement on his Committee's consideration of proposals relating to access to, and within, the Palace of Westminster for wheelchair-bound strangers.

Mr. Ray Powell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 22 March, *Official Report*, column *168*, to a similar question.

Exhibitions (Upper Waiting Hall)

Mr. Keen: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to district nursing awareness to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 13 June 19 Friday 17 June.

Mr. Madel: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to Water Aid to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 27 June to Friday 1 July.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to food-borne disease awareness to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 23 May to Friday 27 May.

Rooms (Allocation)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how many rooms in the parliamentary estate for the use of *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* hon. Members' staff are currently vacant; and what steps are taken to allow their short-term use by hon. Members in inadequate accommodation pending their long-term allocation.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Committee has delegated day-to-day management of accommodation for Members and their staff to the Accommodation Whips and the Serjeant at Arms respectively. They seek to allocate rooms and desks as they become available; and consider short-term use in that context. Such allocation is an ongoing process which makes difficult the estimation of the number of rooms vacant at any one time.

SCOTLAND

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Lang: In answering parliamentary questions I follow the guidelines set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Lang: My ministerial colleagues and I received 646 letters from and sent 392 letters to hon. Members during February.

Cautions

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cautions were issued by police forces in Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and if he will list the categories of offences which are covered by such cautions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Cautions are not issued by police forces in Scotland.

Fisheries Protection Agency

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about performance targets for the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency for 1994-95.

Mr. Lang: For the financial year 1994-95 I have set the following targets:

Aerial surveillance—per cent. of hours flown on task	85%
Aerial surveillance—cost per aircraft sighting	£90
Marine surveillance—number of boardings at sea	2,600
Marine surveillance—cost per boarding	£2,607
Sea Fisheries Inspectorate—cost per log sheet check	£63

50 per cent of cases for prosecution to be reported within 6 weeks of offence being detected and 90 per cent. within 8 weeks.

Number of cases where court proceedings are taken as percentage of offences reported to prosecuting authorities 75%

In order to ensure that the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency uses its resources efficiently, I have set it a target to achieve cash-releasing efficiency gains of 2·0 per cent. over 1993-94.

The chief executive will be directly accountable to me for the achievement of these targets, which will be reported in the agency's annual report.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest number of patients waiting for *(a)* in-patient and *(b)* day care treatment.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* At 30 September 1993 there were 55,518 on in-patient waiting lists and 26,728 on day case waiting lists.

National Health Service Trusts

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual sum paid to each chairman of an NHS trust; and what are the proposed payments for each chairman of trusts about to come into existence.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

NHS Trusts in Operation	*Chairman's Annual Remuneration* £
Caithness and Sutherland	15,125
Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care	17,145
Moray Health Services	17,145
Raigmore Hospital	17,145
Royal Alexandra Hospital	17,145
Royal Scottish National Hospital and Community	17,145
South Ayrshire Hospitals	17,145
Stirling Royal Infirmary	17,145
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals	19,285
Dundee Teaching Hospitals	19,285
Grampian Healthcare	19,285
Monklands and Bellshill	19,285
North Ayrshire and Arran	19,285
Southern General Hospital	19,285
Victoria Infirmary	19,285
West Lothian	19,285
Yorkhill	19,285
NHS Trusts Coming Into Operation on 1 April 1994	
Edinburgh Sick Children's	15,125
Angus	17,145
Dumfries and Galloway Acute and Maternity Hospitals	17,145
East and Midlothian	17,145
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	17,145
Hairmyres and Stonehouse Hospitals	17,145
Highland Communities	17,145
Inverclyde Royal and Rankin Memorial Hospitals	17,145
Kirkcaldy Acute Hospitals	17,145
Law Hospital	17,145
Perth and Kinross Healthcare	17,145
Queen Margaret Hospital, Dunfermline	17,145
Dundee Healthcare	19,285
Edinburgh Healthcare	19,285
Fife Healthcare	19,285
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	19,285
Greater Glasgow Community and Mental Health Services	19,285
Renfrewshire Healthcare	19,285
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh	19,285
Stobhill	19,285
West Glasgow Hospitals University	19,285
Western General Hospitals	19,285

National Health Service Staff

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff were employed in 1993 in the NYHS *(a)* in anciallary grades, *(b)* as nurses and midwives in training and *(c)* in administrator grades.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* The information requested is detailed in the table.

Selected NHSIS staff: at 30 September 1993

	Number	*WTE*
(a) Anciallary staff	20,583	13,286·4
(b) Nurses in training	8,690	8,681·4

	Number	WTE
Student midwife	301	301·0
Health visitor/district nurse	36	35·2
Other post registration/enrollment	885	882·5
Basic student	3,816	3,810·7
Pupil	35	35·0
P2000 students[1]	3,617	3,617·0
(c) Administrative Grades[3]	6,638	6,459·8
General and Senior Management	1,162	1151·6
A & C—Grade 7 and over[2]	983	912·4
A & C—Grades 4-6	4,543	4,395·8

[1] At 31 October 1993.
[2] Includes protected grades.
[3] Administrators per se are not identified in the occupational classification used in the NHS. The numbers of senior managers and higher A & C grades are shown but include many staff who are not administrators, such as computer programmers and systems analysts.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many in-patients have been waiting *(a)* six months or more and *(b)* one year or more for operations.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* At 30 September 1993 there were 13,412 patients who had waited more than six months and 4,347 patients who had waited more than one year on waiting lists for in-patient treatment.

NHS Management (Cars)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much was spent on cars for senior management by each health board in Scotland and in total in each of the past five years for which figures are available;

(2) how much was spent on cars for senior management by each national health service trust in Scotland, in each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* This information is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Blood

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what quantity of blood donated through the Blood Transfusion Service in Scotland has gone to the private health sector in each of the past five years; and what proportion this forms of total donations;

(2) to what extent Scotland has been self-sufficient in blood supplies in each of the past five years; and how any surplus has been used or any deficit been met.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* The information available is as follows:

	Blood units issued	Percentage of total issues in Scotland
1988-89	3,301	0·97
1989-90	3,347	0·94
1990-91	3,361	0·90
1991-92	3,036	0·79
1992-93	3,250	0·89

In each of the past five years Scotland has been self-sufficient in supplies of fresh blood, plasma and fresh blood components, meeting all clinical demand. A small quantity of blood products of types not produced in Scotland is obtained from other suppliers as and when required for special clinical purposes.

Red cell concentrate is the product most often in surplus and when requested in an emergency on humanitarian grounds any surplus available has been provided to blood transfusion services in other parts of the United Kingdom or to the World Health Organisation and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are *(a)* qualified to act as a chairman of fair employment tribunals, *(b)* appointed to the panel of lay members of fair employment tribunals after consultation with organisations representative of employers and *(c)* appointed to the panel of lay members of fair employment tribunals after consultation with organisations representative of employed persons; how many there are in each category whose perceived religious affiliation is (i) Protestant, (ii) Roman Catholic and (iii) not determined; how many come from outside Northern Ireland; and how many of the latter were born in (1) the rest of the United Kingdom or (2) the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: All chairmen and panel members of the fair employment tribunal have addresses in Northern Ireland. Information relating to the country of birth is not held by the Department of Economic Development. The other information sought is given in the following table:

Fair employment tribunal members qualified to act as:	Total number	Perceived number of: Protestants	Roman Catholics
(a) Chairman	3	1	2
(b) Lay panel members representative of employers	27	18	9
(c) Lay panel members representative of employees	31	13	18

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Sir John Wheeler: No Minister has used the Malaysian airline MAS since 1985. Whilst some officials of the Industrial Development Board have, on a few occasions, used the airline, further details could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the distribution of average gross weekly earnings per person for each of the

national health service clinical nursing and midwifery grades, listing the percentages of each grade earning under £140, £150, £160, £170, £180, £190, £200, £210, £220, £230, £240, £250, £275, £300 and those earning £300 and over in each year since 1991.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is provided in the table.

Percentage distribution of average gross weekly earnings for clinical nursing and midwifery grades in Northern Ireland

Percentage

Gross weekly earnings	*Scale A*	*Scale B*	*Scale C*	*Scale D*	*Scale E*	*Scale F*	*Scale G*	*Scale H*	*Scale I*
1991-92									
<£140	11·9	5·1	2·3	10·8	1·5	1·8	0·6	1·1	0·0
<£150	8·1	1·7	0·3	0·9	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·5	0·0
<£160	15·5	12·8	0·3	0·6	0·1	0·0	0·2	0·0	0·0
<£170	12·7	20·5	0·6	1·6	0·2	0·3	0·8	0·0	0·0
<£180	18·9	14·5	1·5	1·7	0·1	0·0	1·1	0·0	0·0
<£190	15·9	11·9	2·2	1·8	0·3	0·0	0·2	1·1	0·6
<£200	6·5	10·2	5·0	2·1	0·3	0·3	0·2	1·1	0·6
<£210	5·1	9·4	9·4	4·6	0·6	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·6
<£220	3·1	3·4	11·6	12·8	0·5	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£230	0·7	3·4	19·9	27·1	0·9	0·0	0·2	0·0	0·0
<£240	0·6	1·7	21·0	31·0	1·8	0·9	0·3	0·0	0·0
<£250	0·2	2·5	10·0	29·9	2·7	2·4	0·1	0·0	0·0
<£275	0·1	0·8	11·4	47·1	21·1	2·1	0·7	0·0	0·6
<£300	0·0	0·8	3·3	17·3	40·9	8·2	2·2	0·0	0·0
£300+	0·1	0·8	0·6	9·4	27·9	83·5	92·6	95·9	97·2
1992-93									
<£140	5·5	2·2	1·8	7·2	1·4	1·2	0·3	1·4	0·0
<£150	3·1	0·5	0·1	0·5	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0
<£160	8·9	0·0	0·3	0·2	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£170	15·7	7·4	0·3	0·5	0·3	0·6	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£180	13·2	6·2	0·1	0·4	0·1	0·0	0·2	0·0	0·0
<£190	17·2	17·7	0·5	0·8	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£200	16·2	6·8	1·3	1·5	0·3	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0
<£210	8·1	10·8	2·7	2·3	0·3	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0
<£220	4·9	17·1	5·8	2·3	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£230	3·7	12·5	9·7	5·6	0·3	0·3	0·1	0·0	0·0
<£240	1·8	6·8	13·2	16·2	0·8	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£250	0·6	5·1	21·4	28·4	0·8	0·0	0·0	0·4	0·0
<£275	0·4	5·1	31·7	71·5	6·7	2·7	0·8	0·0	0·0
<£300	0·0	0·5	8·5	36·0	22·6	4·6	0·4	0·9	0·0
£300+	0·0	0·5	1·7	25·5	65·0	90·4	97·4	97·1	100·0
1993-94									
<£140	4·7	0·4	1·8	2·9	1·2	0·3	0·4	0·0	0·0
<£150	2·7	0·4	0·0	0·3	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£160	5·2	0·9	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0
<£170	13·3	3·7	0·2	0·3	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£180	15·4	7·0	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£190	15·5	14·1	0·6	0·5	0·1	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£200	18·2	9·9	0·8	0·4	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£210	11·3	7·5	2·0	0·6	0·4	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0
<£220	5·6	9·4	6·6	1·6	0·1	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£230	2·9	9·9	5·2	1·9	0·5	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£240	2·0	8·0	11·6	3·2	0·6	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£250	1·2	8·9	18·1	11·2	0·7	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
<£275	0·9	14·6	37·1	38·8	5·1	1·5	0·4	0·0	0·0
<£300	0·1	2·8	12·1	21·5	19·2	5·8	0·8	0·4	0·0
£300+	0·2	1·8	3·1	16·1	70·4	91·0	97·8	99·5	100·0

Note:
Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the number of NHS nursing and midwifery staff by pay grades within the groups of senior nursing and midwifery staff, educational staff, clinical nursing and midwifery staff, learners, and other staff, and to list the number of Project 2000 nursing students, in each year since 1989 and the percentage change between each year.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	1990	*1991*	*Percentage change*	*1992*	*Percentage change*	*1993*	*Percentage change*
Senior Nursing Staff	78	66	−15·38	67	+0·01	56	−16·42
Educational Staff	298	300	+0·67	295	−1·67	284	−3·37
Scale A	3,084	3,256	+5·58	3,177	−2·43	3,250	+2·30
Scale B	318	463	+45·60	609	+31·53	769	+26·27

	1990	1991	Percentage change	1992	Percentage change	1993	Percentage change
Scale C	1,354	1,222	−9·75	1,137	−6·95	1,032	−9·23
Scale D	4,034	4,415	+9·44	4,536	+2·74	5,026	+10·80
Scale E	6,030	5,898	−2·19	5,711	−3·17	5,567	−2·52
Scale F	453	446	−1·54	467	+4·70	452	−3·21
Scale G	2,295	2,218	−3·35	2,117	−4·55	1,989	−6·05
Scale H	184	224	+21·74	243	−8·48	240	−1·23
Scale I	185	166	−10·27	156	−6·02	137	−12·18
Student Nursing	2,121	1,362	−35·78	631	−53·67	39	−93·82
Project 2000 Student Nurses	188	861	+358·00	1,441	+67·40	1,715	+19·00

Note: Information for 1989 is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The 2000 nurses schemes started in September 1990.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the average gross weekly earnings and make-up of pay by type of pay or allowance for each of the clinical grades for nursing and midwifery staff in each year since 1991.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is provided in the tables.

Average gross weekly earnings for clinical nursing grades (full-time) in Northern Ireland

Clinical grade	Gross pay £	Basic pay £	Allowances £
1991-92			
Scale A	165·82	139·85	25·97
Scale B	179·30	158·45	20·85
Scale C	225·50	190·61	34·89
Scale D	235·97	200·78	35·19
Scale E	283·90	241·49	42·41
Scale F	329·66	284·24	45·42
Scale G	350·80	320·42	30·38
Scale H	380·62	353·46	27·16
Scale I	415·72	395·24	20·48
1992-93			
Scale A	179·12	151·01	28·11
Scale B	205·07	176·55	28·52
Scale C	242·84	205·49	37·35
Scale D	258·43	219·45	38·98
Scale E	303·88	258·20	45·68
Scale F	349·66	306·84	42·82
Scale G	380·61	348·46	32·15
Scale H	409·15	383·41	25·74
Scale I	446·17	428·20	17·97
1993-94			
Scale A	182·94	152·75	30·19
Scale B	217·48	180·20	37·28
Scale C	248·80	209·53	39·27
Scale D	266·02	224·26	41·76
Scale E	309·54	262·30	47·24
Scale F	354·43	310·24	44·19
Scale G	386·69	353·09	33·60
Scale H	421·98	392·17	29·81
Scale I	452·88	430·28	22·60

Dairy Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dairy farms there were in Northern Ireland in each year since 1985.

Mr. Ancram: In the Northern Ireland agricultural census, until 1992 a farm was classified as a specialist dairying farm if dairying accounted for over two-thirds of the farm's total standard gross margin and as a mainly dairying farm if the proportion was between half and two thirds and if dairying was the largest enterprise. The numbers of such farms are given in the table for each year between 1985 and 1992.

	Specialist Dairying	Mainly Dairying	All Dairying
1985	5,605	1,770	7,375
1986	5,465	1,674	7,139
1987	5,334	1,567	6,901
1988	5,079	1,609	6,688
1989	4,897	1,631	6,528
1990	4,733	1,718	6,451
1991	4,553	1,805	6,358
1992	4,319	1,854	6,173

A new system of farm typology was introduced in 1993 and under this 5,124 farms were classified as dairy farms. On that new basis the number of dairy farms in 1992 was 5,235.

Prison Places

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the total numbers of prison places in Northern Ireland on *(a)* 1 June 1979, *(b)* 1 June 1983, *(c)* 1 June 1987 and *(d)* 1 April 1992 and on the latest date for which figures are available.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

	Optimum capacity[1]
1 June 1979	1,785
1 June 1983	1,881
1 June 1987[1]	2,253
1 April 1992	2,253
23 March 1994	2,253

[1] Optimum capacity is based on single cell occupancy and does not include compound—dormitory style—accommodation in use prior to 1987—mainly for special category prisoners.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the total numbers of prisoners in custody in Northern Ireland on *(a)* 1 June 1979, *(b)* 1 June 1983, *(c)* 1 June 1987 and *(d)* 1 April 1992, and on the latest date for which figures are available.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

	Total prison population
1 January 1979[1]	[2]2,671
1 January 1983[1]	[2]2,348
1 April 1987[1]	[2]1,939
1 April 1992	1,844
23 March 1994	1,937

[1] Statistics are not available for the specific dates in question in 1979, 1983 or 1987 but the figures provided reflect the prisoner population on the closest available dates to those requested.
[2] Includes special category prisoners housed in compound (dormitory style) accommodation prior to, and including, 1987.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the total numbers of prisoners in custody in Northern Ireland on the first day of each month from May 1992 until the latest month for which figures are available.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

	Total prison population
1 May 1992	1,860
1 June 1992	1,861
1 July 1992	1,853
1 August 1992	1,807
1 September 1992	1,791
1 October 1992	1,861
1 November 1992	1,868
1 December 1992	1,867
1 January 1993	1,760
1 February 1993	1,891
1 March 1993	1,967
1 April 1993	1,991
1 May 1993	1,943
1 June 1993	1,946
1 July 1993	1,948
1 August 1993	1,888
1 September 1993	1,866
1 October 1993	1,901
1 November 1993	1,886
1 December 1993	1,891
1 January 1994	1,786
1 February 1994	1,877
1 March 1994	1,947

Local Government Finance

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for each of the last 10 years and the next year, the average, highest and lowest district rates struck in Northern Ireland and the average percentage increase each year in the regional rate and the total percentage increase in the average district rate and the percentage increase in the regional rate over the whole period or as much of such information as is readily available to him.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information requested is provided in the tables.

	Highest district rate (pence)	Lowest district rate (pence)	Average district rate (pence)	Average percentage increase in district rate
1984-85	64·85	30·10	49·36	4·49
1985-86	69·04	33·00	52·13	5·61
1986-87	76·36	38·00	57·22	9·76
1987-88	80·03	38·00	60·07	4·98
1988-89	83·96	39·90	62·62	4·25
1989-90	83·96	37·90	64·11	2·38
1990-91	88·08	44·39	67·63	5·49
1991-92	96·73	51·00	74·04	9·48
1992-93	100·22	55·79	78·60	6·16
1993-94	103·12	55·75	81·37	3·52
1994-95	105·04	57·42	83·59	2·73

The actual percentage increase in each year in the regional rate is:

Year	Non-domestic (pence)	Percentage rise on last year	Domestic (pence)	Percentage rise on last year
1984-85	93·34	7·86	81·34	9·12
1985-86	100·87	8·07	88·87	9·26
1986-87	110·38	9·43	98·38	10·70
1987-88	113·53	2·85	101·53	3·20
1988-89	122·59	7·98	110·59	8·92
1989-90	138·07	12·63	126·07	14·00
1990-91	148·27	7·39	136·27	8·09
1991-92	165·40	11·55	71·40	–47·60
1992-93	153·17	–7·39	67·17	–5·92
1993-94	139·98	–8·61	65·98	–1·77
1994-95	148·68	6·22	74·68	13·19

The total percentage increase in the average district rate since 1984-85 is 69.35 per cent.
The percentage increase in the regional rate over the whole period is:—
(a) Non-domestic regional rate 59 per cent.
(b) Domestic regional rate –8·2 per cent.

WALES

Tai Cymru

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of Tai Cymru's annual budget is spent on central administration.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1992-93 Housing for Wales's running costs equated to 1·01 per cent. of the total budget that it administered.

House Renovation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will include in grants for the renovation of houses an allowance for value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Value added tax can already be covered by a home renovation grant.

Rented Housing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the statistical database used by his Department in support of proposals made in his recent consultation paper on access to local authority and housing association tenancies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office has available to it the range of local authority-provided information which is published annually in "Welsh Housing Statistics". It also has information on housing association activity provided by Housing for Wales's returns and by the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations.

Cash Limits

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for changes to the cash limits for his Department in the current financial year.

Mr. Redwood: The cash limit for WO/LACAP will be reduced by £9,491,000 from £409,543,000 to £400,052,000 and the cash limit for WO/HFW will be increased correspondingly by £9,491,000 from £130,017,000 to £139,508,000.

These changes reflect a transfer of provision from local authorities to Housing for Wales which will enable housing associations to provide additional housing units.

ENVIRONMENT

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the benefit-cost ratio for the proposed extension of the docklands light railway to Lewisham *(a)* with a toll for the river crossing and *(b)* without a toll, indicating in each case (i) the total annual cost, including capital cost of construction, rolling stock costs, equivalent annual capital cost and annual operating costs and (ii) the total benefit including time savings, overcrowding relief, total public transport users' benefit and additional rail revenue.

Mr. Baldry: Provisional indications are that the project to build the Lewisham extension of the docklands light railway will be financially viable only with a revenue-maximising cross-river toll and with capital costs constrained to a figure around £100 million. In 1993 the benefit:cost ratio of the project on this basis was estimated to be 3·5:1. The forecast benefits included passenger time savings of £220 million and non-user benefits of £54 million. No similar analysis has been carried out for theoretical, non-financially viable, options.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost of each appeal against council tax evaluations *(a)* in England as a whole and *(b)* in each standard region.

Mr. Baldry: The estimated cost of processing a council tax appeal in the current financial year is £115. This estimate includes costs incurred by the Valuation Office Agency and valuation tribunals at all stages of the appeal process, although the great majority of appeals are settled without the need for a full tribunal hearing. The figure is derived by adding the unit cost for registering and handling cases by the VOA and the average unit cost of dealing with all categories of appeals, including those relating to non-domestic valuations and community charge liability, at valuation tribunals. Estimates of the costs are not made for individual regions.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of the valuation exercise in England including the appeals process, since the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Baldry: The cost of the original valuation exercise was £69·69 million. Voted provision for all work undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency in respect of council tax in 1993-94, including work on appeals, is £34·166 million.

In addition, the running costs of valuation tribunals amount to £10·2 million in 1993-94. Their jurisdiction includes council tax and community charge liability appeals and non-domestic rating appeals as well as appeals against council tax valuations.

PSA Building Management

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many companies expressed an interest in the purchase of the PSA's Building Management south-east division when its sale was announced in January.

Mr. Curry: A total of 170.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was his Department's estimate as to the sum which would accrue to the Government following the takeover of the PSA's Building Management South-East; and what assumptions underlay this estimate.

Mr. Curry: It would not be right for the vendor to make public the assumptions or estimates which led to the sale of Building Management South East, while discussions are continuing with the purchasers of the business with a view to agreeing a completion statement, in accordance with the sale agreement. As is usual in the case of major privatisations, the National Audit Office is conducting a study of the sales of the Building Management businesses the findings of which will be published in due course.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria, apart from price, were used to evaluate the bids for the purchase of the PSA's Building Management south-east division.

Mr. Curry: As the sale documentation made clear, regard would be had to the following factors, in addition to price, in selecting purchasers for the PSA Building Management businesses:

Purchasers' financial status;
The credibility of purchasers' long term future plans;
Purchasers' commitment to developing the BM business or businesses in the private sector;
Purchasers' intentions regarding staff and the prospects for staff;
Purchasers' responses to the proposed secondment and pension arrangements;
Purchasers' commitment to ensuring continuity of service to existing customers; and
A preference to sell the businesses to different purchasers in order to promote competitive private sector markets.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff transferred from the PSA's Building Management south-east division to AMEC plc and Pell Frischmann Consulting Engineers Ltd. when the sale of BMSE was completed.

Mr. Curry: A total of 438.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value of the assets of the PSA Building Management south-east at the time of its sale to AMEC plc and Pell Frischmann Consulting Engineers Ltd.

Mr. Curry: As provided for in the sale agreement, the value of the assets transferred will be subject to a completion statement to be agreed between the vendor and purchaser. The outcome of this process will be announced to the House in due course.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which companies were shortlisted to bid for the purchase of the PSA's Building Management south-east division.

Mr. Curry: Four bids were shortlisted for the purchase of PSA Building Management south-east. Details of them are commercially confidential.

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total Government spending in the London boroughs of *(a)* Lewisham, *(b)* Bromley, *(c)* Wandsworth, *(d)* Hammersmith and Fulham and *(e)* Kingston.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information on central Government financial support for the London boroughs concerned is as follows:

Government grants: 1993-94 estimates

£ thousand

	Revenue grants[1]	*Capital grants*	*Housing subsidies*[2]	*Total*
Lewisham	214,560	10,004	73,923	298,486
Bromley	140,342	5,244	0	145,586
Wandsworth	260,200	6,031	42,531	308,762
Hammersmith and Fulham	170,834	3,887	43,362	218,083
Kingston-upon-Thames	69,797	2,237	7,389	79,423

[1]Revenue grants consist of Revenue Support Grant, Specific and Special Grants; redistributed non-domestic rates are excluded.
[2]This consists of Housing Revenue account Subsidies and contributions towards running costs of Approved Home Improvement Agencies.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average revenue support grant per capita awarded to local authorities which are *(a)* Conservative controlled, *(b)* Liberal Democrat controlled, *(c)* Labour controlled and *(d)* under no overall control.

Mr. Baldry: Revenue support grant is distributed so that, if all authorities spent at their standard spending assessment, all council tax payers could receive broadly a standard level of service while paying the same level of council tax as any other council tax payer in a given property band. The amount of revenue support grant which any local authority receives will thus depend on the services for which that authority is responsible, and on the social, demographic and physical characteristics of the area.

In most areas of England provision of local services is split between different classes of local authority. The average revenue support grant figures for 1994-95 in pounds per capita for the main classes of English local authorities are as follows:

	Conservative	*Liberal Democrat*	*Labour*	*No overall control*	*Other*	*All*
Inner London boroughs	573	1,166	756	777	—	741
Outer London boroughs	387	257	552	425	—	436
Metropolitan districts	310	—	424	391	—	414
Shire counties	298	232	299	250	—	262
Shire districts	28	34	51	36	38	38

Estate Action Bids

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the number and location of all unsuccessful estate action bids, giving the reasons for his Department's decision.

Sir George Young: Estate Action bids are considered by my Department and discussed with local authorities in the context of their overall housing requirements. Authorities are invited to work up bids that go furthest in meeting current Estate Action guidelines and offer the best value for money. Two hundred and seventy bids were received for schemes planned to start in 1994-95, of which

115 could be funded within available resources. Information on the regional split of the 155 unsuccessful schemes is as follows:

Number of 1994-95 unsuccessful Estate Action bids

DOE region	*Number*
Yorkshire and Humberside	8
Merseyside	26
North West	15
Northern	9
South West	21
London	37
East Midlands	10
West Midlands	16
South East	3
Eastern	10
Total	155

Information about previous years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Buildmark Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints he has received concerning approved inspectors of the National House Building Council's buildmark scheme.

Mr. Baldry: Inspectors approved by the Secretary of State to carry out building control work, and who are employed by NHBC Building Control Services Ltd., carry out a separate function to those involved in the NHBC's role as provider of the Buildmark warranty. The operation of the Buildmark warranty is a matter for the NHBC which is an independent body and the Government have no general powers to intervene in its affairs.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received from *(a)* hon. Members, *(b)* members of the general public and *(c)* chambers of trade and other trade organisations requesting tighter controls and regulation of car boot sales.

Mr. Baldry: Since the start of this parliamentary Session on 18 November 1993, we have received 10 letters from hon. Members requesting tighter planning controls on car boot sales.

The Department and its regional offices receive numerous representations on a whole range of issues affecting car boot sales, but further information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Building Regulations

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions he has been asked to use his powers under A1 regulation 6(3) of the Building Regulations 1985 to withdraw his approval from a designated body, on the grounds that it had not operated responsibly in accordance with the Building Regulations 1985.

Mr. Baldry: Regulation 4 of the Building (Approved Inspectors etc) Regulations 1985 gives the Secretary of State power to designate a body for the approval of inspectors. As no such body has been approved, questions of withdrawal of approvals using the powers under regulation 6(3) do not arise.

District Audits

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the procedure for appeal against the district audit decision.

Mr. Baldry: Final decisions by a district auditor on an objection to accounts raised under section 17(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 are subject to appeal. Both the objectors and respondents have the right of appeal to the courts.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider the employment of additional staff in order to speed up the implementation of the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan.

Mr. Atkins: Implementation of the biodiversity action plan will require input from many Government Departments, public agencies and non-government organisations, co-ordinated through the action plan steering group. It is too early to assess the staffing implications.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members of the public have sought a reference back to the Local Government Commission in *(a)* Gloucestershire and *(b)* Somerset.

Mr. Baldry: Seven members of the public wrote to my right hon. Friend asking for a further review of Gloucestershire and, to date, three have written in support of a further review of Somerset.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he received from *(a)* local authorities including local councils and *(b)* members of the public, concerning the Local Government Commission's recommendations for the future of local government in Gloucestershire; and how many of those two groups (i) supported the Local Government Commission's recommendations or (ii) supported reference back.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend received 67 representations from principal local authorities and local councils. Eight were opposed to the main recommendation. Three district councils asked for a further review, as did the Gloucestershire branch of the Association of District Councils. A total of 36 representations were received from members of the public. Twenty-one supported the main recommendation, while it was opposed by 15, seven of whom asked for a further review.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make public the letters from local authorities in Gloucestershire asking for a reference back to the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Baldry: I have arranged for copies of the relevant letters to be placed in the Library.

English Partnerships

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for financing the expenditure of English Partnerships.

Sir George Young: The expenditure of English Partnerships—the urban regeneration agency—will be financed by grant-in-aid and receipts which include those from the sale of capital assets for reinvestment in its programmes. In 1994-95, capital receipts are expected to amount to £78 million. Any such receipts in excess of £86 million will be surrendered to the Consolidated Fund. This arrangement is set out in the introductory note to the supply estimate for class VII, vote 3—regeneration initiatives, England—from which the grant-in-aid will be paid.

Sizewell B

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making for ministerial decisions relating to Sizewell B power station.

Mr. Gummer: Sizewell is in my constituency, and I have accordingly delegated responsibility for all ministerial decisions to my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside.

Waste Management Licensing

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce a scheme of fees and charges for waste management licensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Following consultation, and with the approval of the Treasury, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Wales and for Scotland have made a charging scheme for waste management licensing under section 41 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The scheme comes into force on 1 May 1994 and prescribes the fees which are to be paid to waste regulation authorities for applications for waste management licences; the fees for applications for the modification, transfer or surrender of licences; and charges for the subsistence of licences. It also prescribes the amounts which waste regulation authorities are to pay out of those fees and charges to the National Rivers Authority in England and Wales, or to river purification authorities in Scotland, for consultation in relation to licences.

The fees and charges are set in bands of quantities and types of waste. Following consultation we have made a number of changes to the originally proposed scheme which will be of benefit to small businesses and the recycling industry. These changes include the introduction of additional lower bands set at 5,000 tonnes per annum for the treatment or keeping of waste and for the disposal of inert waste. The 1994-95 subsistence charges for these lower bands have also been set at 70 per cent. of our assessment of full recovery of waste regulation authorities' costs. This is a transitional provision which will ensure that the introduction of fees and charges does not have an immediate and adversely disproportionate impact on small businesses, particularly small businesses engaged in the recycling of waste.

In accordance with section 41(4) of the 1990 Act copies of the scheme are being laid before both Houses and placed in the libraries of both Houses. The scheme forms part of a document which also provides guidance on its operation.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* Neither I nor my predecessors have produced a public interest immunity certificate in legal proceedings in any year since 1990.

Global Environmental Facility

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the negotiations over the funding of the global environmental facility held in Geneva from 14 March.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) on 21 March at column *19*. I am pleased to add that the replenishment total of US$2,023 million exceeds the US$2 billion target set, and that the ODA played a major role in negotiating the agreement on the restructuring of the global environment facility.

European Parliament Elections

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funds are being made available to electoral registration officers in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* London, to publicise information to EU citizens from outwith the United Kingdom on voter registration; and in which of the official languages of the European Union versions will be provided.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 15 March at column *588*. No additional funds for publicity have been made available to electoral registration officers. The information sheets and application forms provided for citizens of the European Union are in English.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools have had parental ballots (i) supporting and (ii) rejecting grant-maintained status during each calendar month since May 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the table.

Results of parental ballots on GM status

Ballot month	Secondary "Yes" votes	Secondary "No" votes	Primary "Yes" votes	Primary "No" votes
1992				
May	8	0	1	2
June	11	0	4	0
July	37	5	9	5
August	6	1	3	0
September	6	1	9	0
October	58	16	15	4
November	45	13	11	2
December	43	17	14	4
1993				
January	25	7	11	4
February	29	8	27	4
March	24	6	39	2
April	18	5	16	5
May	16	12	40	9
June	20	12	35	13
July	6	3	27	10
August	1	1	8	1
September	2	1	1	5
October	5	1	8	2
November	10	8	12	6
December	13	4	15	8
1994				
January	2	0	14	2
February	3	11	13	3
March[1]	6	4	6	5

[1] Up to and including ballots closing on 22 March 1994.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for each school so far holding a ballot of parents on grant-maintained status in accordance with section 28 of the Education Act 1993, *(a)* the date the ballot was initiated, *(b)* whether this was by governors' resolution of parents' petition and *(c)* the date on which the ballot papers were dispatched to parents.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out below.

School holding ballots on grant-maintained status under section 28 of 1993 Education Act

LEA	School	Date initiated	Form of initiation	Date of dispatch
Cheshire	Pott Shrigley CE (VA) primary school	2 January 1994	Parents' petition	1 February 1994
Bradford	Myrtle park first school	5 January 1994	Governors' resolution	7 February 1994
Staffordshire	Christ Church CE middle school	6 January 1994	Parents' petition	7 February 1994
Lincolnshire	The Middlefield school	6 January 1994	Governors' resolution	9 March 1994
Berkshire	Prospect school	10 January 1994	Governors' resolution	11 February 1994
Surrey	St. Bede's school	10 January 1994	Governors' resolution	16 February 1994
Berkshire	Blessed Hugh Faringdon RC school	10 January 1994	Governors' resolution	28 February 1994
Northamptonshire	St. Mary's CE (VA) primary school	10 January 1994	Governors' resolution	28 February 1994
Lincolnshire	Lincoln school of science and technology	11 January 1994	Governors' resolution	2 February 1994
Cumbria	Flimby primary school	11 January 1994	Governors' resolution	9 February 1994
Gloucestershire	Sir William Romney's community school	11 January 1994	Governors' resolution	21 February 1994
Somerset	Haygrove school	11 January 1994	Governors' resolution	21 February 1994
Barnet	Collindale primary school	11 January 1994	Governors' resolution	24 February 1994
Croydon	Christ Church CE primary school	11 January 1994	Parents' petition	1 March 1994
Leicestershire	Vale of Catmose college	12 January 1994	Governors' resolution	7 February 1994
Rochdale	Healey county primary school	12 January 1994	Governors' resolution	21 February 1994
Cumbria	The Sir John Barrow school	12 January 1994	Governors' resolution	15 March 1994
Surrey	Whyteleafe school	13 January 1994	Governors' resolution	7 February 1994
Croydon	St. Chad's RC primary school	13 January 1994	Governors' resolution	28 February 1994
Hampshire	Petersfield school	17 January 1994	Governors' resolution	14 February 1994
East Sussex	Claverham community college	17 January 1994	Governors' resolution	16 February 1994
Northamptonshire	Northampton Trinity school	18 January 1994	Governors' resolution	14 February 1994
East Sussex	Little common primary school	18 January 1994	Governors' resolution	22 February 1994
Halifax	Halifax RC high school	18 January 1994	Governors' resolution	16 March 1994
Havering	Crownfield junior school	20 January 1994	Governors' resolution	25 February 1994
Cumbria	Hensingham junior school	20 January 1994	Governors' resolution	2 March 1994
Gloucestershire	Northleach CE primary school	20 January 1994	Governors' resolution	23 March 1994
Lincolnshire	Wallace Fields middle school	24 January 1994	Governors' resolution	21 February 1994
Norfolk	Wicklewood county primary school	24 January 1994	Governors' resolution	25 February 1994
Lincolnshire	The Central school	24 January 1994	Governors' resolution	15 March 1994
Warwickshire	Haselor primary school	25 January 1994	Parents' petition	21 February 1994
Berkshire	The Turnpike school	26 January 1994	Governors' resolution	16 February 1994
Warwickshire	All Saints CE first school	26 January 1994	Parents' petition	16 March 1994
Warwickshire	Dunnington CE primary school	28 January 1994	Parents' petition	9 March 1994
Derbyshire	Becket primary school	31 January 1994	Governors' resolution	2 March 1994

LEA	School	Date initiated	Form of initiation	Date of dispatch
Merton	Ursuline Convent high school	2 February 1994	Governors' resolution	28 February 1994
Calderdale	Bartisland CE (VA) primary school	2 February 1994	Parents' petition	7 March 1994
Derbyshire	Fairmeadows primary school	2 February 1994	Governors' resolution	21 March 1994
Warwickshire	Middlemarch middle school	3 February 1994	Parents' petition	21 March 1994
Essex	The Notley high school	3 February 1994	Governors' resolution	24 March 1994
Wiltshire	Clarendon infants school	4 February 1994	Governors' resolution	2 March 1994
Wiltshire	Clarendon junior school	4 February 1994	Governors' resolution	2 March 1994
Gloucestershire	Christ Church primary school	4 February 1994	Governors' resolution	4 March 1994
Berkshire	Highdown school	4 February 1994	Governors' resolution	8 March 1994
Calderdale	Todmorden high school	4 February 1994	Governors' resolution	9 March 1994
Nottinghamshire	Padstow comprehensive school	7 February 1994	Governors' resolution	2 March 1994
Surrey	Fullbrook school	7 February 1994	Governors' resolution	4 March 1994
Derbyshire	Woodlands community school	7 February 1994	Governors' resolution	7 March 1994
Bradford	Ryshworth middle school	7 February 1994	Governors' resolution	21 March 1994
Rotherham	Pope Pius RC comprehensive school	8 February 1994	Governors' resolution	3 March 1994
Bradford	Oakworth first school	9 February 1994	Governors' resolution	3 March 1994
Buckinghamshire	Bradwell village middle school	10 February 1994	Governors' resolution	15 March 1994
Derbyshire	St. John Houghton RC school	21 February 1994	Governors' resolution	15 March 1994
Northamptonshire	Thrapston primary school	21 February 1994	Governors' resolution	16 March 1994
Rochdale	Hollingworth high school	23 February 1994	Governors' resolution	16 March 1994
Nottinghamshire	All Saints RC comprehensive school	2 March 1994	Governors' resolution	17 March 1994
Northamptonshire	Stanion CE primary school	3 March 1994	Governors' resolution	21 March 1994

Note: This table is derived from information provided by Electoral Reform Ballot Services.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what applications have been received from grant-maintained schools for special purpose grant (restructuring); and, in each case *(a)* how many posts have been affected, *(b)* whether the post of (i) head teacher or (ii) deputy head teacher was affected and *(c)* what grant has been agreed.

Mr. Robin Squire: Applications for special purpose grant—restructuring—have to date been approved in respect of 923 posts at 414 schools at a total cost of £6,251,179,·42. A more detailed breakdown of the posts is not available.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the schools where a new head teacher has been appointed since the school became grant maintained.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not collated centrally.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the grant-maintained schools which have published proposals to make a significant change in the character of the school giving, in each case, *(a)* the date of publication, *(b)* the nature of the proposed change and *(d)* his decision.

Mr. Robin Squire: Proposals published under section 89 of the Education Reform Act 1988 for a significant change of character in grant-maintained schools are as follows:

Change of age range: To add or extend sixth form

School	LEA	Proposal date	Nature of change	Decision	Decision date
Chalvedon School	Essex	5 June 1991	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	27 August 1991
The Cornwallis School	Kent	15 November 1991	11-17 to 11-18	Approved	5 March 1992
Higham Park School	Waltham Forest	14 January 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Rejected	11 May 1992
Baverstock GM School	Birmingham	3 February 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	15 June 1992
Moseley Park GM School	Wolverhampton	30 March 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	17 August 1992
The Mapleaden Noakes School	Kent	2 April 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	16 July 1992
West Hatch School	Essex	30 April 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	30 July 1992
Beauchamps GM School	Essex	4 June 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	17 August 1992
Bromfords School	Essex	4 June 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	17 August 1992
Aylesford School	Kent	10 July 1992	11-17 to 11-18	Rejected	25 November 1992
Higham Park School	Waltham Forest	31 July 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	2 February 1993
Wrotham School	Kent	6 August 1992	11-17 to 11-18	Rejected	5 March 1993
Senacre Technology School	Kent	4 September 1992	11-17 to 11-18	Rejected	5 March 1993
Thamesview School	Kent	16 September 1992	11-17 to 11-18	Rejected	5 March 1993
Olborough Manor Community College	Kent	18 September 1992	11-17 to 11-18	Rejected	5 March 1993
Ringwood School (GM Comprehensive)	Hampshire	2 October 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	16 February 1994
Small Heath School	Birmingham	19 October 1992	11-17 to 11-18	Approved	4 May 1993
The Queen's School	Cambridgeshire	23 October 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Rejected	1 July 1993
Queen Elizabeth School, Atherstone	Warwickshire	5 November 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	3 March 1993
The Arnewood School	Hampshire	7 November 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	16 February 1994
The Philip Morant School	Essex	11 December 1992	11-16 to 11-18	Rejected	28 July 1993
St. Augustines RC (GM) Comprehensive School	Wiltshire	15 January 1993	11-16 to 11-18	To be republished	
The Burgate School	Hampshire	21 January 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Approved with modification	16 February 1994
Sawtry Village College	Cambridgeshire	18 February 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	4 June 1993
Heathside Secondary School	Surrey	4 April 1993	12-16 to 11-18	Rejected	24 August 1993

School	LEA	Proposal date	Nature of change	Decision	Decision date
Meopham GM School	Kent	15 April 1993	11-17 to 11-18	Rejected	10 August 1993
The Merrill Community School	Derbyshire	20 April 1993	11-16 to 11-19	Approved	16 February 1994
Chellaston School	Derbyshire	26 April 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	16 February 1994
The Frances Bardsley School	Havering	8 June 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
The King John School	Essex	26 June 1993	11-16 to 11-19	Approved	16 February 1994
The Thorpe Bay High School	Essex	12 July 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Rejected	23 February 1994
William Farr CE School	Lincolnshire	31 July 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	2 March 1994
Sheringham High School	Norfolk	30 July 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Approved	16 February 1994
The New Wellington High School	Trafford	30 July 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Rejected	8 March 1994
Cortessey High School	Norfolk	16 August 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Noel Baker Community School	Derbyshire	4 November 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Gleed Girls GM School	Lincolnshire	26 November 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Greenwood Dale GM School	Nottinghamshire	16 December 1993	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Highcliff School	Dorset	15 January 1994	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Riddlesdown GM High School	Croydon	28 January 1994	11-16 to 11-19	Under consideration	
Castle Hill GM School	Lincolnshire	28 January 1994	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Angley School	Kent	28 February 1994	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
St. Peter and St. Paul	Lincolnshire	22 February 1994	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Bay House School	Hampshire	4 March 1994	11-16 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Thamesview School	Kent	11 March 1994	11-17 to 11-18	Under consideration	

To add or extend nursery

School	LEA	Proposal date	Nature of change	Decision	Decision date
The Manor County First School	Surrey	26 November 1992	4-8 to 3-7	Rejected	18 June 1993
Hawkedale First School	Surrey	17 December 1992	5-8 to 3-7	Rejected	18 June 1993
Wold Newton GM Primary School	Humberside	28 January 1993	5-11 to 3-11	Under consideration	
Katherines Primary School	Essex	29 April 1993	5-11 to 3-11	Under consideration	
Alder Coppice GM Primary School	Dudley	10 November 1993	5-11 to 3-11	Under consideration	
Robinswood Primary School	Gloucester	19 November 1993	4-11 to 3-11	Under consideration	
Bourne Abbey (GM) Primary School	Lincolnshire	9 December 1993	4-11 to 3-11	Under consideration	
Send CE GM School	Surrey	16 December 1993	5-7 to 3-7	Under consideration	

Other change of age range

School	LEA	Proposal date	Nature of change	Decision	Decision date
St. John The Baptist	Surrey	21 November 1991	12-18 to 11-18	Approved	4 November 1992
Hardley School (GM)	Hampshire	2 January 1992	12-16 to 11-16	Approved	19 October 1992
Wood End Middle School	Ealing	5 February 1992	8-12 to 7-12	Approved	13 July 1992
Guildford County School	Surrey	14 February 1992	12-18 to 11-18	Approved with modification	18 June 1992
Drayton Manor High School	Ealing	8 May 1992	12-19 to 11-19	Approved with modification	11 September 1992
Northolt High School	Ealing	8 May 1992	12-19 to 11-19	Approved	11 September 1992
Greenford High School	Ealing	15 May 1992	12-19 to 11-19	Approved with modification	11 September 1992
Brentside High School	Ealing	15 May 1992	12-19 to 11-19	Approved with modification	11 September 1992
De Stafford School	Surrey	23 June 1992	12-18 to 11-18	Approved with modification	5 May 1993
Heathside Secondary School	Surrey	16 July 1992	12-16 to 11-16	Approved	2 November 1992
Oakwood Park Grammar School	Kent	17 July 1992	13-18 to 11-18	Approved	5 March 1993
The City of Portsmouth Boys' School	Hampshire	17 July 1992	12-16 to 11-16	Approved with modification	2 March 1993
Castle Hall GM School	Kirlees	2 October 1992	9-13 to 11-16	Approved	1 April 1993
Ash Green	Warwickshire	12 October 1992	12-16 to 11-16	Rejected	22 April 1993
Glyn School	Surrey	15 October 1992	12-18 to 11-18	Approved	18 June 1993
Rosebery School	Surrey	21 October 1992	12-18 to 11-18	Approved	18 June 1993
The Beacon Secondary School	Surrey	29 October 1992	12-18 to 11-18	Approved	18 June 1993
Send CE First School (GM)	Surrey	26 November 1992	5-8 to 5-7	Approved with modification	5 May 1993
Collingwood GM School	Surrey	15 December 1992	12-18 to 11-18	Approved	18 June 1993
Epsom and Ewell High School	Surrey	17 December 1992	12-18 to 11-18	Approved	18 June 1993
Avon Valley	Warwickshire	18 January 1993	12-16 to 11-16	Approved with modification	25 January 1994
Wood End First School	Ealing	5 February 1993	3-8 to 3-7	Approved	13 July 1993
Testwood School	Hampshire	5 February 1993	12-16 to 11-16	Approved	24 February 1994
Clifford First	Sheffield	17 February 1993	5-8 to 5-11	Rejected	23 July 1993
Front Lawn Middle School	Hampshire	26 July 1993	8-12 to 7-11	Approved	8 October 1993
Purbrook Park School	Hampshire	14 October 1993	12-16 to 11-16	Approved	11 February 1994
Calmore Middle School	Hampshire	15 October 1993	8-12 to 7-11	Approved	24 February 1994

School	LEA	Proposal date	Nature of change	Decision	Decision date
Queen Elizabeth GM School	Warwickshire	22 October 1993	12-18 to 11-18	Under consideration	
Abbotswood Middle School	Hampshire	16 November 1993	8-12 to 7-11	Approved	24 February 1994
Park Mead First School (GM)	Surrey	19 November 1993	5-8 to 5-7	Under consideration	
Yattendon Middle School	Surrey	1 December 1993	8-12 to 7-11	Under consideration	
Lyndhurst Middle Primary School	Hampshire	7 February 1994	8-12 to 7-11	Under consideration	

To add whole or partial selection

School	LEA	Proposal date	Nature of change	Decision	Decision date
Castle Hall GM School	Kirklees	8 November 1991	100 per cent. selection by ability and change of age range 9-13 to 11-18	Rejected	21 May 1992
Southlands School	Berkshire	17 July 1992	Selective form of entry	Approved	12 February 1993
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School	Cumbria	5 September 1992	Selection and change of age range 13-18 to 11-18	Approved	31 March 1993
Budmouth GM School	Dorset	23 June 1993	10 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	
Cheam High School	Sutton	21 October 1993	50 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	
Chaucer Technology School	Kent	29 November 1993	100 per cent. selection by aptitude for technology	Under consideration	
Homewood School	Kent	9 December 1993	20 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	
Watford Grammar (Girls) School	Hertfordshire	17 December 1993	50 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	
Watford Grammar (Boys) School	Hertfordshire	17 December 1993	50 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	
Queen Elizabeth Boys School	Barnet	17 December 1993	100 per cent. selection including 10 per cent. by aptitude for music	Under consideration	
Parmiter's School	Hertfordshire	14 January 1994	50 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	
Rickmansworth School	Hertfordshire	21 January 1994	50 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	
Graveney GM School	Wandsworth	25 February 1994	50 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	
Burntwood School	Wandsworth	3 March 1994	30 per cent. selection by ability	Under consideration	

To add or remove boarding

School	LEA	Proposal date	Nature of change	Decision	Decision date
Skegness Grammar School	Lincolnshire	23 November 1989	Introduction of boarding	Approved with modification	31 October 1990
Caistor Grammar School	Lincolnshire	10 February 1994	Removal of boarding	Under consideration	

City Technology Colleges Trust

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what annual grant is paid to the City Technology Colleges Trust; if he will list all *(a)* trustees and *(b)* council members of the City Technology Colleges Trust since its foundation giving the periods of service of each; and what payments have been made to council members of the City Technology Colleges Trust.

Mr. Robin Squire: The annual grant to be paid by the Department to the City Technology Colleges Trust for the 1994-95 financial year is £664,500. The charitable trustees of the trust, who are its council members, are listed below, together with their periods of service. No remuneration is paid to council members, although reasonable expenses incurred for attendance at council meetings are reimbursed if requested.

City Technology Colleges Trust Council Members/Trustees

Council Member	Length of service (Months)
Current	
Sir Cyril Taylor	83
Sir Robert Balchin	32
Valerie Bragg	5
Donald Bompas CMG	41
Christopher Bostock	53
Baroness Brigstocke	70
Hugh de Capell Brooke	56
Nicholas Carey	11
John Deacon	32
Robert Findlay	55
Canon Gerald Greenwood	50
Sir Ronald Halstead CBE	83
Gilbert Jessup	11
Stanley Kalms	82
Martin Landau	65
Sir Geoffrey Leigh	65
Jack Mawdsley	14
John Nelson-Jones	83
Richard Painter	20
Michael Prideaux	41
George Proctor	5
Sir Randolph Quirk CBE	85
Colin Shock	11
Ronald Somerville	11
Professor Sir Brian Thwaites	82
Peter Vardy	62
Michael Wakeford	29
Garfield Weston	11
Lord White of Hull	82
Christopher Woodhead	26
Lord Young of Graffham	29
Previous	
Arthur Andrews	6
Michael Ashcroft	42
John Barnes	27
Colin Bell	22
Richard Branson	27
Anthony Collins	38
Gerald Dennis	30

Council Member	Length of service (Months)
Sir Harry Djanogly	71
Terrence Ellis	18
Stanley Goodchild	12
Joseph Harmatz	72
Sir Philip Harris	39
Maurice Hatter	37
Leslie Jones	30
Robert Maas	72
Donald Naismmith	35
Gordon Owen	36
John Sellars	62
Julian Smith	21
Julian Wathen	36

Grammar Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what number and percentage of maintained secondary school pupils are educated in grammar schools in the latest year for which information is available; what were the comparable figures for the years in which general elections were held since 1964; and what were the percentage point changes between these dates.

Mr. Patten: The information is as follows:

Pupils in maintained grammar schools in England in January of each year: 1964 to 1993

Year	Number of pupils in maintained grammar schools (Thousands)	Percentage of maintained secondary school pupils educated in grammar schools (Percentage)	Changes between years (Percentage points)
1964	667	25·2	—
1970	569	19·9	−5·3
1974	400	11·4	−8·4
1979	163	4·2	−7·2
1983	117	3·1	−1·1
1987	100	3·1	−0·1
1992	109	3·8	+0·7
1993	112	[1]3·8	0·0

Note: The percentage of maintained secondary school pupils educated in grammar schools remains broadly constant between 1992 and 1993, despite a rise in the number of pupils in maintained grammar schools, because there was an increase of equal proportions, in the number of pupils in *all* maintained schools over this period.

Primary and Secondary Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the four secondary schools in the maintained sector for which he has most recently approved significant capital expenditure and which are over 90 per cent. full and which occupy new, extended or modified buildings.

Mr. Forth: Whether schools are 90 per cent full or occupy new, extended or modified buildings are not criteria for capital support. Details of capital grants to voluntary aided and special agreement schools and of local education authorities' annual capital guidelines were placed in the Library following the reply of 17 December 1993 from my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford, (Mr. Burns) *Official Report,* column *946.* Copies of press notices of 16 December 1993 and 21 March 1994 announcing capital grants to self-governing, grant-maintained schools were placed in the Library.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 17 March, *Official Report,* column *848,* concerning cost multipliers for new primary and secondary schools if he will state in arithmetic terms the teaching area standards which he regards as the minimum acceptable in respect of each place in *(a)* primary schools, *(b)* secondary schools already in operation and *(c)* new schools.

Mr. Forth: The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981, as amended, prescribe the minimum overall teaching areas to be provided at maintained schools, according to the number of pupils at the school and their age range. Schools already in existence when the 1981 standards were introduced have until 1996 to comply with these standards.

Copies of the 1981 regulations and the previous 1972 regulations are available from the Library.

Special Schools

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to be able to make a decision concerning the reorganisation of Bensham Manor and St. Nicholas special schools.

Mr. Forth: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 18 March to explain that my right hon. Friend is minded to approve the reorganisation of Bensham Manor and St. Nicholas schools proposed by Croydon LEA, subject to the satisfactory resolution of a few remaining issues. My officials wrote to Croydon's director of education on the same day to convey this information. The timing of my right hon. Friend's final decision will depend on the LEA's response to that letter.

Schools Reorganisation, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report,* column *128,* if he will send the hon. Member for Don Valley a copy of his decision on school reorganisation in the Doncaster area when he announces it.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have today sent the hon. Member a copy of the official letter to Doncaster local education authority setting out my right hon. Friend's decisions on those parts of Doncaster LEA's phase 3 reorganisation proposals which fall to him for determination. I have also sent the hon. Member a copy of my letter to him dated 14

March conveying my right hon. Friend's decision to approve that part of the reorganisation proposals which affect schools in his constituency.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time for a claimant to receive invalidity benefit before being referred to the Benefits Agency medical service.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Benefit

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *479*, if he will disclose such information as is readily available on the payment of housing benefit by local authority.

Mr. Hague: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Medical Examinations

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many referrals for a medical examination have been made where the claimant has successfully appealed against a decision that they are capable of work within *(a)* one month, *(b)* three months and *(c)* six months, of the appeal being heard, for each quarter of 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Benefit

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide the most recent statistics covering a full year of the number of disqualifications from unemployment benefit for voluntary unemployment under each of the various heads of section 28(1) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the "Unemployment Benefit Statistics—Quarterly Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions", copies of which are in the Library.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of whether he is satisfied that the Child Support Agency is acting in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1984 in revealing details of an individual's income.

Mr. Scott: The agency has devised its procedures to comply with the Data Protection Act, and is in regular discussion with the data protection registrar to ensure that it continues to meet its requirements.

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been made to the Child Support Agency; and how many of those applications have actually been completed.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the monthly report on the agency's performance in the Library.

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what ethnic monitoring there is of the applications and assessments by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Scott: The chief executive of the Child Support Agency, Ros Hepplewhite, informs me that the agency does not carry out such monitoring.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many assessments for payment of maintenance by the Child Support Agency have been made where the absent parent is in receipt of benefits in *(a)* the London borough of Newham and *(b)* Great Britain.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 24 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of assessments made by the Child Support Agency where the absent parent is receiving benefit.

You asked for figures for both the London Borough of Newham and Great Britain. Information is not available specifically for the London Borough of Newham, but national figures show that during the period from 5 April 1993 to 31 January 1994 the Agency assessed maintenance in 32,700 cases where the absent parent was on Income Support.

Figures are not available for other benefits.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency the parent with care has not named the absent parent due to harm and undue distress; and in how many cases it has been accepted by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 23 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of cases in which good cause has been an issue and the number of cases in which it has been accepted.

From 5 April 1993 to 31 January 1994, 44,600 parents with care were considered in relation to the requirement to cooperate. Of the cases so far completed, good cause was accepted in nearly 25,000; the absent parent was named in 8,900; and 330 were referred to the Beneifts Agency to consider implementation of a Reduced Benefit Direction.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if there is provision in the operation of the Child Support Agency for the parent with care to withdraw his or her authorisation to pursue the absent parent when such authorisation has resulted in violence towards the parent with care.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 24 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the provision for the parent with care to withdraw authorisation to pursue the absent parent.

After the parent with care has authorised the Secretary of State to recover maintenance, the requirement to cooperate in arranging maintenance may be withdrawn if it is considered that there would be a risk of harm or undue distress to the parent or any child living with her or him.

If a parent with care approaches the Child Support Agency about this, an officer acting for the Secretary of State will discuss the matter with her or him and will consider the basis for their concern. I should stress that the parent will be believed unless what is said is contradictory or improbable.

If the requirement to cooperate is subsequently withdrawn, the parent with care will be given the opportunity to request the Secretary of State to cease pursuing the absent parent for maintenance. The Agency will then cease all action on the case.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what procedure the Child Support Agency has in place to deal with complaints arising from the operation of the agency; and how this is publicised;

(2) how many complaints on the operation of the Child Support Agency have been *(a)* received and *(b)* dealt with.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 24 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of complaints received and cleared by the Child Support Agency and the Agency's complaints procedures.

The Agency has received a total of 15,479 written enquiries and complaints to the end of February 1994, of which 11,945 have been cleared. The Agency's clients are sent information about the complaints procedure as part of the maintenance application and enquiry packs.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases pursued by the Child Support Agency have not been successful in resulting in the payment of maintenance to the parent with care due to *(a)* failure to locate absent parent, *(b)* failure to obtain details of absent parent, *(c)* failure to enforce payment or *(d)* other reasons.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 24 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking about the effectiveness of the Child Support Agency in obtaining the payment of maintenance to the parent with care.

As at 31 January 1994 the Agency had successfully traced the absent parent in 19,000 cases where their whereabouts were not previously known. There were only 2,800 cases where the Agency was unable to trace the absent parent, and these cases may be re-opened if new information becomes available. Overall, the Agency has contacted 381,300 absent parents.

During the same period there were 37,400 cases where it was either accepted that the parent with care had "good cause" not to identify the absent parent, or where they declined to do so, and "good cause" was not accepted.

You also asked about enforcement. Activity in this area is at a relatively early stage, and the process can prove time consuming. However, so far out of 2,700 cases in which enforcement action had commenced, payment had been re-established in 280 cases.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Permanent Health Insurance Policies

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the estimated cost to his Department of extra-statutory concessions on benefits paid under permanent health insurance policies during 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

Precise figures are not available centrally, but the estimated cost of the concession which exempted benefits from tax for the remainder of the tax year in which they commenced and the subsequent tax year was £10 million in 1991-92 and £15 million in 1992-93. The revenue cost of this concession will be lower in future years as a result of the changes in its operation which were announced on 30 November 1993.

War Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the correspondence between the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Lord Henley, and the President of the war pensions appeal tribunal on the proposed changes in legislation for noise-induced hearing loss entitlement which were announced by the Government in 1992.

Mr. Hague: Lord Henley consulted the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions on the proposals to amend the war pensions legislation on noise-induced hearing loss. He did not consult the then president of the war pensions appeal tribunal on the proposed changes.

HEALTH

Health Service Administration

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the administration of each regional health authority cost in the last four years and in 1978, adjusted to 1993 prices.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the table. The figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are not directly comparable with the figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 because of the introduction of capital charges and other changes to accounting procedures. Simple comparisons between authorities are misleading because regional health authorities devolved their non-core functions at varying times and bore different costs on their regional budgets. Administration expenditure figures are not held for individual health authorities in 1978.

Administration costs for Regional Health Authorities 1989-90—1992-93 at 1993 prices

Region	*1989-90 £000s*	*1990-91 £000s*	*1991-92 £000s*	*1992-93 £000s*
Northern	8,919	10,300	19,433	21,517
Yorkshire	12,774	14,528	67,010	44,751
Trent	13,718	13,026	18,867	21,227
East Anglian	9,712	12,614	8,310	9,595
North West Thames	10,880	13,371	20,334	32,126
North East Thames	15,588	16,931	33,096	21,720
South East Thames	17,949	18,235	17,153	19,142
South West Thames	16,370	16,820	13,638	16,625
Wessex	7,450	9,472	20,741	23,493
Oxford	5,612	6,918	27,768	29,210
South Western	9,545	11,655	16,143	16,773
West Midlands	21,499	30,201	23,196	26,306
Mersey	7,211	6,996	24,881	28,409
North Western	14,742	15,054	13,450	16,454

Source Annual accounts of regional health authorities.

Notes:

1. The table shows expenditure adjusted to 1992-93 prices by use of the Gross Domestic Product deflator.
2. The figures represent expenditure on pay and accommodation costs of the staff at Regional Health Authority headquarters and exclude costs of emergency bed service, planning and setting up NHS Trusts, grants not related to purchase of health care, education and training, expenditure on Community Health Councils. They do not include the costs of purchasing healthcare.
3. The figures for the years vary between RHAs as regions were managed in an integrated way and the balance of management between RHAs and their respective district health authorities (DHAs) differed between regions. The figures were also affected by other factors including differences in the geographical size of regions and in the extent to which RHAs directly managed operational services. Following implementation of the NHS Reforms from April 1991, the role of RHAs changed. There were significant variations in the extent to which RHAs retained or devolved management, support and operational services functions and in the extent to which their costs are borne or recharged to users directly involved in the purchaser function.
4. The figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Complaints Review

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her review of national health service complaints procedures includes a right for patients to lodge complaints against employees of general practitioners.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the publication of the review of national health service procedures.

Dr. Mawhinney: The committee set up to review national health service complaints procedures has now made its report with a number of recommendations and we are considering our response to these.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice the review of national health service complaints took from the social service inspectorate.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Severance Payments

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *438*, on irregular severance payments, what action she has taken to recover the irregular payment of £78,000.

Dr. Mawhinney: Any ultra vires payment by a health authority is recoverable in principle, and it is obligatory for the authority in question to consider the feasibility of recovery and to take prompt action as appropriate. The Department of Health and Her Majesty's Treasury will be looking to ensure that this happens in the instance referred to.

DNase

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the hospitals which took part or are taking part in trials of the drug DNase; on whose behalf these trials were conducted; when the results of the trial will be published; and if she will be issuing guidance to health boards on the use of the drug if the trials are successful.

Mr. Sackville: Medicinal products for use in clinical trials are regulated under the Medicines Act 1968 and subsidiary legislation. The Medicines Control Agency acting on behalf of the licensing authority keeps confidential records of all applications to conduct clinical trials. Information from these records cannot be disclosed in accordance with section 118 of the Medicines Act. The question of guidance to health boards is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. In England, it is for a local district health authority to decide priorities in the light of competing demands on finite resources. The Department of Health encourages the national health service to study the results of research into drugs.

Accident and Emergency Units

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current ratio of accident and emergency units to district general hospitals in London; and what the ratio was *(a)* two, *(b)* five and *(c)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) on 22 February at columns *210-11*.

General Practitioner Prescribing

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to commission a medical audit of the quality of treatment being received by patients of general practitioner practices whose annual prescribing costs are 20 per cent. below the average for practices in their family health service authority areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: Family health services authorities are responsible for working with general practitioner practices to make sure that their prescribing is both cost-effective and meets all the clinical needs of their patients.

Pre-school Child Care

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* nursery places and *(b)* child minding places there were in England and Wales, (i) in total and (ii) in the private sector for 1987 and the last year that figures were available.

Mr. Bowis: Information on day nursery and child minder places in England for 1987 and the latest available year is contained in the publication "Children's day care facilities at 31 March 1992, England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Information about nursery schools is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

The number of nursery and child minding places in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Sheffield Community Health Trust

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent by Sheffield health authority in consultative fees for research, design or establishment costs for the logo to be adopted by the proposed Sheffield Community Health Trust operational from 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for Sheffield health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. J. Neill, for details.

Pain Clinics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pain clinics are available in the Doncaster area; on what sites; and how many people were treated at each in 1992, 1993, and 1994 to date.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Doncaster health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. J. G. Smith, for details.

Dental Services

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of patients being deregistered for NHS dentistry treatment in each of the health authority areas within the south-west region, and what is the proportion per head of population in each of those areas, for the latest available period.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information for the latest available period is shown in the table. At 31 January 1994, there were 2,178,566 patients registered in South Western region. Based on June 1992 estimates, this represents 62·2 per cent. of the population of the region. In England since July 1992 there has been a net increase of over 600,000 patients registered and a net increase of 264 dentists in contract with family health services authorities.

Number of patients and percentage of population deregistered, week ending 18 March 1994, by FHSA

FHSA	*Number of patients deregistered during week ending 18 March 1994*	*Percentage of population deregistered*
Avon	36	0·004
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	22	0·005
Devon	79	0·008
Gloucestershire	206	0·038
Somerset	129	0·027

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much additional revenue would be raised in a full year by increasing the contributions to NHS dental treatment fees for patients not exempt from charges to 100 per cent.

Dr. Mawhinney: We estimate that an increase in contributions for patients liable to pay dental charges to 100 per cent. of the national health service dental fee would raise £90 million–£100 million additional revenue in a full year. This estimate is made on the assumption that there is no change in the demand for or supply of dental treatment under the general dental services. It also takes into account the maximum patient charge from 1 April 1994 of £275 for a course of NHS dental treatment.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS dentists in England are offering private dental insurance schemes to their patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for individual dentists who are independent contractors, who themselves decide whether, and to what extent, to provide private treatment.

Press Conference Suite

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the planned uses for the new Department of Health press conference suite; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The new conference room in Richmond house will be used for conferences, meetings, training seminars and workshops by the Departments of Health and Social Security. The room has also been equipped for press conferences and interviews.

The conference facility is also being made available for other Government Departments.

NHS Trusts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what freedom NHS trusts have to vary the terms and conditions for service for hospital medical and dental staff in relation to the freedom of practitioners to publish articles or to speak on any issue without the prior consent of their employer.

Dr. Mawhinney: Trusts have freedom to recruit staff on new terms and conditions and can negotiate new terms with existing staff.

NHS Employees

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning the number of employees aged over 70 years who are currently allowed to continue to work within the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information available centrally suggests that there were about 200 direct care staff aged over 70 years as at 30 September 1992.

Complaints

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether it is her policy to apply different standards in relation to complaints by social service clients and NHS patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are separate procedures for complaints by social service clients and national health service patients.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the budget, *(b)* the outturn and *(c)* the amount retained by general practitioner fundholders in each family health service authority area for each of the last four years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about general practitioner fundholder budgets is available centrally only at regional health authority level.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* administrative staff, *(b)* practice nurses, *(c)* other nurses, *(d)* social workers or counsellors and *(e)* other staff are directly employed by general practitioners' fundholding practices.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information collected centrally covers all general practitioner-employed staff. It does not distinguish between fundholding and other GP practices.

Call-out Fees

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis general practitioners may charge a call-out fee to *(a)* an individual patient, *(b)* a voluntary organisation providing a community care service, *(c)* a family health service authority and *(d)* a district health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under their terms of service general practitioners receive a fee from their family health services authority for making a visit to a patient between 10 pm and 8 am. GPs may not charge any call-out fee to patients.

Family Health Services Authorities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much was paid over to family health services authorities by district health authorities in each of the last five years;

(2) what was the total amount of money paid over by family health services authorities to *(a)* district health authorities and *(b)* local authorities for services provided and joint projects for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The annual accounts and financial returns of family health services authorities and district health authorities do not analyse income and expenditure in a way which would permit the identification of all such payments to DHAs or local authorities by FHSAs or to FHSAs by DHAs.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the responsibility for a family health services authority to ensure that adequate general practitioner cover is available to respite centres for carers and day centres for elderly or disabled people.

Dr. Mawhinney: A family health services authority may require a general practitioner included in its medical list to provide treatment at any place in his practice area, provided that there is no other doctor who, at the time of the request, is under an obligation to give treatment to that person.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish in the *Official Report* details of the administrative costs of administering the family health service authorities for England for each year since 1989-90; and what has been the percentage change since then for the latest possible year.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* The revenue expenditure on family health services authorities —in 1989-90, family practitioner committees—in England on administration was £67 million in 1989-90, £104 million in 1990-91, £136 million in 1991-92 and £162 million in 1992-93. The percentage change from 1989-90 to 1992-93 was 142 per cent. FHSAs manage the introduction of general practitioner fundholding, the monitoring of prescribing and the development of clinical audit in primary care—all initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness of patient care and value for money the national health service receives from its investment in primary care services. In 1992-93, FHSA administrative expenditure represented only 2·5 per cent. of the £6·5 billion of taxpayers' money spent on the family health service.

Community Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *356*, what steps a member of community care staff with concerns about fraud or client abuse by their employer can take.

Mr. Bowis: It is the responsibility of social care staff to raise such issues with their line managers and with any other authority as appropriate.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures her Department takes to ensure that voluntary organisations and private providers of community care services have suitable complaints procedures in place.

Mr. Bowis: Voluntary and private providers of community care services are responsible for their own complaints procedures. If the service is being provided under a contract from the local authority, the local authority's own complaints procedures are available.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to bring forward legislation to replace regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: As soon as parliamentary time allows.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the names of the regional health authorities after 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: The following is the information:

Northern and Yorkshire
Anglia and Oxford
South Thames
North West
Trent
North Thames
West Midlands
South and West

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she intends to transfer the freehold of St. Bartholomew's hospital at Smithfield to the new Royal Hospital of St. Bartholomew, the Royal London hospital and the London Chest hospital national health service trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter which is currently being discussed by the trust project team and the North Thames Outpost.

Midwifery Supervision

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on which is the appropriate body or person to make local decisions on midwifery supervision; what guidance or circulars have been issued in relation to this question; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The policy for local supervision of midwifery practice is set out in the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979. In section 16(1)*(a)* it is specified that in England the local supervising authorities shall be the regional health authorities.

Guidance on supervision of midwives has been issued by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting to the regional health authorities, and by them to the supervisors of midwives in their areas of supervision.

Hospital Staff

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when paragraph 330 of the terms and conditions for service for hospital medical and dental staff was last revised; and what was the effect of that revision.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1981, when a reference to "an administrative medical officer of a regional hospital board" was deleted as no longer relevant.

Water Births

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take further steps to draw the attention of all NHS providers of maternity services, in relation to water births, to the recommendations of her expert maternity group that where there are no proven risks in any procedure, priority should be given to the expressed wishes of the mother-to-be.

Mr. Sackville: Circular EL(94)9 already sets out action required by national health service purchasers and providers to implement the recommendations of the expert maternity group within the next five years. Copies of this circular are available in the Library.

Adoption Registration Data

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she plans to take to increase the confidentiality of adoption registration data and to guarantee a standard, controlled procedure through which birth relatives may seek to re-establish contact with adopted adults; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The means already exist for adopted adults and their birth parents or relatives to make contact by using the Adoption Contact Register, established in May 1991 and operated by the registrar general. I am studying the judgment of the Court of Appeal of 21 March concerning disclosure of information from the index to the Adopted Children's Register and will consider with the registrar general how best to reconcile access to the register with the need to protect confidentiality.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *890*, if she will indicate the number of full days per week, month and year which Sir Donald Wilson is expected to commit to his responsibilities as chairman of the Mersey regional health authority; where information about Sir Donald's attendance record is held; if she will request copies of that attendance record, and those of all chairmen of regional health authorities; and if she will make it her policy in future to hold centrally such information.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Donald Wilson was recently appointed as chairman of North West regional health authority and non-executive regional policy board member for that region. We have every confidence that he will fulfil these responsibilities with distinction and we have no intention of requiring him, or other non-executive members of the policy board, to report their daily involvement upon national health service business.

Dental Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental patients have been de-registered in each family health services authority since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply, 17 March, c. 836-38]:* I regret that there was an omission in the second sentence of my previous reply. It should read "Since July 1992 there has been a net increase of over 600,000 patients registered and an increase of 264 dentists in contract with family health services authorities".

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Offices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many proposals there are in each English region, Wales and Northern Ireland for conversion of Crown to agency status post offices; and if he will list the affected offices in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that consultation on a proposal to convert the following Crown post offices had *(a)* been completed but the conversion had not taken place by 21 March 1994 or *(b)* is currently in progress. The information is provided on the basis of Post Office Counters regions, except in the case of data for Wales and Northern Ireland which has been produced separately.

North Thames and Anglia Region
(a) Completed
Woodbridge
Borehamwood
Cannon St. London
Chief Office London
Ware
Hatfield
Maida Vale
Rayleigh
Bush Fair Harlow
Staple Tye Harlow
Leytonstone
Epping
Beaconsfield
Bicester
Prestwick Road Watford
West Ealing
Maida Hill
Cricklewood
(b) In Progress
Forest Gate
Wolverton
Sheringham
Brandon
Turners Hill Cheshunt
Bruce Grover Tottenham
Wanstead

Midlands Region
(a) Completed
Corporation Street Coventry
Warstone Lane Birmingham
(b) In Progress
Nantwich

North West Region
(a) Completed
Buxton
Barnes Green Manchester
Farnworth
Tarporley
Birkenhead
Nelson
Morecambe
Darwen
High Town Manchester
Radcliffe
(b) In Progress
Stockport Road Manchester
Cheadle (Cheshire)
Bury

North East Region
(a) Completed
Peterlee
Heaton Newcastle upon Tyne
Shipley
Worksop
Otley
Hexham
(b) In Progress
Hessle
Cleethorpes

South East Region
(a) Completed
Bexleyheath
Godalming
Hythe
Blackheath
Gloucester Road London
Battle
Heathfield
South Kensington
Sunbury
Leatherhead
Havant
Hassocks
(b) In Progress
None

South West Region
(a) Completed
Portishead
Victoria Road Swindon
Bude
Ilfracombe
Marlborough
Seaton
Street
Tewkesbury
(b) In Progress
None

Northern Ireland
(a) Completed
Strabane
(b) In Progress
None

Wales
(a) Completed
Machynlleth
Dolgellau
Penbroke Dock
Tredegar
Brecon
Colwyn Bay
(b) In Progress
None

Mail Interception

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if the Security Service has been consulted during the Post Office review about mail interception procedures;

(2) what consideration is being given in his review of the future of the Post Office to changes to mail interception procedures;

(3) what consultations he has had in the course of his review of the future of the Post Office about mail interception procedures.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government would not make any proposals which did not deal satisfactorily with all relevant issues.

Heavy Commercial Vehicles

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the number of commercial vehicles on British roads weighing more than 7·5 tonnes; what was the proportion of imported vehicles in each year; and what factors underlie the trend in this proportion.

Mr. Needham: The number of vehicles over 7·5 tonnes licensed in the United Kingdom in 1988 and 1992 were 305,000 and 266,000 respectively. Data for the earlier years are not available. Figures for the proportion of imported vehicles in the total stock are not available. Data showing the volume of United Kingdom imports of vehicles over 7·5 tonnes are published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders in "Motor Industry of Great Britain, World Automotive Statistics". This publication is in the Library of the House.

Mechanical Engineering Products

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in the volume of orders on hand for United Kingdom mechanical engineering products for supply to the United Kingdom market since 1989; what the corresponding figures are for Germany, France and Italy; whether he will publish a table showing the value and volume of output, imports, exports and consumption of mechanical engineering products in the United Kingdom and each of these countries in 1970, 1979, 1989 and 1992 together with the numbers employed; and when he expects United Kingdom orders for supply to the United Kingdom market to regain the 1989 level.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom information on the volume of orders on hand is regularly published in "Engineering Sales and Orders," published by CSO, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Corresponding figures for Germany, France and Italy are not readily available.

Some comparable information on the value of output and employment for 1979 and 1989 is available on the Eurostat Cronos database, which can be assessed via the Library of the House. Corresponding information for 1970 and 1992 is not readily available. The information requested on trade and the volume of output is not readily available. Information on consumption of mechanical engineering products is not collected. The Department does not make industrial forecasts.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the reasons for the difference between the rate of change in the level of United Kingdom exports according to table 6.5 of "Eurostat Basic Statistics of the Community, 1993" in *(a)* 1978 to 1989 and *(b)* 1975 to 1979.

Mr. Needham: The Department has not undertaken such an assessment.

Overseas Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the value of Austrian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of apparel in SITC 84 and of Austrian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(2) what was the value of Austrian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of electrical machinery not elsewhere specified in SITC 77 and of Austrian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(3) what was the value of Austrian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of iron and steel and of Austrian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(4) what was the value of Austrian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of manufacturers of metal in SITC 69 and of Austrian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(5) what was the value of Austrian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of telecommunications equipment and sound recording apparatus and of Austrian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(6) what was the value of Austrian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of specialised machinery in SITC 72 and of Austrian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the prinicpal United Kingdom user industries;

(7) what was the value of Austrian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of power generating machinery and equipment and of Austrian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(8) what was the value of Austrian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of textiles, and so on, in SITC 65 and of Austrian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries.

Mr. Needham: The 1992 information can be found in "Commodity Trade Statistics 1992 Series D" Vol. XLII, Nos. 1-09 and 1-12, published by the United Nations, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Information on United Kingdom trade with Austria during 1993 is published in "Business Monitor MM20 Overseas Trade Statistics of the UK with Countries outside the European Community", published by CSO, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Information on principal products can be obtained from the sources listed above. Information on United Kingdom user industries of goods imported from Austria is not collected.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the value of Belgian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of manufactures of metal in SITC 69 and that of Belgian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(2) what was the value of Belgian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of iron and steel in SITC 67 and that of Belgian imports from the United Kingdom; what were the corresponding figures based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(3) what was the value of Belgian exports to the United Kingdom of textiles in SITC 65 in 1992 and of Belgian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade

returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(4) what was the value of Belgian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of photographic apparatus, optical goods and clocks and watches and of Belgian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(5) what was the value of Belgian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of miscellaneous manufactured products in SITC89 and of Belgian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(6) what was the value of Belgian exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of other transport equipment in SITC79 and of Belgian imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries.

Mr. Needham: Detailed information on trade statistics for Belgium and Luxembourg is classified together. The 1992 information can be found in "Commodity Trade Statistics 1992 Series D" Vol. XLII, Nos. 1-09 and 1-04, published by the United Nations, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Information on United Kingdom trade with Belgium-Luxembourg during the first three quarters of 1993 is published in "Business Monitor MQ20 Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with Countries within the European Community", published by CSO, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Owing to the introduction of Intrastat, data across the two years may not be comparable at the detailed product level. Information on principal products can be obtained from the sources listed above. Information on United Kingdom user industries of goods imported from Belgium-Luxembourg is not collected.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the value of French exports to the United Kingdom manufactures of metal SITC 69 in 1992, and of French imports from the United Kingdom; what were the corresponding figures based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992, and in 1993, to date; and what were the principal products in each case together with the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(2) what was the value of French exports to the United Kingdom of vehicles in 1992, and French imports from the United Kingdom, the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date and the principal products in each case;

(3) what was the value of French exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of electrical machinery in SITC 77 and of French imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(4) what was the value of French exports to the United Kingdom of power generating machinery and equipment in 1992 and that of French imports from the United Kingdom, the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and in 1993 to date, the principal products in each case and the principal United Kingdom user industries.

Mr. Needham: The 1992 information can be found in "Commodity Trade Statistics 1992 Series D" Vol. XLII, Nos. 1-01 and 1-09, published by the United Nations, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Information on United Kingdom trade with France during the first three quarters of 1993 is published in "Business Monitor MQ20 Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with Countries within the European Community", published by CSO, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Owing to the introduction of Intrastat, data across the two years may not be comparable at the detailed product level. Information on principal products can be obtained from the sources listed above. Information on United Kingdom user industries of goods imported from France is not collected.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the value of Finnish exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of iron and steel and of Finnish imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(2) what was the value of Finnish exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of road vehicles and of Finnish imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries.

(3) what was the value of Finnish exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of office machines and automatic data processing equipment in SITC75 and of Finnish imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries;

(4) what was the value of Finnish exports to the United Kingdom in 1992 of telecommunications and sound recording apparatus in SITC76 and of Finnish imports from the United Kingdom; what was the corresponding figure based on the United Kingdom trade returns in 1992 and 1993 to date; what were the principal products in each case; and which were the principal United Kingdom user industries.

Mr. Needham: The 1992 information can be found in "Commodity Trade Statistics 1992 Series D" Vol. XLII, Nos. 1-09 and 1-11, published by the United Nations, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Information on United Kingdom trade with Finland during 1993 is published in "Business Monitor MM20 Overseas Trade Statistics of the UK with Countries outside the European Community", published by CSO, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Information on principal products can be obtained from the sources listed above. Information on United Kingdom user industries of goods imported from Finland is not collected.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the United Kingdom current-weighted

share of the volume of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries between 1973 and 1990; and if he will make a statement on the changes.

Mr. Needham: The information is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on Tuesday 15 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *645*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will publish for 1970, 1973, 1979, 1985 and each year from 1989 exports by each of the main manufacturing countries of textiles, mechanical engineering products, and road motor vehicles on a comparable basis to that used in compiling the tables in the article published in the 18 November 1966 issue of the Board of Trade journal, entitled "United Kingdom and World Exports of Manufactures in the Past Decade."

Mr. Needham: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the changes since 1973 in *(a)* the United Kingdom share of the volume of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries, *(b)* the United Kingdom share of manufacturing output by these countries, *(c)* the volume of imports of manufactures from the rest of the EC as a ratio against United Kingdom output, *(d)* the rest of the EEC import penetration of the United Kingdom market for motor cars, *(e)* United Kingdom manufacturing output and *(f)* manufacturing employment.

Mr. Needham: The information on the United Kingdom share of the volume of exports by the main manufacturing countries to 1991 can be readily derived from table E1 of "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" annual supplement 1992, published by CSO, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. More timely information is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

The information on the United Kingdom share of manufacturing output by the main manufacturing countries can be readily derived from the information contained in the OECD "Main Economic Indicators" database which can be accessed from the Library of the House, and from the OECD publications "National Accounts Vol. II" and "Main Economic Indicators", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

The information on the United Kingdom volume of imports of manufactures as a ratio against United Kingdom output post-1987 can be readily derived from data available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed via the Library of the House. Comparable pre-1988 information is not readily available and could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

The information on European Union import penetration of United Kingdom motor car market can be readily derived from "Motor Industry of Great Britain—World Automotive Statistics", published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

The information on United Kingdom manufacturing output and employment can be readily derived from data available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed via the Library of the House.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what awards, or other forms of recognition, are made by his Department to individuals and companies from manufacturing industry.

Mr. Heseltine: The Department of Trade and Industry does not give any specific awards to individuals and companies from manufacturing industry.

It does, however, run the annual competition, SMART, for small and medium-sized enterprises of fewer than 50 employees and provides 180 awards of up to £45,000 each in the form of grants to help develop new products and processes. A second phase of the competition is also open to SMART winners and offers each of them up to a further £60,000 of grant support.

In addition, the Department co-sponsors many awards managed by private sector organisations; most are also open to the service sector. Examples of these awards are the export award for smaller businesses, the United Kingdom quality award and the best factory award.

The Department is also responsible for the work of the Queen's Awards Office, though recommendations to the Palace are made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Japanese Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the difference between the price index for Japan on page 31 of the January edition of OECD "Series A Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade" and the index of average values on page 23; and if he will make a statement as to the effect of each on calculations of the competitiveness of Japanese exports to Britain.

Mr. Needham: Definitional differences between the two indices are a matter for the OECD. The effect of each index will depend on the exact nature of the calculations performed.

Auditing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which sections of the Companies Act 1989 relate to the prevention of lobbying on behalf of the auditing industry by recognised supervisory bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None. The recognised supervisory bodies are free to bring to my attention any matters which they consider relevant to the conduct of audit.

Jammu and Kashmir

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken to date with the Indian authorities in respect of Madam Speaker's statement of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 21, regarding the document from Jammu and Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 16 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *701*.

Exports (Macedonia)

Mr. Sims: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to assist United Kingdom exporters whose consignments have been blocked by the Greek authorities en route to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Needham: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has made our concerns known to the Greek Government. We and other European partners are working to encourage the Greeks to lift the block on goods being transported to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia via the port of Salonika. We regard the blockade as illegal. Our embassy in Athens successfully assisted a British company soon after the imposition of the blockade. Since then no British companies have made representations to the Department or to the embassy.

Nuclear Facilities (Accident Insurance)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the reason for the proposed increase in publicly funded accident insurance coverage for nuclear facilities set out in the draft statutory instrument on the Atomic Energy and Radioactive Substances Nuclear Installations (Increase of Operators' Limits of Liability) Order 1994.

Mr. Eggar: The order increases the liability limit of nuclear operators under the Nuclear Installations Act for third party nuclear damage from £20 million to £140 million. In the case of licensees of prescribed sites, the limit will increase from £5 million to £10 million.

As set out in the explanatory memorandum to the order, the increase is in line with the recommendation made in 1990 by the steering committee for nuclear energy of the OECD for countries which are parties to the Paris convention. A copy of the memorandum will be placed in the Library of the House.

Subsidence

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for preventing fraud in the handling of money paid by the Coal Authority to contractors in respect of subsidence; and what response he has made to the recent letter from Mr. Neil Clarke to his Department on this matter.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 March 1994]:* The Coal Authority will want to ensure proper procedures and safeguards to minimise the risk of fraud for all their functions, whether carried out by their own staff or contractors. They will doubtless wish to take account of considerations referred to by Mr. Clarke.

Scotch Whisky

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will include in the agenda for the forthcoming EU/Bulgaria associations agreement meeting the tariff levels and excise tax rates facing Scotch whisky and other imported spirits in Bulgaria.

Mr. Needham: Following representations from my Department to the European Commission, this matter has been placed on the agenda for the agricultural sub-committee of the joint committee of the EU/Bulgaria interim agreement, which takes place in Sofia on 23-25 March.

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has raised with the Hungarian Government the effect on Scotch whisky exporters of Hungary's restrictive quota system applied to imported spirits.

Mr. Needham: My Department has been aware of the difficulties which importers of spirits face in this market for some time, and has raised these with Hungarian counterparts when appropriate.

We have agreed with the Scotch Whisky Association that, over the next few months at least, we may be of greatest help in supporting the industry's representations to the Hungarian administration. This we are doing, although recognising that progress may be difficult to sustain over the period of the Hungarian general elections which are due to be held in May.

Liquor Tax (Japan)

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action Her Majesty's Government plans to take following the Japanese Government's failure to implement in full the requirements of a 1987 GATT panel in regard to liquor tax as part of its budget proposals for 1994-95.

Mr. Needham: It is disappointing that the proposals in the budget currently passing through the Japanese Diet would merely reduce, rather than remove, tax discrimination against imported liquors.

My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade and I have all made clear to the Japanese Government on every possible occasion that we expect the recommendations of the GATT panel to be implemented as soon as possible. We will be considering with our EU partners what further action can be taken.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* The information requested is shown in the table.

Number and value (including amendments) of consultancy contracts awarded by the Department of Trade and Industry, 1989-1993

Calendar Year	Number of Contracts	Value (£)
1989	415	26,578,000
1990	517	27,620,000
1991	597	38,491,000
1992	543	36,612,000
1993	402	29,369,000

The above figures exclude consultancy contracts let independently by the Department's executive agencies.

Fire Safety

Mr. Mans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the conclusions and recommendations of the review of fire safety legislation and enforcement he announced on 17th January.

Mr. Nell Hamilton: The review of fire safety legislation and enforcement by a Government scrutiny team was announced on 17 January and is still in progress. It is taking representations from anyone with an interest.

I am aware that there are some concerns about the wording in an early draft of a report by the construction industry deregulation task force which suggested that the Government's position is already settled. That was a mistaken claim by the authors of the report and does not represent the Government's position. The scrutiny team is due to complete its work by the end of May and an announcement will be made in due course against the background of the Government's commitment not to compromise safety standards.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by *(a)* himself and *(b)* the Solicitor General in February.

The Solicitor-General: (a) 48 received, 30 written and (b) three received, two written.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

The Solicitor-General: The Law Officers answer parliamentary questions in accordance with paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

The Solicitor-General: None.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 25 March 1994

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cost of receptions held by the Parliamentary Secretary and myself in 1993-94 has been approximately £5,400. Four receptions were held: service for the citizen conference reception (£3,229); two receptions for the media—summer (£742) and Christmas (£1,122); and a Christmas reception for staff (£300).

Furniture

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cost of new furniture for my private office and that of the Parliamentary Secretary in 1993-94 was £1,558.

Alcohol Consumption

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Waldegrave: My guests and I have consumed less than two bottles of whisky and less than half a bottle of gin in 1993-94. No sherry or port has been consumed.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the dates on which Ministers or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost to his Department of each flight.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor, accompanied by his private secretary, used Malaysian Airlines on official business between 30 March and 8 April 1993. The total cost to the Department for the flights was £8,510.

In July 1990 the keeper of the Public Record Office travelled on Malaysian Airlines to attend the International Council on Archives. This flight was paid for by the event organisers.

EDUCATION

GEST Programme

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the specific courses, the numbers following them, and the numbers successfully completing them, funded in the 1993-94 grant for education support and training programme for teachers of people with *(a)* hearing impairment, *(b)* visual impairment, *(c)* severe learning difficulties, *(d)* dyslexia, *(e)* other language and communication difficulties, *(f)* emotional and behavioural difficulties, *(g)* moderate learning difficulties, *(h)* autism, *(i)* physical disabilities and *(j)* other learning difficulties and special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: This information is not currently held centrally. The Department does, however, monitor the provision of training and is currently conducting a survey of local education authorities' use of grant 12 of the GEST programme.

Henrietta Barnett School

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what capital payments have been made to Henrietta Barnett voluntary-aided school in the past 10 years in respect of building works and refurbishment.

Mr. Forth: The Department's records show that, since January 1984, the sum of £303,000 has been paid in capital grant to the Henrietta Barnett school. A further sum of £2,771,000 has been paid in repair grant.

Pupils with Problems

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what date the first draft circulars on pupils with problems were distributed; to which categories of people they were automatically distributed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Distribution of the draft circulars began on 4 January 1994. They were sent automatically to all local education authorities, self-governing (grant-maintained) schools representative bodies, teacher unions, the main subject representative bodies, some acknowledged experts in the field and all individuals who had expressed an interest or had been involved in discussions with the Department beforehand. Some 16,000 further copies of the package have been sent free, on demand. The consultation period, which lasted 10 weeks, ended on 11 March.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps have been taken to distribute the code of practice on pupils with problems to all schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Subject to its approval by Parliament, the code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs will be distributed to all maintained schools.

Liverpool City of Learning Campaign

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what encouragement and practical support he is giving to the Liverpool city of learning campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend warmly applauds the initiative of the higher and further education institutions in Liverpool, and the many partners with whom they are working, to ensure that continuing education plays a vital part in the social, cultural and economic development of the city. This is a local initiative, to which local support is the key. No financial or other support has been sought from the Department; and I understand that Professor Peter Toyne, who is leading the initiative, has explicitly said that he does not seek such support.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about teachers' pay in 1994-95.

Mr. Patten: On 3 February the Prime Minister announced that the Government proposed to implement, with modifications, the recommendations of the School Teachers' Review Body for teachers' pay in England and Wales for 1994-95. After careful consideration of the representations I have received from the local authorities, the teachers' associations and others, I am today laying before Parliament a pay and conditions order bringing into force the increases of 2·9 per cent. which will apply from 1 April. Copies of this order are being sent to all maintained schools, to all local education authorities and to the teachers' and employers' associations.

Drafts of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1994, which will set out the details of the changes to the pay structure which I propose should apply from 1 September, will shortly be sent to the relevant teachers' and employers' associations and to representatives of the governors of voluntary schools and grant-maintained schools. I shall be inviting their comments on the detail of the draft document and on the Department's associated circular of guidance.

Mathematics and Science Undergraduates

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table giving for every year since 1979 the total number of undergraduates in *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* physics, *(c)* chemistry, *(d)* all science subjects and *(e)* all subjects.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table giving for every year since 1979, and for every London borough, the total number of undergraduates in *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* physics, *(c)* chemistry, *(d)* all science subjects and *(e)* all subjects.

Mr. Boswell: Information for England is shown in the table:

Full-time and part-time undergraduates

Thousands

Academic year	*Mathematics*	*Physics*	*Chemistry*	*All science*	*All subjects*
1979-80	18·9	7·5	12·3	208·8	502·0
1980-81	21·0	7·8	11·5	223·0	518·0
1981-82	23·3	8·2	11·4	236·9	541·6
1982-83	24·7	8·2	11·3	241·7	556·0
1983-84	26·3	8·3	11·5	245·0	568·8
1984-85[1]	28·3	7·9	11·1	246·8	572·6
1985-86	29·6	7·7	11·3	248·0	588·3
1986-87	31·7	7·5	11·6	253·0	611·6
1987-88[1]	33·5	7·3	11·8	256·0	619·0
1988-89[1]	37·8	7·1	11·7	264·9	640·4
1989-90	41·2	7·4	12·4	282·0	681·6
1990-91	45·8	7·4	13·1	305·2	731·1
1991-92	50·9	7·9	13·7	338·8	807·7
1992-93	55·4	7·9	13·9	374·6	892·6

[1] The subject definitions changed between 1984 and 1985 for USR and between 1987 and 1988 for FESR. Series between these dates are not fully comparable.

Sources: USR and FESR surveys.

To produce the information for each London borough can be done only at disproportionate cost.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Pergau Dam

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations underlay the decision to pay the assistance under aid and trade provision for the Pergau dam to the Tenaga power company and not to the Malaysian Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Malaysian Government requested that the soft loan should be made direct to Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB). The Malaysian Government took the view that TNB was still a public body and therefore entitled to benefit from preferential loans. Her Majesty's Government considered that, in principle, the Malaysian Government would recoup the concessionality of the loan through an enhanced share price when TNB was privatised, and therefore agreed to its request for the soft loan to be made direct with TNB. There was no commitment by the Malaysian Government to float TNB shares at any particular level and none was requested by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contracts for the Pergau dam project in Malaysia were awarded to Kris Heavy Engineering and Construction; what work was covered by sub-contracts; and if he will list *(a)* the dates on which the contracts were awarded and *(b)* their individual value.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the supply of information technology to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help reunite child refugees in the former Yugoslavia with their families.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I welcome UNHCR's efforts to help reunite child refugees in the former Yugoslavia with their families. We give UNHCR substantial financial and practical support for its relief programme in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the medical situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the availability of gas and oil for essential heating purposes, and the availability of medical precursors to health authorities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* We receive frequent reports from all United Nations agencies and ODA staff who are working on the ground throughout the former Yugoslavia. We are doing what we can to ensure that all victims of this conflict are given access to essential humanitarian supplies, including heating and medical assistance. To date we have committed some £171 million towards the humanitarian relief effort for the former Yugoslavia, including Serbia and Montenegro. The bulk of our direct bilateral assistance, totalling some £92 million to date, is focused on central Bosnia where the needs are greatest.

Sanctions applied under United Nations Security Council resolutions Nos. 757, 787 and 820 specifically exclude humanitarian supplies, subject to notification procedures in the United Nations Sanctions Committee. We have worked hard in this committee to ensure that all genuine humanitarian shipments are expedited, including the monitored delivery of heating oil by UNHCR to humanitarian institutions in the former republic of Yugoslavia.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish tables showing the average hourly rate, excluding overtime, for part-time employees who are *(a)* male, *(b)* female, and *(c)* male and female for each year since 1980 in (i) Durham, (ii) Cleveland, (iii) Tyne and Wear, (iv) Cumbria, and (v) Northumberland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available from the New Earnings Survey for part-time female employees and part-time adult employees in the counties of Durham, Cleveland, Tyne and Wear, Cumbria, and Northumberland is shown in the following table. There were too few part-time male employees in the New Earnings Survey samples for reliable figures to be produced for them.

Average gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of part-time female employees whose pay was unaffected by absence: in April of each year

Year	Durham £	Cleveland £	Tyne and Wear £	Cumbria £	Northumberland £
1980	1·64	1·61	1·56	1·70	1·54
1981	1·84	1·80	1·78	1·87	1·79
1982	1·89	2·04	1·90	1·90	1·97
1983	2·10	2·34	2·09	2·17	2·02
1984	2·22	2·56	2·19	2·34	2·33
1985	2·42	2·64	2·42	2·46	[1]—
1986	2·59	2·63	2·47	2·75	2·36
1987	2·75	2·85	2·68	2·99	2·53
1988	2·82	3·09	3·04	3·13	2·71
1989	3·27	3·35	3·20	3·27	3·16
1990	3·57	3·72	3·53	3·70	3·38
1991	3·95	4·06	3·89	4·08	[1]—
1992	4·15	4·85	4·33	4·27	4·00
1993	4·33	4·84	4·59	4·32	3·99

[1]— denotes information is unavailable due to (i) an unacceptably high standard error, or (ii) no information available for that category.
Source: New Earnings Survey.

Average gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of part-time adult employees whose pay was unaffected by absence: in April of each year

Year	Durham £	Cleveland £	Tyne and Wear £	Cumbria £	Northumberland £
1980	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1981	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1982	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1983	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1984	2·32	[1]—	2·28	2·33	[1]—
1985	2·41	[1]—	2·51	2·44	[1]—
1986	2·68	2·64	2·61	2·70	2·42
1987	2·75	2·90	2·88	3·03	2·57
1988	2·84	3·07	3·20	3·07	2·68
1989	3·19	3·39	3·35	3·30	3·21
1990	3·61	3·74	3·59	3·73	3·45
1991	3·97	4·09	3·89	4·20	[1]—
1992	[1]—	4·87	4·45	4·20	[1]—
1993	4·34	4·96	4·60	4·32	[1]—

[1]— denotes information is unavailable due to (i) an unacceptably high standard error, or (ii) no information available for that category.
Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish tables showing the average weekly and hourly earnings, exclusive of overtime, for each year since 1980, of full-time employees in the categories *(a)* male manual employees, *(b)* male non-manual employees, *(c)* female manual employees, *(d)* female non-manual employees, *(e)* male and female manual employees and *(f)* male and female non-manual employees in each of (i) Durham, (ii) Cleveland, (iii) Tyne and Wear, (iv) Cumbria, and (v) Northumberland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Tables 108, 109, 111 and 112 of part E of the New Earnings Survey report contain average weekly earnings, the weekly overtime component, and hourly earnings excluding overtime, for manual and non-manual male and female employees in each county. Copies of the reports for each year since 1980 can be found in the Library.

The corresponding information for manual and non-manual adults is provided in the following tables:

Average gross weekly earnings (excluding overtime) of full-time manual employees whose pay was unaffected by absence: in April of year

Year	Durham £	Cleveland £	Tyne and Wear £	Cumbria £	Northumberland £
1980	95·7	98·0	90·6	88·6	91·6
1981	106·1	110·5	101·0	102·8	104·8
1982	110·0	119·6	112·2	110·3	109·5
1983	116·6	127·0	117·9	119·0	121·5
1984	121·7	134·8	124·5	127·8	125·1
1985	131·8	142·2	131·1	135·5	127·5
1986	139·6	149·5	140·3	143·8	133·4
1987	147·0	164·7	145·1	163·1	140·8
1988	156·2	177·6	155·9	166·9	155·8
1989	162·4	191·8	165·5	180·0	159·6
1990	180·0	200·6	179·4	202·7	174·2
1991	192·7	219·7	197·3	219·2	191·2
1992	203·8	230·9	217·4	225·7	207·2
1993	209·1	244·9	223·6	230·5	215·2

Average gross weekly earnings (excluding overtime) of full-time non-manual employees whose pay was unaffected by absence: in April of year

Year	Durham £	Cleveland £	Tyne and Wear £	Cumbria £	Northumberland £
1980	110·1	115·5	102·2	106·2	99·4
1981	129·1	127·3	120·7	123·1	113·8
1982	133·5	141·2	127·5	131·4	124·6
1983	145·1	151·5	139·9	146·1	136·4
1984	150·6	159·1	150·7	157·2	151·6
1985	163·8	171·5	159·0	162·4	160·3
1986	179·6	185·4	173·8	173·8	172·6
1987	189·0	193·5	184·5	188·3	182·1
1988	209·4	212·2	200·7	209·3	202·8
1989	226·4	235·8	221·4	225·2	229·4
1990	251·4	251·6	246·3	251·7	237·3
1991	267·0	268·0	267·8	276·9	270·4
1992	301·4	299·2	289·9	297·2	302·4
1993	314·8	300·9	296·3	315·7	299·6

Average gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of full-time manual employees whose pay was unaffected by absence: in April of year

Year	Durham £	Cleveland £	Tyne and Wear £	Cumbria £	Northumberland £
1980	2·42	2·47	2·30	2·23	2·32
1981	2·69	2·79	2·55	2·55	2·64
1982	2·81	3·04	2·86	2·80	2·77
1983	3·01	3·28	3·02	3·03	3·09
1984	3·14	3·52	3·21	3·29	3·22
1985	3·42	3·69	3·37	3·48	3·28
1986	3·61	3·89	3·59	3·65	3·42
1987	3·78	4·27	3·82	4·18	3·65
1988	4·08	4·60	4·01	4·26	3·96
1989	4·22	4·97	4·29	4·62	4·12
1990	4·64	5·16	4·65	5·19	4·35
1991	4·97	5·61	5·10	5·68	4·82
1992	5·33	6·00	5·57	5·81	5·35
1993	5·46	6·33	5·78	5·96	5·56

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Average gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of full-time non-manual employees whose pay was unaffected by absence: in April of year

Year	Durham £	Cleveland £	Tyne and Wear £	Cumbria £	Northumberland £
1980	2·86	3·14	2·71	2·85	2·70
1981	3·31	3·42	3·18	3·32	3·11
1982	3·49	3·73	3·31	3·54	3·38
1983	3·93	4·19	3·65	3·97	3·69
1984	3·99	4·37	3·88	4·23	4·07
1985	4·39	4·68	4·15	4·35	4·33
1986	4·88	5·05	4·54	4·75	4·70
1987	5·02	5·35	4·72	5·12	5·03
1988	5·23	5·89	5·12	5·68	5·48
1989	5·57	6·37	5·88	5·98	6·32
1990	6·33	6·51	6·46	6·73	6·44
1991	6·74	7·05	7·01	7·35	7·47
1992	7·62	7·95	7·56	7·75	8·07
1993	8·37	7·86	7·81	8·46	8·08

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Workstart

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to extend the workstart pilot scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: We have decided to extend the workstart pilots for a further six months.

There are four pilots, two run by the Employment Service in south London and east Kent, and two by training and enterprise councils in Tyneside and in Devon and Cornwall. Each offers a financial incentive to employers who recruit eligible unemployed people. All of those helped by the scheme have been unemployed for a very long time—over two years in the east Kent and Tyneside pilots, and over four years in south London and in Devon and Cornwall.

The pilots began last summer, each with funding to place up to 250 people into employment by the end of March 1994. The rate of take up was initially slow, but it has improved significantly as the pilots have worked to match individual long-term unemployed people to specific vacancies put forward by employers.

To date, more than 400 people have been placed in jobs supported by the scheme—more than half of them in the last two months. I believe this is a significant achievement. A great many people who have found jobs through workstart might otherwise have remained unemployed for a further long period of time.

Each pilot will continue until the end of September to work towards the one thousand opportunities originally planned. There are, however, evident difficulties despite all the efforts of the TEC in matching very long-term unemployed people to vacancies in a rural area as large as Devon and Cornwall, and we are therefore making some changes to this pilot. I have asked the Employment Service to operate the scheme in Devon and Cornwall for the next six months, with eligibility extended to those who have been unemployed for two years or more, to see whether its wider network of local offices and the enlargement of the eligible group can improve performance.

There are still lessons to be learnt from the extended operation of the pilots, and evaluation will continue.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

The Prime Minister: Sixty-nine appointments were made to bodies under Cabinet Office auspices. One was Asian (1·4 per cent.). None was black. Information on the ethnic origin of individuals is provided on a confidential basis. Names cannot therefore be given.

D-day Celebrations

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Prime Minister what public relations advisers have been retained formally or informally by the Government to assist in the promotion of the D-day celebrations.

The Prime Minister: Lowe Bell Communications has been appointed by the Department of National Heritage to help organise its programme of civilian events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-day landings.

European Union (Voting)

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 22 March, to the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), *Official Report*, column 134, which two European Union member states are being particularly difficult in opposing the United Kingdom's position on qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers after enlargement of the Union.

The Prime Minister: Belgium and the Netherlands have been particularly insistent that the United Kingdom must give way on the issue of qualified majority voting.

Nursery Education

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Prime Minister what his aims are for nursery education in the United Kingdom and the role he sees for the various organisations and agencies concerned.

The Prime Minister: More than 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds already receive nursery education or other pre-school provision in the public or private sector.

The Government's policy is to promote diversity, choice, quality and cost-effectiveness. Our long-term ambition is availability for all those who want it, and we are exploring possible ways of extending opportunities for the under-fives as resources allow.

I regret that in my oral answer to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) in the House on Tuesday 22 March, *Official Report,* column 132, I inadvertently referred to universal nursery education provided in Westminster, when I had instead intended to refer to Wandsworth and its policy of offering nursery class places to all pupils during the year before they reach compulsory school age. This contrasts with the Isle of Wight which provides a negligible number of maintained nursery school and class places.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Young Offender Units

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many private companies have expressed an interest in receiving from his Department the specifications on the design of, and the regime in, the proposed five secure training units for young offenders.

Mr. Maclean: A total of 25 United Kingdom registered companies have expressed an interest in tendering for the financing, designing, building/refurbishing, operating and maintaining of five secure training centres.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were seeking asylum in Britain at the latest available date; what were the comparable figures for *(a)* March 1992 and *(b)* March 1993; and how many current asylum seekers are (i) at liberty, (ii) in detention centres, (iii) in police cells and (iv) in prison.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At 28 February 1994—the latest date for which the information is available—an estimated 47,100 applications for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, were outstanding. The corresponding estimates for 28 February 1992 and 28 February 1993 were 60,400 and 43,700 respectively.

On 21 March 1994 a total of 645 people who had sought asylum were detained. This figure includes people awaiting the setting of directions for removal following refusal of the application, as well as those whose application was under consideration or subject to appeal. Of this figure, 363 were in detention centres, 35 in police cells and 247 in prison.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers held at Campsfield house immigration detention centre have been transferred to Prison Service accommodation and for what reasons since 1 March; to which Prison Service establishments they were transferred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ten people who had sought asylum have been transferred from the immigration detention centre, Campsfield house to Prison Service accommodation since 1 March because of their disruptive behaviour.

Four were transferred to Birmingham prison, three to Blakenhurst, two to Bullingdon and one to Holloway.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are currently held in detention; and how many of them were in *(a)* Campsfield house immigration detention centre, *(b)* Harmondsworth immigration detention centre, *(c)* other immigration service accommodation, *(d)* Haslar Home Office holding centre, *(e)* Dover young offenders centre and *(f)* other Prison Service accommodation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information shows that on 17 March 1994 a total of 654 people who had sought asylum at some stage, including those who are awaiting removal or the determination of an appeal, were held in detention. The numbers held in the establishments listed in the question were as follows:

	Number
(a) Campsfield house detention centre	174
(b) Harmondsworth detention centre	88
(c) Other immigration service accommodation	31
(d) Haslar holding centre	91
(e) Dover young offenders institution	23
(f) Other Prison Service accommodation	211
Total	618

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of keeping asylum seekers in custody per head for each of the past three years; and what has been the total cost in each of those years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information does not identify separately those detention costs which relate to people who have sought asylum.

Fire Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from the Fire Service concerning his proposals on fire safety requests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 was referred to in terms of reference of the current inter-departmental scrutiny on fire safety enforcement. Publication of the report of the review was intended to inform public debate on the options available and facilitate responses to the enforcement scrutiny. Interested parties have been sent copies of the report and I understand that a number of representations have been made by the Fire Service to the scrutiny team.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future responsibility of the Fire Service for all aspects of fire safety in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The fire safety enforcement scrutiny which began on 17 January is reviewing the operation and effectiveness of all fire safety legislation for which the Home Office, Department of the Environment and Health and Safety Executive have policy responsibility. The scrutiny is also examining the organisational arrangements of all bodies and agencies responsible for enforcing such legislation. Any decision about the need for changes to the legislation and those responsible for enforcing it must await the outcome of that scrutiny.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the Fire Service spent on information technology and communications in 1992-93 and 1993-94, by authority; and what are the spending plans for 1994-95.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Expenditure on information technology and communications is a matter for individual authorities and detailed information is not held centrally.

Mr. Ian Smalley

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has made to the United States Justice Department regarding the extradition of Mr. Ian Smalley from the United States.

Mr. Maclean: None. The offences for which Mr. Smalley is wanted in the United Kingdom are not covered by the US-UK extradition treaty of 1972.

Police Service

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the police service spent on information technology and communications in 1992-93 and 1993-94, by constabulary; and what are the spending plans for 1994-95.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Details of capital expenditure on information technology and communications in 1992-93 are set out in the table. Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. Spending plans are not held centrally.

Capital expenditure on information technology and communications in 1992-93

£ million

	Information technology	*Communications*	*Total*
Avon and Somerset	328,000	2,410,000	2,738,000
Bedfordshire	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	205,000	57,000	262,000
Cheshire	179,000	705,000	884,000
City of London	6,000	0	6,000
Cleveland	505,000	313,000	818,000
Cumbria	64,000	0	64,000
Derbyshire	1,067,000	130,000	1,197,000
Devon and Cornwall	50,000	1,504,000	1,554,000
Dorset	368,000	53,000	421,000
Durham	277,000	47,000	324,000
Dyfed-Powys	10,000	183,000	193,000
Essex	56,000	0	56,000
Gloucestershire	278,000	157,000	435,000
Greater Manchester	3,055,000	1,696,000	4,751,000
Gwent	75,000	155,000	230,000
Hampshire	2,040,000	0	2,040,000
Hertfordshire	784,000	269,000	1,053,000
Humberside	269,000	575,000	844,000
Kent	1,186,000	2,238,000	3,424,000
Lancashire	302,000	17,000	319,000
Leicestershire	587,000	490,000	1,077,000
Lincolnshire	172,000	204,000	376,000
Merseyside	53,000	134,000	187,000
Norfolk	0	59,000	59,000
Northamptonshire	285,000	44,000	329,000
Northumbria	498,000	1,810,000	2,308,000
North Wales	52,000	29,000	81,000
North Yorkshire	1,000	638,000	639,000
Nottinghamshire	837,000	502,000	1,339,000
South Wales	1,125,000	266,000	1,391,000
South Yorkshire	1,295,000	1,228,000	2,523,000
Staffordshire	790,000	333,000	1,123,000
Suffolk	661,000	141,000	802,000
Surrey	969,000	398,000	1,367,000
Sussex	171,000	2,170,000	2,341,000
Thames Valley	730,000	208,000	938,000
Warwickshire	649,000	111,000	760,000
West Mercia	198,000	411,000	609,000
West Midlands	1,101,000	357,000	1,458,000
West Yorkshire	2,940,000	326,000	3,266,000
Wiltshire	0	0	0
Totals	24,218,000	20,368,000	44,586,000

C3 Division

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases he referred to the Court of Appeal following an investigation by C3 division at his Department in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is given in the following table:

Number of cases referred under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 in respect of conviction

Month	
	1993
March	Nil
April	Nil
May	Nil
June	Nil
July	[1]1
August	Nil
September	Nil
October	1
November	1
December	Nil
	1994
January	Nil
February	Nil

[1] 2 defendants.

Miscarriages of Justice

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of alleged miscarriages of justice cases which were held by C3 division at his Department in 1993 or for the latest date available.

Mr. Maclean: At the beginning of 1993, 207 representations were under consideration; 663 new representations were received during the year, and 650 representations were concluded; 173 representations were under consideration at the end of the year.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average time taken to investigate an alleged miscarriage of justice by his Department during 1993 or for the latest year available; and how many cases which are currently being examined by the C3 division of his Department, at the latest date available, have been outstanding for more than 12 months.

Mr. Maclean: Excluding cases over 12 months old, the average time taken in 1993 to complete consideration of an allegation of wrongful conviction was 43 days. On 1 January 1994, there were 23 cases which had been under consideration for more than 12 months.

Court of Appeal (Referred Cases)

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases were referred to the Court of Appeal following investigation by his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is provided in the following table:

Cases referred under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968

	Number of cases	*Number of defendants*
(a) In respect of conviction:		
1989	3	6
1990	7	20
1991	10	12
1992	8	11
1993	8	9
(b) In respect of sentence only:		
1989	7	7
1990	3	3
1991	4	4
1992	1	1
1993	1	1

Criminal Cases Review Authority

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made towards establishing the proposed criminal cases review authority recommended by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

Mr. Howard: I have today published a discussion paper, "Criminal Appeals and the Establishment of a Criminal Cases Review Authority". The paper sets out the issues to be settled before any new arrangements for the investigation of alleged miscarriages of justice can be put in place, discusses how these might be resolved and asks those interested to comment by the end of May. I think the paper will be of considerable interest to a great many people and I look forward to hearing their views.

I have placed a copy of the paper in the Libraries of both Houses.

TREASURY

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *330*, what was the statistical basis for his statements that the advertisements increased public awareness of the circulating standard £5 coronation anniversary crown and that there were significant increases in the number of crowns issued after the advertisements appeared.

Mr. Nelson: The advertising campaign for the circulation standard £5 coronation anniversary crown sought to encourage sales.

The effectiveness of the advertising was measured by sample surveys. These showed that the numbers of people who knew about the coins increased from 10 per cent. to 43 per cent. after the advertisements had been shown. The surveys also showed that most people knew that the coins could be obtained from banks and post offices. Of those people who had seen the advertisements, 47 per cent. had seen them in the press, and 39 per cent. on television.

The coins were issued to the public by banks and post offices and sample information given to the mint showed a fourfold increase in the demand for the coins after the television advertisements were shown.

Bank of England

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff are employed by the economics division of the Bank of England; at what cost to the Exchequer directly or indirectly; and whether he will propose that that division should be contracted out to the private sector.

Mr. Nelson: The Bank of England employs around 75 people in the economics division including secretarial, clerical and information technology staff. The costs of these functions are in effect met by the bank's income from non-interest bearing deposits placed with the bank by the banking sector. There is no cost to the Exchequer.

I understand that the bank has no plans to contract out this function.

Economic Policies (Environmental Implications)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what matters in regard to the environmental implications of economic policies were discussed during his dinner with Vice-President Gore in Detroit on 14 March.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We discussed the environmental implications of a range of economic issues.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the most recent Council meeting of European Economic and Finance Ministers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Union (ECOFIN) met in Brussels on 21 March. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council heard a report from the President of the Court of Auditors on the Community's 1992 budget. The Council agreed to recommend that the European Parliament grants a discharge to the Commission on the 1992 budget. The recommendation calls upon the Commission to report back on specific areas criticised by the Court of Auditors and on any follow-up action the Commission takes. I and others emphasised the importance the Council attached to improving financial management and tackling fraud in the Community budget. Later in the day the Commission trailed its forthcoming strategic programme for the fight against fraud in 1994. The Commission welcomed my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's proposal for action under title VI.

The Council reached political agreement on the budget discipline decision. It will now go to the European Parliament for conciliation. The text of the decision makes clear that the guideline limit may only be increased or exceeded by unanimous decision of the Council and a 1997 deadline will be applied to the special arrangements for dealing with agrimonetary costs. The Council also agreed a declaration providing for a formula-based adjustment of the guideline to take account of enlargement.

The Council discussed the new own resources decision but agreement on this was not possible because Italy maintained a general political reserve.

The Council discussed balance of payments assistance to the countries of central and eastern Europe. The Council agreed to provide 110 million ecus in assistance to Bulgaria in support of the proposed International Monetary Fund programme. The Commission indicated that it would put forward proposals for a further 40 million ecus of support to Bulgaria and 125 million ecus for Romania. These proposals will be considered in due course.

The Council discussed the convergence programme of Denmark which covers the period 1994 to 2000. The Council applauded the aim of the Danish authorities to fulfil the convergence criteria outlined in the treaty on European union in 1996, although Denmark is not committed to participating in stage 3 of economic and monetary union. However, it raised questions on some elements of the programme. In particular, it considered the assumptions on the revival of private sector expenditure slightly optimistic. These assumptions play an important role in the achievement of the programme's main targets, which include a reduction in unemployment and a reduction in the fiscal deficit following an initial temporary loosening.

The council took note of reports on follow-up work by the Commission on the White Paper and agreed to require the Economic Policy Committee to report regularly on member states' progress in implementing labour market reforms.

As requested by the December ECOFIN the Commission presented an interim report on contacts with non-member states on the proposed withholding tax on savings in the EU. The Commission's final report is expected later this year but it was made clear to the Council that any proposals on this subject would be unlikely to secure United Kingdom agreement.

The Council took note of an appeal by the Commission to make faster progress on the proposed directive on withholding taxes on interest and royalties.

The Commission presented its recommendation on the taxation of non-residents, noting that it would evaluate the extent to which member states had followed the recommendation.

There were no formal votes on issues discussed in the Council.

Personal Investment Authority

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to meet Mr. Joe Palmer and Ms Colette Bowe of the Personal Investment Authority to discuss its future.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend and I meet members of the regulatory bodies from time to time.

Economic Forecasting

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider modifications to the Treasury's methods of economic forecasting in order to take into account the impact of environmental factors on the economy.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* The Treasury will continue to use the current system of national accounts as the basis for its economic forecast. However, the Central Statistical Office and Department of the Environment are engaged in the long term development of environmental accounts and indicators to provide information about the impact of environmental factors on the economy. This work is still in its early stages, but an illustrative set of accounts was published in *Economic Trends* in November 1992.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the dates on which occupants of his office or officials of the Council have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost to his Department of each flight.

Mr. Newton: No occupants of my office and no Privy Council officials have used the Malaysian airline MAS in the course of official business since 1985.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what proposals the Committee has to provide nappy changing facilities for the children of hon. Members and staff.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Committee has no proposals to meet this specific requirement.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what facilities exist in the House for child care.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: None. The matter is under consideration.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Committee of the Catering Committee what is the Committee's policy on special provision for children; and how many child high chairs are available in each catering outlet at the House.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The Committee has not so far considered any specific policy on provision for children. I understand from the Director of Catering Services that the Refreshment Department has two high chairs which are available on request.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to make provision in the current year for day care for the children of hon. Members and their staff.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to make such provision. It is up to individual Members to make arrangements to suit them and their staff.

Newspapers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what is his Committee's policy in respect of the removal of newspapers from 7 Millbank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Soley: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, whether male staff of the House are eligible for paternity leave.

Mr. Beith: Heads of Department may grant special leave, with or without pay, to staff for domestic or compassionate reasons, including up to two days special paid leave to fathers on the birth of a child or within a few weeks of the birth.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Lord President of the Council on how many occasions in the past five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Newton: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". I also seek to comply with the Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers to oral questions.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what were the costs attributed for answering written parliamentary questions tabled by the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 16 December 1991 at columns *22-25*, by the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 18 January 1990 at columns *382-89*, by the former hon. Member for Pembroke, Mr. Bennett on 25 May 1989 at columns *695-719*, by the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) on 6 May 1988 at columns *628-44*, and by the former hon. Member for Darlington, Mr. Fallon on 11 May 1987 at columns *4-14*.

Mr. Newton: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 13 January 1992 at column *468*, the answer to my hon. Friend, the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) of 16 December 1991 was estimated to have cost £1,520. Figures for the other answers are not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated savings to his Department arising from the provisions in the Social Security (Incapacity For Work) Bill to abolish payment to claimants with adult dependants under the age of 60 years and where there is no payment for children.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

	£ million
1995-96	15
1996-97	40

Note:

Estimates are expressed in constant 1993-94 prices and are net of offsetting expenditure on income-related benefits. They are rounded to the nearest £5 million and take account of all other changes proposed in the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of sickness benefit now receive increases of benefit for adult dependants under the age of 60 years where there are no children in the household; how many people on sickness benefit in April 1995 he estimates will fail to receive an increase for an adult dependant after that time; and what are the estimated savings to his Department of abolishing increases for adult dependants to people on short-term incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

(i) it is estimated that around 10,000 adult dependency increases (ADIs) of sickness benefit (SB) are paid to people with a spouse under 60 with no dependent children[1];

(ii) no one receiving an SB ADI at the point of change in April 1995 who continues to meet the existing entitlement conditions for payment of SB ADIs will have that increase withdrawn unless or until they become entitled to long-term incapacity benefit (IB) after 52 weeks incapacity;

(iii) the proposals for payment of ADIs of short-term IB are expected to yield savings of around £10 million in 1995-96 and £15 million in 1996-97[2].

Notes:

[1] Estimate derived from 1 per cent. of SB recipients combined with information from the 1989, 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure Surveys.

[2] Estimates are expressed in constant 1993-94 prices and are net of offsetting expenditure on income-related benefits. They are rounded to the nearest £5 million and take account of all other changes proposed in the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill.

Benefits (Take-up)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when benefit take-up figures for 1990 and 1991 will become available.

Mr. Hague: Estimates of income related benefit take-up for 1990 and 1991 have today been published by the Government statistical service. Copies of its report have been placed in the Library.

Invalidity Benefit

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have applied for invalidity benefit on grounds of the new disability provision within the invalidity benefit rules, by benefit agency area, since the rule change in September 1993; how many of these applications have been on grounds of bronchitis and emphysema; and, of these, how many applications have been *(a)* turned down and *(b)* accepted by benefit agency area.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were currently receiving housing benefit in *(a)* Durham, *(b)* Cleveland, *(c)* Tyne and Wear, *(d)* Cumbria, and *(e)* Northumberland, for each year from 1980; and if he will include the most recent figures for housing benefit claimants in these areas which are available.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the table.

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	August 1993
Durham	57,000	56,000	56,000	55,000	56,000	58,000
Cleveland	55,000	54,000	53,000	54,000	55,000	57,000
Tyne and Wear	147,000	143,000	139,000	138,000	141,000	143,000
Cumbria	27,000	27,000	27,000	28,000	30,000	31,000
Northumberland	23,000	22,000	22,000	22,000	23,000	23,000

Source: The Housing Benefit Management Information System Quarterly caseload counts.
Notes:
1. No reliable information is available prior to 1988.
2. Estimates are included for non-responding authorities.
3. Housing Benefit has been defined as rent rebate and rent allowance.
4. All figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and are in benefit units, not individuals; couples are counted as one unit.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the financial target of the Child Support Agency for the current year; and to what extent it has been met.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Matthew Banks, dated 25 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, about the financial target for the Child Support Agency in the current year.

The Secretary of State set the Agency a benefit savings target of £530 million for the year 1993-94.

We are not yet able to provide an assessment of the level of benefit savings that the Agency will achieve in the year because of uncertainties caused by the effect of the recent policy changes.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many absent parents have been traced by the Child Support Agency; how many are paying; and how much money has been collected.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Matthew Banks, dated 25 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of absent parents traced by the Child Support Agency, the number paying, and the money collected.

As at 31 January, the Agency had issued maintenance enquiry forms to 381,000 absent parents. These included 19,000 absent parents whose whereabouts were not known prior to the Agency's involvement in tracing them. Two thirds of the enquiry forms have been returned leading to the completion of over 170,000 maintenance assessments.

With regard to how many absent parents are paying, the Child Support Computer System records client's details on an individual case by case basis, and it is not currently configured to produce information on the total number of absent parents paying maintenance.

Information on the amount of money collected is, however, available. As at 31 January, £181 million had been collected. This includes money paid via the Agency, and also directly to the parent with care for the absent parent.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what percentage of those who have been contacted by the Child Support Agency have previously made no contribution to the maintenance of their first family;

(2) what percentage of those targeted by the Child Support Agency are subject to court orders and have already been contributing to the maintenance of their first families.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive, She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Matthew Banks, dated 25 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about absent parents and whether they were maintaining their children before the Child Support Agency assessed their cases.

Up to 31 January 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, the Agency issued maintenance enquiry forms to 381,300 absent parents, of which 170,700 have resulted in the assessment of maintenance. Figures are not kept on the number of cases in which a prior maintenance agreement existed. It is estimated however, that 56 per cent. of cases taken on will not have had an existing arrangement, and 44 per cent. will have had an existing maintenance agreement, a proportion of which would include court orders.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what money has been received as a result of the activities of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. David Ashby, dated 25 March 1994:

I am repling to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the money collected by the Child Support Agency.

As at 31 January, £181 million had been collected. This includes money paid via the Agency, and also directly to the parent with care from the absent parent.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the assessments carried out by the Child Support Agency are in respect of fathers who pay nothing towards the support of their children.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. David Ashby, dated 25 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of absent parents who were not maintaining their children before the Child Support Agency assessed their cases.

Up to 31 January 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, the Agency issued maintenance enquiry forms to 381,300 absent parents, of which 170,700 have resulted in the assessment of maintenance. Figures are not kept on the number of cases in which a prior maintenance agreement existed. It is estimated however, that 56 per cent. of cases taken on will not have had an existing arrangement.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will carry out a cost/benefit analysis of the proposals in the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

No, but I understand that the Secretary of State for Social Security is in the process of preparing a compliance cost assessment.

WALES

Farmers (Suicides)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the last five years *(a)* the number of suicides among farmers in Wales, *(b)* the proportion of suicide cases per 1,000 among farmers in Wales and *(c)* the average suicide rate for Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is given in the following table:

Residents of Wales

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Number of suicides[1] of farmers	9	8	10	9	6
Suicides per 1,000 farmers	0·26	0·23	0·29	0·26	0·17
Suicides per 1,000 total residents	0·08	0·07	0·08	0·08	0·09

[1] Suicides and undetermined deaths of farmers, horticulturalists and farm managers.
Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total cost of the valuation exercise, including the appeals process, since the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Redwood: The cost of the valuation banding exercise was £4·81 million. In 1993-94 the voted provision for the Valuation Office Agency for council tax, including the handling of appeals and new valuations, is £2·53 million. Valuation of tribunal costs for council tax appeals to date are small and cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average cost of each appeal against council tax evaluations.

Mr. Redwood: The estimated average cost of dealing with each council tax banding appeal is some £115.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Harrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the standard spending assessment for education for each Welsh education authority.

Mr. Redwood: There is no standard spending assessment for education for Welsh local authorities. The standard spending assessments for county councils in Wales include provision for education.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consult *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* local authorities during his review of the working of (i) the Welsh Development Agency and (ii) the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans at present for a review of the Welsh Development Agency. I have already written to hon. Members about the review of the Development Board for Rural Wales. Local authorities will also be consulted.

Correspondence

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his practice to sign personally letters in reply to hon. Members which are written in the Welsh language.

Mr. Redwood: I sign all my replies to hon. Members' letters. However, I do not sign letters I do not understand. Therefore, when I reply in bilingual form to letters written in Welsh, I will sign the English version only.

Departmental Projects

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each department within his office details of each project of less than £100,000 which has been contracted out to the private sector during 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not available and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the dates on which Ministers or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost to his Department of each flight.

The Solicitor-General: No such flights have been made.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 18 February, *Official Report,* columns *1012-14.*

Mr. Eggar: The Department uses computerised databases to collect among other things information on the theft of equipment. They contributed some data in the answer of 18 February to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). The Department's main asset register uses packaged software supplied by Britannia Software PLC and has been run by the Department's Accounts Services Agency in Newport since 1 April 1993. In 1993-94 the cost of operating the register is expected to be approximately £80,000. Three staff are employed on the work. The Department's executive agencies maintain their own computerised assets registers using mainly Britannia or Sun software. While it is too early to quantify the direct savings from these asset registers, availability of data is likely to highlight theft in the short term while helping to reduce it in the long term.

Time Zones

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what estimate his Department has made of the cost to British business of the one-hour time difference between the United Kingdom and continental Europe;

(2) what studies his Department has commissioned on the advantages for British businesses of a harmonisation of the United Kingdom's time zone with that of the rest of continental Europe; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations his Department has received on the subject of Britain's time zone.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has made no estimate of the cost to British business of the one hour time difference and has commissioned no studies on the advantages of harmonising time zones. My Department has received a small number of representations.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial resources his Department commits to *(a)* nuclear safeguards and *(b)* nuclear safety.

Mr. Eggar: In 1993-94 my Department expects to spend £1·7 million on nuclear safeguards support programmes and £2 million on its nuclear safety and health programme.

Manufacturing Challenge

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the progress of the manufacturing challenge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I welcome the progress of this business-to-business programme in the north-east and my Department is fully supporting it. I am encouraged that a number of projects are being developed targeted on priorities identified by the regional business community and discussions are continuing between manufacturing challenge and programmes in other regions of the country.

Rolls-Royce Aeroengine

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will state the total expenditure on, and receipts expected from, Rolls-Royce in respect of launch aid estimated up to 1 April; and what expenditure and receipts are planned for 1994-95 to 1996-97 for Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Sainsbury: Rolls-Royce has received £505·5 million in launch aid (at current prices) and has paid receipts of approximately £292 million up to 1 April this year.

No launch aid expenditure for Rolls-Royce is currently planned for the years 1994-95 to 1996-97. Rolls-Royce currently estimates repayments of £82·5 million for these years.

Chemical Industry

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library the results of his study into the competitive success of the British chemical industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have placed a copy of Dr. Jon Bird's study, "Competitiveness in the United Kingdom Chemical Industry", from which commercially sensitive information has been deleted, in the Library of the House. The study was a preliminary investigation into this important area and is being circulated for consideration by experts in the industry and will be used as a basis for further discussion between my Department and the chemical industry.

Engineering Steel Industry

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will next be meeting the European Council of Ministers to discuss the engineering steel industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: The next meeting of the Council of Industry Ministers is due to take place on 22 April 1994. The agenda for the meeting is not yet available, but current steel issues will be discussed.

Radiocommunications Agency

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to increase the charge made by the Radiocommunications Agency in cases of interference to domestic broadcast reception where complainants ask the agency to inspect their equipment.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have decided that there should be a modest increase in the charge from £31 to £35. This charge

is applicable when the private sector is unable to effect a cure and complainants ask for an inspection by the agency. It is the first rise in two years and is in line with rises in costs in the private sector.

The work of curing domestic interference, which is often due to poor immunity to unwanted signals in television and radio receiving equipment, should be done in the first instance by the private sector. This enables the Radiocommunications Agency to devote greater resources to investigating illegal radio use and to business radio users. In 1993 the agency received 556 requests for help with interference to broadcast reception.

There is still no charge for investigating a named source of interference.

Collieries (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list which collieries he has visited and those where he has made an underground visit *(a)* since taking his present office and *(b)* since the publication of "Prospects for Coal".

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has not visited any collieries since taking up his present office. However, as Minister for Energy, I have visited Ollerton, Rufford, Whitemoor, Ashfordby and Bilsthorpe. The visits to Ashfordby and Bilsthorpe took place after the publication of the coal review White Paper and all except Bilsthorpe included a visit underground.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure who are women.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The information requested in respect of permanent staff in post on 16 March 1994 is set out in the following table:

Grade	Total staff Number	Percentage of staff who are female Per cent.
Grade 1	1	0·0
Grade 2	8	0·0
Grade 3	52	9·6
Grade 4	7	28·6
Assistant Comptroller (Patent Office)	2	0·0
Grade 5	204	15·2
Executive Director Lower Insolvency Service	3	0·0
Superintendent Examiner (Patent Office)	8	0·0
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 1	1	0·0
Grade 6	181	16·6
Grade 7	922	15·0
Insolvency Grade A	12	0·0
Insolvency Grade B	70	5·7
Principal Examiner (Patent Office)	26	7·7
Senior Examiner (Patent Office)	168	10·1
Chief Investigations Officer	1	0·0
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 2	2	0·0
Petroleum Specialist 2	1	0·0
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 3	8	12·5
Petroleum Specialist 3	3	0·0
Senior Electrical Engineer 1	4	0·0
Senior Executive Officer	381	17·6
Higher Executive Officer D	35	45·7
Higher Executive Officer	1,008	30·0
Executive Officer	1,521	44·0
Administrative Trainee	13	30·8
Senior Economic Assistant	15	60·0
Economic Assistant	5	20·0
Senior Assistant Statistician	4	50·0
Assistant Statistician	6	33·3
Senior Information Officer	18	44·4
Information Officer	28	32·1
Assistant Information Officer	13	38·5
Higher Graphics Officer	1	100·0
Legal Officer	5	60·0
Senior Librarian	8	50·0
Librarian	20	50·0
Assistant Librarian	27	59·3
Photographic Officer	1	0·0
Process and General Supervisory C	2	0·0
Process and General Supervisory D	2	0·0
Senior Scientific Officer	296	12·5
Higher Scientific Officer	335	25·4
Scientific Officer	181	32·6
Senior Personal Secretary	45	97·8
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	99	1·0
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	81	4·9
Professional and Technical Officer	28	3·6
Professional and Technical Officer IV	1	0·0
Senior Telecommunications Technical Officer	13	0·0
Higher Telecommunications Technical Officer	44	0·0
Telecommunications Technical Officer	110	0·0
Insolvency Grade C	132	23·5
Insolvency grade D	311	31·8
Insolvency grade E	138	53·6
Examiner (patent office)	32	9·4
Translator I	2	0
Translator II	9	77·8
Translator III	1	0
Deputy chief investigations officer	8	0
Investigations officer	42	2·4
Communications officer IV	3	66·7
Chief typing manager	6	83·3
Typing manager	29	100
Support manager 1	1	0
Legal trainee	0	0
Higher scientific officer D	11	36·4
Senior management trainee	3	33·3
Chief gas examiner	1	0
Reservoir evaluation specialist 4	20	35
Petroleum specialist 4	9	0
Area gas examiner	1	100
Reservoir evaluation specialist 5	2	100
Petroleum specialist 5	2	0
Gas examiner	4	0
Chief gas meter examiner	1	0
Assistant chief gas meter examiner	1	0
Gas meter examiner 1	2	0
Gas meter examiner 2	9	0
Gas meter examiner 3	10	0
Higher mapping and charting officer	1	0
Administrative officer	2,192	59·5
Administrative assistant	1,103	57·8
Graphics officer	2	100
Support manager 2	9	44·4
Support manager 3	38	71·1
Support grade 1	134	75·4
Support grade 2	653	65·8
Senior photographer	2	0
Photographer	1	0
Industrial	140	5·7
Technical grade 1	9	22·2
Part time graduate trainee	6	16·7
Technican 2A	0	0
Assistant telecommunications technical officer	23	0
Trainee telecommunications technical officer	1	100
Personal secretary	353	99·4
Typist	438	98·4

Grade	Total staff Number	Percentage of staff who are female Per cent.
Assistant scientific officer	87	41·4
Graphics technical grade	1	100
Mapping and charting officer	3	0
Total	12,016	43·2

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Arts Council Membership

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he will announce the membership of the Arts Council of England.

Mr. Brooke: In December I announced that Lord Gowrie would be the first chairman of the Arts Council of England. I have today appointed the following to the council:

Professor Christopher Frayling
Maggie Guillebaud
Peter Gummer
Sir Ernest Hall
Thelma Holt
Michael Holroyd
Clive Priestley
Stella Robinson
Prudence Skene
Robert Southgate

Announcements on the remaining members will be made in due course. I have also written to Lord Gowrie setting out the main tasks and objectives for the chairman and council, and a copy of that letter has been placed in the Library.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* Since it was established in April 1992, my Department and its two agencies have entered into 58 contracts with consultants. The cost has been £5·13 million in 1992-93 and £3·15 million in 1993-94.

HEALTH

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions she has referred to one of her Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to her Department this represents.

Mr. Sackville: No such referrals have been made during the last 12 months.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of qualified NHS nurses and midwives, unqualified NHS nursing staff and nursing learners representing these as a percentage of the total NHS nursing and midwifery staff, including Project 2000 students for each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table.

Whole time equivalent	1989	per cent.	1990	per cent.	1991	per cent.	1992	per cent.
Total nursing and midwifery staff plus project 2000	398,050	100·0	398,360	100·0	402,700	100·0	397,080	100·0
Qualified nursing and midwifery staff	242,190	60·8	242,340	60·8	243,250	60·4	246,570	62·1
Unqualified nursing and midwifery staff	90,880	22·8	90,450	22·7	90,550	22·5	90,850	22·9
Learners	63,310	15·9	58,840	14·8	47,340	11·8	34,740	8·7
Others	1,680	0·4	3,730	0·9	11,050	2·7	6,630	1·7
Project 2000	—	—	3,000	0·8	10,500	2·6	18,300	4·6

The number of qualified staff has gone up both as an absolute figure and as a proportion of the overall NHS work force.

London Ambulance Service

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the expenditure on the London ambulance service for each of the past five years; what is the budget for the current year and for the next financial year; what representations have been made to him by the London ambulance service about the adequacy of such expenditure; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are committed to providing sufficient revenue and capital to the London ambulance service to ensure an improving ambulance service in the capital.

The London ambulance service identifies revenue as:

Year	Including capital charges £ million	Excluding capital charges £million
Actual		
1988-89	n/a	46.3
1989-90	n/a	[1]53.0
1990-91	n/a	51.3
1991-92	66.5	59.8
1992-93	72.2	64.0
Budget		
1993-94	75.5	67.8
1994-95	78.3	71.0

[1] 1989-90 includes additional costs during the ambulance dispute.

The LAS received extra revenue of £6·8 million in 1993-94, and in this coming financial year (1994-95) an

extra £14·8 million will be invested in the LAS, tied to specific improvements in performance. The extra resources will enable the LAS to recruit an additional 240 front-line staff and will also buy 120 new ambulances, replacing a third of its fleet.

Spongiform Encephalopathies

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many recorded human deaths from spongiform encephalopathies there have been in the United Kingdom in each year since 1964; and how many of each were diagnosed as being specifically Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Mr. Sackville: Surveillance of human spongiform encephalopathies (SEs) in the United Kingdom is primarily concerned with the identification of cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD). However, since 1990 when the UK CJD surveillance unit was established, there have been improvements in the methods of identification of Gerstmann-Strausser-Scheinker syndrome, an extremely rare familial form of human SE. There have also been considerable advances in the methods of identification of human SEs generally since the 1960s.

The tables show recorded cases of CJD and GSS from 1964-1993. During this period there have been five separate studies using differing methodologies. The figures are therefore not directly comparable.

Table 1: CJD by year of onset (Retrospective study: England and Wales)

Year	Number of cases
1964	4
1965	1
1966	4
1967	1
1968	7
1969	4
Total	21

Table 2: Deaths from definite and probable cases of CJD (Retrospective study: England and Wales)

Year	Number of cases
1970	10
1971	13
1972	9
1973	16
1974	17
1975	8
1976	16
1977	19
1978	25
1979	16
Total	149

Table 3: Deaths from definite and probable cases of CJD and incidence of GSS (Prospective study: England and Wales)

Year	Number of cases	
	CJD	GSS
1980	23	1
1981	22	—
1982	24	—
1983	21	—
1984	32	—
Total	122	1

Table 4: Deaths from definite and probable cases of CJD and incidence of GSS (United Kingdom retrospective study by CJD surveillance unit)

Year	Number of cases	
	CJD	GSS
1985	28	—
1986	26	—
1987	22	1
1988	23	—
1989	31	—
Total	130	1

Table 5: Deaths from definite and probable cases of CJD and incidence of GSS (ongoing United Kingdom prospective study by CJD surveillance unit from 1 May 1990)

Year	Number of cases	
	CJD	GSS
1990	[1]30	—
1991	36	—
1992	49	2
1993	[2][3]29	[2]2
Total	144	4

[1] 12 from 1 January to 30 April. 18 from 1 May to 31 December.
[2] Provisional total.
[3] One of these patients is still alive.

The final figure for 1993 may show some increase over the provisional total as diagnoses of people dying in 1993 is confirmed restrospectively. It is most unlikely, however, to reach the 1992 figure.

Hospital and Community Services

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many written complaints have been made relating to hospital and community services by type of complaint and method of investigation in each year since 1979 to the latest available date.

Dr. Mawhinney: Details for England about written complaints for hospital and community services from 1981 to 1991-92 will be placed in the Library.

The increase over the last 10 years shows the impact of three factors. Firstly, the greater awareness of the complaints procedure; secondly, the reinforcement in the patients charter of the right to have a complaint dealt with thoroughly and quickly; thirdly, an increase in willingness on the part of the health service personnel to listen to the patient.

General Practitioners

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to commission a medical audit of the quality of treatment being received by *(a)* patients of fundholding general practitioner practices and *(b)* patients of non-fundholding general practitioner practices, and what studies have already been carried out.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to do so.

Limb Defects

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will widen the Government's examination of the incidence of babies born with missing hands in

coastal areas to include evidence of similar defects in Germany; and if she will involve the Medical Research Council in this wider inquiry;

(2) when the inquiry announced by the Government into the incidence of babies born with deformed or missing hands in coastal areas will announce its findings; and what further action her Department has taken regarding this issue.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 1 March at column *678*. In the light of the reports of similar limb defects in the German North sea coastal region, the Department is in contact with the relevant German authorities for further information.

Commercially Sponsored Posts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what restrictions exist and what guidance has been issued regarding commercially sponsored posts in the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance about commercially sponsored posts in the national health service is contained in departmental circular HSG(93)5, copies of which are available in the Library.

National Continence Week

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what projects her Department instigated in respect of national continence week.

Mr. Bowis: The Department granted extra funding to the Continence Foundation to set up a full-time telephone helpline for members of the public. Nearly 2 million posters, leaflets and stickers advertising this helpline and encouraging sufferers to seek treatment were distributed. A national newspaper advertising campaign carried the same message. The Department also sponsored a national conference of women's organisations on "Women and Continence" and helped continence advisers and commercial organisations to run local events around the country.

Women Employees

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women returning to work in the NHS in each of the last five years following maternity leave or a career break returned to a job of similar status to that which they left; and what measures she has taken in that time to ensure that this takes place.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

General Whitley Council agreements (sections 6 and 10 of the council's handbook) provide for an employee who has taken maternity leave or a career break to return to a job of similar status. Copies of the handbook are available in the Library.

Ambulance Service

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the ambulance service spent on information technology and communications in 1992-93 and 1993-94, by authority; and what are the spending plans for 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Hospital Closures, London

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by *(a)* health authority, *(b)* borough and *(c)* year all London hospitals closed since 1978.

Mr. Sackville: Information is available centrally only on hospital closures since 1988 which were initially contested by community health councils and remained contested throughout the consultation period. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 23 March at cols. *231-32*.

Appointments (FHSAs)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of all individuals appointed to chair family health services authorities and serve as non-executive directors, listing their occupation and sex; and if she will list any known political affiliations of those appointed.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of family health services authority chairmen and their occupations at the time of their appointment, where known, are listed. Regional health authorities are responsible for the appointment of the non-executive members. The political affiliation of chairmen and non-executive members of health authorities plays no part in their appointment and would be known at the time of appointment only if an appointee was pursuing a public career at that time. Current political affiliations are not known.

Chairmen of family health services authorities

East Anglian Region		
Cambridge	Mrs. M. Scott	Business consultant
Norfolk	Mrs. J. Hopwood	Former research scientist
Suffolk	Mrs. J. Spicer	Housewife
Mersey Region		
Liverpool	Mrs. R. Hawley	Housewife
St. Helens and Knowsley	Mr. J. Dray	Company director
Sefton	Mr. C. Darley	Former chief executive
Wirral	Mrs. M Pearce	Voluntary worker
Cheshire	Mr. R. Brown	Pharmacist
North East Thames Region		
Barking and Havering	Lady C. Rhys-Williams	Housewife
Camden and Islington	Mrs. A. Burgess	Headteacher
City and East London	Mr. N. Warner	Management consultant
Enfield and Haringey	Mr. H. B. Blackler	Solicitor

Essex	Maj. Gen. R. Wall	Management consultant
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	Mr. P. Brokenshire	Senior auditor
Northern Region		
Cleveland	Mr. T. O'Connor	Company chairman
Cumbria	Mr. J. Wills	Company director
Durham	Mr. I. Bonas	Company chairman
Gateshead	Mrs. B. Balls	Economist
Newcastle	Mr. A. Griffiths	Marine consultant
North Tyneside	Mrs. K. Johnston	Company director
Northumberland	Dr. C. Robinson	Lecturer
South Tyneside	Mr. A. Brown	Solicitor
Sunderland	Mr. J. Brown	Solicitor
North Western Region		
Bolton	Mrs. L. Pickford	Company director
Bury	Mr. B. Wood	University lecturer
Lancashire	Mr. C. Jeanes	Managing director
Manchester	Professor Joan Higgins	University professor
Oldham	Mr. M. Farrar	Headteacher
Rochdale	Mr. L. Price	Retired social services director
Salford	Mrs. B. Wilkinson	College lecturer
Stockport	Mr. S. McGeorge	Retired company director
Tameside	Mrs. A. Corrie	Lecturer
Trafford	Mr. D. Higginbottom	Solicitor
Wigan	Mr. B. Edmond	Chemical manufacturer
North West Thames Region		
Barnet	Baroness Miller	Company chairman
Bedfordshire	Dr. A. Wood	Company director
Brent and Harrow	Mrs. S. Child	Former publisher
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	Mrs. J. Stern	Company director
Hertfordshire	Lady J. Staughton	—
Hillingdon	Mr. D. Bucks	Businessman
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	Mr. R. Davies	Company director
Oxford Region		
Berkshire	Mr. G. Odds	Surveyor/estate manager
Northamptonshire	Mrs. S. Barnes	Company director
Buckinghamshire	Mr. P. Gell	Chartered accountant
Oxfordshire	Mrs. D. Levy	Chairman/chief executive
South East Thames Region		
East Sussex	Mrs. J. Darlington	Company chairman
Greenwich and Bexley	Mrs. J. Rodin	Projects officer
Kent	Mr. M. Rowley	Company chairman
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	Mr. J. Fraser	—
Bromley	Mrs. C. McLoughlin	Management consultant
South Western Region		
Avon	Mrs. M. Perriam	Teacher
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	Mr. M. Varcoe	Chartered accountant
Devon	Rev. Mrs. M. Gent	Parish deacon
Gloucestershire	Mr. C. Weaver	Funeral director
Somerset	(Vacancy)	—
South West Thames Region		
Croydon	Mrs. M. James	Former teacher
Kingston and Richmond	Mr. D. Banks	Client services director
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	Mr. J. Spiers	Managing director
Surrey	Mrs. M. McNaughton	Housewife
West Sussex	Mrs. A. Swain	Education consultant
Trent Region		
Barnsley	Mrs. P. Acklam	Accountancy administator
Derbyshire	Mr. M. Boissier	Group personnel controller
Doncaster	Mr. K. Jones	Deputy director of mining
Leicestershire	Dr. G. Edmondson-Jones	Retired GP
Lincolnshire	Mr. P. Pumfrey	Retired chartered surveyor
Rotherham	Mr. P. Andrew	Chief executive
Nottinghamshire	Mr. M. Dassau	Retired clothes manufacturer
Sheffield	Mrs. L. Gladwin	Proprietor of independent social work practice

Wessex Region		
Dorset	Mrs. W. Mulliner	Voluntary worker
Hampshire	Mr. D. Paterson	Barrister
Isle of Wight	Dr. Dale Ferguson-Hudson	Senior lecturer
Wiltshire	Ms. J. Gibbons	
West Midlands Region		
Birmingham	Mrs. C. Vaughan-Griffiths	Management consultant
Coventry	Miss C. Andrew	Solictor
Dudley	Mr. A. Waldron	Solicitor
Hereford and Worcester	Mrs. E. Metcalfe	Bookkeeper
Sandwell	Mr. A. Sealey	Company director
Shropshire	Mr. Z. Nilski	Lecturer
Solihull	Mrs. A. Woolley	Company director
Staffordshire	Mr. P. Jones	Managing director
Walsall	Mr. J. Howell	Chartered surveyor
Warwickshire	Mr. R. Gardener	Compliance officer
Wolverhampton	Ms T. Evans	Educationalist
Yorkshire Region		
Bradford	Mr. J. Fergusson	Chartered accountant
Calderdale	Mr. B. Calverley	Retired NHS manager
Humberside	Dr. T. Bolton	General practioner
Kirklees	Mr. K. Sarathy	Deputy headteacher
Leeds	Professor B. Jewell	University professor
North Yorkshire	Mr. J. Whitworth	Managing director
Wakefield	Mr. D. Travis	Administrator

Directors

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a breakdown, by health authority or NHS trust, of the numbers of directors, both executive and non-executive, and their chairmen who are currently aged over 70 years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* Currently there are four chairmen and 12 non-executive directors of NHS trusts and four chairmen of national health service authorities who are aged 70 or over.

Regional Health Authority Headquarters

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the tenure of the North West regional health authority headquarters premises, Gateway house, Piccadilly, Manchester;

(2) what is the tenure of the Merseyside regional health authority headquarters premises, Hamilton house, Pall Mall, Liverpool.

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to his answer, 22 February, column 207]:* I regret that my previous reply was incorrect. It should read

"Hamilton house is the freehold property of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Gateway house is held on lease until February 2010."

DEFENCE

AWE Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total estimated cost of the new capital works projects at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The current total estimated cost of the major programme of capital works at AWE Aldermaston is £1·2 billion.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the plutonium processing laboratories in the A90 complex at AWE Aldermaston are expected to become operational.

Mr. Aitken: The radioactive commissioning of the plutonium processing laboratories in the A90 complex commenced on 15 March 1994. This activity will be phased over some two years during which time plutonium processing will progressively transfer from existing facilities.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimated total cost of rectifying the problems in the A91 building at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The cost of rectifying the problems in the A91 building at AWE Aldermaston is in the region of £15 million exclusive of value added tax.

It is not our normal practice to disclose commercially confidential information, which is given in this instance with the agreement of the contractor.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long the A1 building at AWE Aldermaston is to remain operational under current plans.

Mr. Aitken: Under current plans it is expected that the A1 building at AWE Aldermaston will remain operational until early 1996.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long the A45 building at AWE Aldermaston is to remain operational under current plans.

Mr. Aitken: The majority of work currently in progress at A45 will progressively transfer to A90, as it becomes operational over the next two years. Under these plans A45 will remain in operation for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the A91 building at AWE Aldermaston to become fully operational.

Mr. Aitken: The A91 building at AWE Aldermaston is expected to become fully operational in 1997.

PINDAR Bunker

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the expenditure on the PINDAR bunker in each year of design and construction work.

Mr. Aitken: Details of expenditure for project PINDAR civil works by financial year are as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	0·1
1985-86	0·6
1986-87	2·4
1987-88	6·6
1988-89	6·7
1989-90	9·3
1990-91	24·5
1991-92	7·6
1992-93	8·2
1993-94	0·3
Total	66·3

Submarine Reactor Cores

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected timetable for the introduction into service of the replacements for the used core transport package flasks that were used by his Department for the transport of submarine reactor cores.

Mr. Aitken: The contract for the design and build of new purpose built transportation containers for the Royal Navy's nuclear submarine used fuel is expected to be placed later this year with the first delivery some three years later. For the interim period a contract was placed in December last year to procure two commercial containers which we expect should allow licensed transportation to resume later this year.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of delivery of vehicles and containers for the transport and storage of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Aitken: Good progress is being made towards the provision of 250 nuclear weapons containers (supercontainers) and 20 vehicles which are being gifted to Russia to help with the disposal of surplus nuclear weapons. We expect deliveries of the first equipment to commence shortly. The estimated cost of the total package is £35 million at current prices.

Polaris

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any decisions have yet been taken on the methods of disposal for United Kingdom Polaris missiles and their components.

Mr. Aitken: Decisions have now been taken on the methods of disposal for most elements of United Kingdom Polaris missiles. Surplus components are being disposed of to best advantage; where this involves disposal for scrap, relevant legislation and conventions are being fully observed.

Strategic Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will define the terms strategic and sub-strategic as currently used by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, on 23 March at column *290*.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current estimated cost of procurement of the European fighter aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Aitken: The estimated total project cost comprising the costs of development, production and integrated logistic support, (assuming a United Kingdom offtake of 250 aircraft) is some £13·45 billion at September 1993 prices.

Ammunition

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to providing ammunition fitted with armour piercing, fin stabilised, discarding sabots to British tank and artillery forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Fin stabilised, discarding sabot ammunition has been in service with British tank regiments since 1982. It is not suitable for use by artillery forces.

Defence Sales

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each Government-to-Government or memorandum of understanding defence sales agreement since 1979, with the date of signing and indicating in each case whether all or part of the sales under the agreement had Crown status and were exempt from export licence controls; and in each such case how exemptions were reported to Parliament.

Mr. Aitken: Exports of defence equipment by Her Majesty's Government to: *(a)* the Government of Saudi Arabia, under the terms of the Al-Yamamah arrangement signed in 1985, 1986 and 1988, and *(b)* to the Government of Kuwait under the memorandum of understanding signed on 2 December 1992, have Crown status. As such, they do not require a licence. They are, however, assessed under the normal foreign and defence criteria.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which defence sales carried out since 1979 on behalf of International Military Services Ltd., Defence Sales Export Organisation, or Royal Ordnance or British Aerospace whilst in public ownership, carried exemptions from export licence controls.

Mr. Aitken: Only those sales made by Royal Ordnance through the sales/supply organisations of the Defence Export Services Organisation had Crown status. Although no export licences were required, such exports took account of foreign and defence policy considerations.

Arms Transportation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any Royal Air Force VC-10 cargo plane has been used to transport arms to Iran since 1979.

Mr. Aitken No.

Depleted Uranium Shells

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which countries the depleted uranium imported by his Department for use in anti-tank penetrator shells originated; and what collaborative research is being undertaken with other countries that manufacture such shells.

Mr. Aitken: The depleted uranium used in my Department's anti-tank ammunition development programmes has been imported, by the contractors, from the United States of America.

My Department has undertaken a collaborative research programme with the United States, France and Germany to examine the feasibility of developing a 140 mm tank round. As part of the programme depleted uranium penetrators have been considered. This programme is now almost complete.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department gathered as a result of the research conducted by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment into prophylactic protection against chemical and germ weapons; and how this was used to help protect British service men in Operation Granby.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment (CBDE) under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from G. Pearson to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 25 March 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what information his Department gathered as a result of the research conducted by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment into protection against chemical and germ weapons; and how this was used to help protect British Service Personnel in Operation GRANBY has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the UK Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. Effective protective measures against chemical and biological weapons necessitate a portfolio of capabilities:

(a) *Hazard Assessment.* The implications and evaluation of the potential hazard should such agents and weapons be utilised against British forces.

(b) *Detection and Warning.* The detection of an attack prior to inhalation of a harmful concentration and the provision of warning to units located in the downwind hazard area. Identification of the nature of the particular agent facilitates the assessment of the downwind hazard area and of the duration of the hazard and enables appropriate medical countermeasures to be taken.

(c) *Physical Protection.* The provision of effective protection for the respiratory tract and for the body. This may be provided either as individual protection or collective protection ie the provision of facilities supplied with filtered air in which individual protection does not need to be worn.

(d) *Contamination Control.* Some agents such as mustard and some of the nerve agents are persistent and present a long term hazard. Action needs to be taken to decontaminate personnel and equipment contaminated with such agents.

(e) *Medical Countermeasures.* The provision of prophylactic or pretreatment measures which enhance the ability of the body to withstand attack by chemical orbiological agents and the provision of therapy after exposure to chemical or biological agents.

4. The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment has over the years built up a group of scientists with the expertise in these areas and skills to apply their scientific and technical knowledge to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with the best possible protective measures.

5. When the United Kingdom sent its forces to the Gulf in Operation GRANBY it was with the knowledge that they would be facing Iraqi forces experienced in the use of chemical weapons. It was also assessed that Iraq had the capability to manufacture and use biological weapons.

6. During the Gulf conflict of late 1990/early 1991 the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down was directly engaged in ensuring that the British Service personnel were as well protected as possible against the possible use of chemical or biological weapons by Iraq. Some two thirds of the senior staff of the Establishment were involved directly in providing advice at least part of the time.

7. Our assistance covered a wide range of areas:

(a) *Hazard assessment.* Advice was provided on the potential implications should Iraq use chemical or biological weapons. Information was provided for example on the effect of the local environment on the duration of the hazard and on the optimum deployment of detection systems to give the most effective warning of such attacks.

(b) *Detection.* The existing detection equipment was extended so as to provide audible warning should chemical agents be used against UK Armed Forces. The capabilities of in-service equipment were extended so that all chemical agents which Iraq was assessed to posses would be detected. An expedient biological detection system was developed and deployed to the Gulf together with a supplementary identification capability. In addition, kits for the sampling and identification of biological and chemical agents were produced and deployed so that in the event of an attack, appropriate samples would have been taken and returned to this Establishment for analysis.

(c) *Protection.* Advice was given on the optimum use of available physical protective measures and on collective protection including the incorporation of air conditioning systems.

(d) *Contamination management.* Advice was provided on the likely duration of the hazard had chemical or biological weapons been used by Iraq and consequently on how that hazard might have been further reduced by appropriate decontamination techniques.

(e) *Medical countermeasures.* The effectiveness of existing medical countermeasures against agents assessed to be possessed by Iraq were evaluated and confirmed. In addition, advice was provided on appropriate medical countermeasures to be taken against the potential use of biological weapons by Iraq.

8. The contributions made by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment ensured that the protection available to the British Armed Forces was the best possible.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates on which Ministers or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each

year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost to his Department of each flight.

Mr. Aitken: Detailed information of this nature is not readily available without incurring disproportionate cost.

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the contractorisation of the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment is included in the £850 million of civil service work won by private companies which was announced on 7 March.

Mr. Aitken: Yes.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the leasing of Tornado F3 aircraft to Italy.

Mr. Aitken: We are discussing with the Italian MOD detailed arrangements for the lease of 26 RAF Tornado F3 aircraft to the Italian air force. I hope to be able to make an announcement shortly.

Quality Assurance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to withdraw recognition of defence contractors claiming quality management assurance systems certification, which has been certified by institutions or companies which are not qualified to offer such certification by the National Association of Certification Control Bodies.

Mr. Aitken: The MOD recognises only contractors quality management system certifications which have either been:

(a) granted by certification bodies who hold appropriate accreditation through the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies (NACCB), or

(b) subject to assessment by MOD, or

(c) can be shown to be acceptable to another NATO MOD.

Armed Forces (Complement)

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what adjustments have been made to the size of the British armed forces since April 1992 due to changed strategic circumstances.

Mr. Hanley: The Government's plans for force restructuring over the time scale given in the question are detailed in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992 (Cm 1981) and 1993 (Cm 2270) and subsequent ministerial statements.

"Options for Change"

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a declassified version of the paper written by the former Minister of State for Defence Procurement, Mr. Alan Clark, as part of the "Options for Change" exercise.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

TRANSPORT

British Rail Staff

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of employees employed by British Rail in all staff categories in each financial year from 1990-91; and what are the projections for *(a)* 1994-95, *(b)* 1995-96 and *(c)* 1996-97.

Mr. Freeman: The table gives figures for 1990-91 to 1992-93 and the latest figures for 1993-94. Projections for future years are not available.

BR staff numbers

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*As at 26 February 1994*
	Salaried			
Administrative, technical and clerical staff	40,548	49,068	49,225	49,711
Police	1,620	1,644	1,654	1,729
TOTAL SALARIED	42,168	50,712	50,879	51,440
	Wages			
Drivers and other footplate staff	16,919	16,675	15,765	14,968
Guards and other train staff	8,210	7,679	7,497	6,887
Train catering staff	1,756	1,686	1,623	1,847
Signalling staff (including crossing keepers)	5,554	5,684	5,523	5,348
Staff employed in stations, yards and depots	16,438	15,534	13,780	12,765
Staff employed on carriage and wagon examination	468	441	342	305
Permanent way, signal and telecommunications staff	21,515	16,370	13,683	12,414
Workshop staff	15,237	15,090	13,698	13,090
Miscellaneous staff	3,165	3,189	2,002	1,564
TOTAL WAGES	89,262	82,348	73,913	69,188
TOTAL ALL STAFF	131,430	133,060	124,792	120,628
BR Property Board	651	638	581	630
BR Maintenance Ltd.	3,908	3,895	3,413	3,358
Transmark Ltd.	89	109	104	0
Meldon Quarry Ltd.	64	71	47	26
BR Pension Trustee Co. Ltd.	21	21	22	22
BR Telecommunications Ltd.	17	26	704	762

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	As at 26 February 1994
European Passenger Services Ltd.	97	181	327	868
GROUP TOTAL	136,277	138,001	129,990	126,294

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the dates on which Ministers or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost to his Department of each flight.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is not available in the form requested back to 1985. However, Ministers in this Department have not used Malaysian Airlines Services (MAS) during the last two years.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total cost to public funds of rail privatisation to date.

Mr. Freeman: At March 31, the total cost to public funds of rail privatisation incurred by the Department of Transport, the Office of the Rail Regulator, the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising, British Rail and Railtrack, is expected to be around £92 million. The Government have made full financial provision to BR and Railtrack to meet their costs so there is no question of these costs affecting fares or the quality of passenger services. Privatisation costs are small in relation to the size of the railway businesses involved, the massive reorganisation taking place and the benefits that this will bring.

Seat Belts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the requirements laid down by United Kingdom and EC legislation for the fitting and wearing of seat belts in minibuses and coaches; which legislation applies to each requirement; and if he will make a statement on the possibility of further requirements being legislated for.

Mr. Key: Regulations 46 and 47 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (SI 1986/1078) as amended, have required seat belts to be fitted to the front seats of minibuses and exposed forward-facing seats of coaches, since 1 October 1988. EC directives 76/115, 81/575, 82/318 and 90/629 in respect of seat belt anchorages and 77/541, 81/576, 82/319 and 90/628 in respect of seat belts, make, for new vehicles, similar provisions on seat belt fitment to the current United Kingdom regulations.

United Kingdom legislation (SI 1992/3105, SI 1993/31 and SI 1993/176) requires seat belts to be used wherever they are available in the front seats of all vehicles and in the rear seats of minibuses with an unladen weight of 2,540kg or less. It is illegal to carry an unrestrained child in the front seat of any vehicle. EC Directive 91/671 requires seat belts to be used in the front seats of vehicles of less than 3·5 tonnes and, where fitted, in the rear seats of cars with up to 8 passenger seats.

We are considering the technical and cost implications of fitting seat belts to all seats in minibuses and coaches and hope to publish the conclusions shortly.

Passengers Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *104*, concerning the passengers charter, whether rail franchisees will be required in their own passengers charters to commit themselves to standards of service, and levels of compensation to passengers when these standards are not met, that are no less favourable than those in the relevant British Rail passengers charter.

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

Channel Freight Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the cost advantage of the use of a through rail freight service for the journey across the channel compared to the costs of using *(a)* the conventional roll-on, roll-off ferry and *(b)* the road-rail ferry service; and to what extent there are likely to be differences in cost for transporting goods from, rather than into, the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: It is for industry to decide which mode of transport to use. Distribution costs are a matter for commercial negotiation and will depend upon individual circumstances, such as volumes carried and frequency of service.

Rail Services (Wales)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations regarding rail services he has received from local authorities in Wales during 1994.

Mr. Freeman: I have received a number of representations covering a wide range of issues relating to railways in Wales including those from Clwyd county council, Gwynedd county council, Dyfed county council, and Maesteg town council.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his assessment of the impact of the Budget on housing in the Doncaster area.

Sir George Young: Householders in Doncaster, and throughout the country, have benefited from the steady reduction in interest rates over the last few years, from the new opportunities for home ownership that we are creating through rent to mortgage and the expansion of cash incentive schemes which release housing for those in greatest need; and from the prudent approach to public finances and the sound basis for economic growth which my right hon. and learned Friend set in place in his Budget.

As far as housing expenditure is concerned, significant reductions were made at a national level in provision for both local authority and housing association capital expenditure. Doncaster has, however, benefited from our policy of taking account of performance in allocating resources: our assessment that its performance improved from average last year to above average this year has been reflected in its increased share of regional resources, from 4·1 per cent. in 1993-94 to 4·5 per cent. in 1994-95. The authority's basic housing investment programme allocation in 1994-95 is £5·3 million.

In addition, Doncaster has been allocated £1·5 million in 1994-95 to continue work on the Stainforth estate action scheme, which when complete will have attracted £9·1 million in additional resources from the government. Doncaster could benefit from the in-year reallocation of specified capital grant resources for private sector renovation, as it has in previous years. The total Housing Corporation programme, including the tenants incentive scheme and do-it-yourself-shared-ownership will enable 197 units to be provided in 1994-95. The actual effect of housing allocations will depend on local decisions and priorities.

I hope to see Doncaster and all local authorities making maximum use of the opportunities for drawing private finance into housing, developing partnerships with the local private rented sector, and involving all those with a contribution to make in their efforts to tackle local housing need.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the size of the outstanding debt for each local authority for which he has responsibility, together with any balances from capital receipts which have not been used to reduce debt; and what are the annual costs of servicing the debt, together with income from the balances.

Mr. Baldry: The available information has been placed in the Library of the House.

London (Consultation Document)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish the information received from his recent consultation document on London.

Sir George Young: We aim to publish a digest of responses later this month.

Assets

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the assets *(a)* in total and *(b)* per head of population of (i) Manchester, (ii) Birmingham, (iii) Lambeth, (iv) Southwark, (v) Liverpool, (vi) Hackney, (vii) Leeds, (viii) Sheffield, (ix) Haringey, (x) Newham, (xi) Lewisham, (xii) Newcastle-upon-Tyne, (xiii) Salford, (xiv) South Tyneside, (xv) Coventry, (xvi) Hammersmith and Fulham, (xvii) Bristol and (xviii) Wakefield.

Mr. Baldry: No information is currently available on the capital value of assets held by individual local authorities.

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *890*, if he will list those concessions and rebates applicable to residents of private residential homes under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978.

Mr. Baldry: Section 2 of the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 sets out the rebates which could be granted to the occupier of institutions for the disabled in England and Wales for years up to and including 1989-90. Full rebates in respect of rates chargeable were granted in respect of hereditaments used for the purposes set out in section 2(2) of the Act. The hereditament must have been used either wholly for one or more of the purposes listed, or partly for one or more of the purposes listed and partly for ancillary purposes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Malta

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards Malta's application to join the EC.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have welcomed the prospect of Maltese accession. The Commission's opinion on Malta's application identified institutional problems that would have to be addressed and a number of Maltese economic reforms that would be necessary before they can become members of the EU. In the interim, and before accession negotiations begin, the Government are looking at ways of maintaining a dialogue with the Maltese about accession matters.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 22 March.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I attended the Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels on 22 March.

The Council discussed the qualified majority voting arrangements which will apply once the EFTAn applications have joined the European Union. We again emphasised the need to ensure the adequate protection of significant minorities in the Council and the democratic legitimacy of Community decision-making. Our Spanish colleagues supported us. Other Ministers continued to argue that the qualified majority should be kept constant as a proportion of the total number of votes after enlargement. It was not possible to find a solution to this question. The matter will probably be discussed again at the informal Foreign Affairs Council on 26-27 March.

The number of seats on the European investment bank management committee after enlargement was also discussed, but no agreement reached.

The Council reached agreement on the remaining non-institutional aspects of the accession negotiations. Political agreement was reached on a declaration on less-favoured area coverage for Finland and Swedish access to Baltic cod.

There were no formal votes.

SCOTLAND

Procurators Fiscal

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement indicating, for each of the procurators fiscal in Scotland, in how many cases involving a fatality the procurator fiscal has decided to take no further proceedings in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not readily available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Common Services Agency

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his plans for the future of the building division of the Common Services Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government are committed to a publicly funded health service with national health service units firmly within the public sector. However, health service managers should concentrate their skills on core activities of the NHS, using their expertise to seek best value for money in the provision of non-core services.

The work of the building division of the Common Services Agency (CSA) is a non-core activity and its ability to adapt and to develop the skills and services that it can provide in a changing world is constrained within the public sector. Following a review of the options for the future, my noble and learned Friend and I have agreed in principle that the opportunity should be taken to invite tenders for a management buy-out or from the private sector to take over the business as a going concern.

The CSA board has been asked to consider how this can be taken forward and to draw up an implementation plan. A prospectus will be issued by the board. When all bids received have been evaluated, the board will make recommendations to my noble and learned Friend.

Fishing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to discuss fishing management for the Scottish inshore fleet in the North sea.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* I meet representatives of the SFF regularly, but have no current plans for a meeting. Discussions about fish conservation have been held between Scottish Office officials and representatives of the SFF, and further discussions may be necessary in due course.

Wild Birds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list details of all current licences issued to kill wild bird species, including the premises and the wild bird species concerned.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Species	*Premises*	*Number of licences*
Cormorant	Fish farm/Put and take fishery	8
Goosander	District Salmon Fisheries Board (DSFB)	1
Goosander/Cormorant	DSFB/Put and take fishery	4
Goosander/Red-breasted Merganser	DSFB	2
Goosander/Red-breasted Merganser/Cormorant	DSFB	8
Red-breasted Merganser/ Cormorant	DSFB	2
Goose, Barnacle	Croft/farm	2
Goose, Greyleg/Pinkfoot	Croft/farm	34
Raven	Croft/farm	2
Pigeon, Feral/Sparrow, House	Shops/warehouses	30
Sparrow, House	Shops/warehouses	15

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* There are 81 registered disabled people—1·3 per cent. of staff—who are recorded as employed in my Department. However, in a recent anonymous staff survey about disability in the workplace, which covered an additional 2,058 Scottish Office staff in associated departments and on loan and secondment, 131—(1·6 per cent.—indicated that they were currently registered disabled.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 28 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Case Procedure Reform

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps the Lord Chancellor is taking to reform the procedures for handling cases in the High Court and the county courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has asked Lord Woolf to examine the procedures used in the civil courts. Lord Woolf will aim to improve access to justice and reduce the cost of litigation. He will also seek to reduce complexity and modernise terminology.

Legal Aid

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the desirability of availability of legal aid for disputes between groups of pensioners and their pension funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government have no plans to make legal aid available for groups, but civil legal aid is available to individuals pursuing most types of action through the civil courts of England and Wales subject to tests as to their means and the merits of their case.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Details of the number of staff in each civil service grade by *(a)* male and *(b)* female, and by (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees are set out in the tables.

List of male and female staff, part-time and full-time in the Lord Chancellor's Department as at 24 March 1994

Grade	*Male full-time*	*Male part-time*	*Female full-time*	*Female part-time*
Grade 1	1	0	0	0
Grade 2	2	0	0	0
Grade 3	8	0	1	0
Grade 4	5	0	0	0
Grade 5	16	0	3	0
Grade 5 sol	11	0	1	2
Grade 6 senior principal	28	0	8	0
Grade 6 legal	23	1	7	4
DP registrar	11	0	0	0
Senior legal assistant	6	0	1	1
Grade 7 principal	109	0	45	2
Grade 7 legal	20	0	26	6
Legal assistant	2	0	0	0
Legal officer	0	0	2	0
SEO	211	3	110	3
Total	453	4	204	18

List of male and female staff, part-time and full-time in the Lord Chancellor's Department as at 24 March 1994

Grade	*Male full-time*	*Male part-time*	*Female full-time*	*Female part-time*
Senior assistant stats	2	0	0	0
Senior information officer	1	0	0	0
HEO	506	3	508	44
Information officer	1	0	1	0
Assistant stats	1	0	0	0
Chief typing manager	0	0	3	0
Librarian	4	0	4	0
HEO D	3	0	5	0
Admin trainee	4	0	1	0
EO	700	7	1,180	162
Assistant information officer	0	0	1	0
Senior personal secretary	0	0	15	0
Typing manager	0	0	33	0
Assistant librarian	0	0	8	0
Total	1,222	10	1,759	206

List of male and female staff, part-time and full-time in the Lord Chancellor's Department as at 24 March 1994

Grade	Male full-time	Male part-time	Female full-time	Female part-time
SM2	5	0	0	0
SM3	9	0	22	0
AO	1,023	19	2,719	667
Personal secretary	0	0	61	8
Interpreter	0	0	2	0
AA	180	7	363	94
SGB 1	57	0	72	18
SGB 2	453	123	434	415
Typist	1	0	437	301
Total	1,728	149	4,110	1,503

Council Tax

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what guidelines he has issued in relation to the council tax liability for those domestic staff required to live in at judges' lodgings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Those staff required to live in at judges' lodgings are, as a condition of their employment, subject to a service licence and are required to pay rent. As resident licensees, they are consequently liable to pay the council tax, based on an assessment of the accommodation which they occupy. The staff concerned have been advised of the position.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Isle of Man

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of state for National Heritage when he last met the Minister of Tourism of the Isle of Man with a view to the co-promotion of the island's heritage, Celtic traditions and recreational facilities in north America and the Pacific rim.

Mr. Sproat: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend have met the Minister of Tourism of the Isle of Man to discuss the promotion of the island's attractions abroad. The British Tourist Authority has no obligation under the 1969 Development of Tourism Act to represent the Isle of Man. However, it does offer representational services and I understand that it is currently in discussion about new proposals to represent the Isle of Man in certain overseas markets.

Quangos

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Sproat: This information is available in "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Library of the House.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of state for National Heritage how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sproat: My Department was established in April 1992. Between then and the year end, it passed four regulations. In 1993, it passed 34 regulations and so far in 1994 it has passed six regulations.

Sports Facilities

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with the Central Council of Physical Recreation concerning the loss of sports facilities and planning legislation as it relates to sports sites.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary had discussions with representatives of the Central Council of Physical Recreation, on 2 March, to discuss a number of sports issues, including briefly the national register of recreational land.

TRANSPORT

Executive Agencies

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further progress he has made in transferring the executive functions of his Department to agency status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I am establishing three further executive agencies in my Department with effect from 1 April: the Highways Agency, the Coastguard Agency and the Marine Safety Agency. I have set clear aims and objectives for each of the agencies and I am placing clear responsibility for the management of the agencies on their chief executives. I will look to the chief executives for improvements in efficiency and effectiveness and in the quality of the services the agencies provide. The aims and objectives of each agency and the chief executives' reponsibilities are set out in the agencies' framework documents; copies of which will be placed in the Library when published.

Each year, I shall set these agencies demanding efficiency and service targets, which will be published in annual business plans. The agencies will also publish annual reports; again, copies of these, and the business plans for 1994-95, will be placed in the Library.

The Highways Agency has some 2,400 staff, and has a headquarters office in London. The agency will be

responsible for managing and maintaining the existing motorway and trunk road network in England and for delivering the Government's road programme. I believe that the increased focus on managing the network as a whole, which is reflected in the agency's aim and objectives and in the targets in the road users charter and charter standard statement—"Your Home and Trunk Road Proposals"—which I will publish shortly, will result in a better quality of service for users of the trunk road network and those who are affected by traffic on it and improvements to it. Following an open competition, I have appointed Mrs. Lawrie Haynes, formerly with British Aerospace, to be the agency's first chief executive.

The Coastguard Agency has some 580 staff, the large majority of whom are uniformed coastguard officers, and has its headquarters in Southampton. The agency will be responsible for discharging the Government's responsibilities for civil maritime search and rescue and combating oil and chemical pollution from ships where there is a threat to United Kingdom interests. Following an open competition, I have appointed Mr. Chris Harris, formerly director of the Department's marine emergencies organisation, to be the agency's first chief executive.

The Marine Safety Agency has some 410 staff, and has its headquarters in Southampton. The agency will be responsible for implementing the Government's strategy for marine safety and the prevention of pollution from ships. Following an open competition, I have appointed Mr. Robin Bradley, formerly a serving Royal Navy officer, to be the agency's first chief executive.

I wish the chief executives and their staffs every success for the future. I am confident that these new arrangements will enable them to provide yet further improvements in the services they provide while giving better value for money.

Where right hon. or hon. Members have queries about matters relating to the operation of the agencies, I hope they will write in the first instance to the chief executives, I and my hon. Friends the Ministers for Roads and Traffic and for Transport in London and my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping will continue to deal with questions of policy and resources, or where there is dissatisfaction with an agency's reply.

Isle of Man

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the Minister for Transport of the Isle of Man to discuss transport links and matters of common interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have not met the Isle of Man Minister for Transport. However, my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping met the hon. David North MHK, Isle of Man Minister for Highways, Ports and Properties, on 2 March to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Rail Costs

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of additional costs in overall rail subsidy which will be necessary to pay for consultants and to cover additional administration arising out of rail franchising.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to separate the costs specifically associated with franchising from the overall cost of restructuring the railway industry. Although there will be some additional administration costs arising from the restructuring of the railway in April, we believe that, over time, these will be more than offset by the efficiency savings privatisation will bring.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his estimate of the financial effects of rail franchising of the services subsidised by passenger transport authorities or executives on routes where track is shared with InterCity or Regional Railways where charges are currently made only for marginal costs; and what is his estimate of the financial effects on such services of the requirement to pay a proportionate share of administration costs;

(2) what effect changes in charging procedure as a result of rail franchising will have in respect of subsidies for services subsidised by passenger transport authorities or executives; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his estimate of the percentage increases in passenger transport executive Railtrack access charges for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97, compared to the present charges for each executive.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to draw a direct comparison between the various elements of the charges currently paid by the passenger transport executives to BR under their section 20 agreements, under which the PTEs have paid the net marginal cost of their services to BR, and the charges that will apply under the new regime, under which PTE services will carry an appropriate share of infrastructure charges and central overheads. From April 1994 the PTEs will be treated on the same basis as the franchising director, paying subsidy to the company operating their services, which will in turn need to pay access charges to Railtrack.

We expect the headline cost to PTEs of maintaining existing service levels to increase under the new regime, but we have undertaken to cover the increased cost in 1994-95 by making special grant payments to them, and, thereafter, to enhance the provision made in the section 20 bolt-on for their constituent metropolitan district councils.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of the channel tunnel rail link route, that he announced in his statement of 24 January, *Official Report*, columns 19-34, will be in tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: About 23 per cent. of the 108 km route of the new channel tunnel rail link route announced in January will be in tunnel, although final decisions on the route at Pepper Hill and Ashford may affect this figure.

Rail Fares

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the most recent available comparisons of rail fares per mile or kilometre throughout the EEC and non-EEC European countries.

Mr. Freeman: Comparative data of the kind requested are not available to the Department.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statistics his Department has for each of the last four years on the number of accidents involving heavy goods vehicles where the operator of the heavy goods vehicle is found not to hold a heavy goods vehicle operator licence.

Mr. Key: The information necessary to provide the statistics requested is not at present collected; consideration is being given to how these statistics might be collected in the future following a meeting with the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Vehicle Inspectorate and the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards last December.

Personal injury road accident data are collected by the police and reported to the Department: those accidents involving heavy goods vehicles where the operator does not hold an operator's licence are not at present distinguished from those where such a licence is held by the operator. The Department is pursuing with the Association of Chief Police Officers and individual police forces how more precise statistics might be provided.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. MacGregor: The cost of receptions held by Ministers in this Department in 1993-94 was £3,038·21.

Stansted Airport

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport at what date it is forecast that Stansted airport will be operating at full capacity as indicated by the new air traffic forecasts recently published by his Department; and what assessment he has made of the effect on this of doubling the air passenger duty in real terms.

Mr. Norris: The air traffic forecasts published by the Department of Transport provide aggregate forecasts for the London airports, and regional airports. They do not provide forecasts for individual airports. The forecasts of the working group on runway capacity to serve the south-east—RUCATSE—indicated that Stansted would reach capacity around 2015; this would require an increase in the air traffic movement limit from its present level of 78,000 movements. No assessment has been made of the effect of doubling the air passenger duty.

New Car Registrations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of new car registrations for each of the last eight quarters for *(a)* Doncaster and *(b)* South Yorkshire; and what were the comparable figures for (i) five and (ii) 10 years ago.

Mr. Key: The requested information for 1993, 1992 and 1988 is given. Comparable figures for these two areas for the year 1983 are not available.

New registrations

	1993	*1992*	*1988*
Doncaster			
Quarter 1	3,915	3,313	5,475
Quarter 2	3,104	2,924	4,610
Quarter 3	6,206	5,211	7,220
Quarter 4	2,628	2,384	3,231
Total	15,853	13,832	20,536
South Yorkshire			
Quarter 1	7,096	6,509	10,496
Quarter 2	5,852	5,792	8,701
Quarter 3	11,001	9,434	13,344
Quarter 4	4,888	4,440	6,312
Total	28,837	26,175	38,853

Kingkerswell Bypass

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to start work on the Kingkerswell bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The future progress of this scheme depends on the outcome of our review of the national trunk road programme. We will announce the results of the review shortly.

Railway Staff, Redundancies

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to fill the skills gap left by the departure of experienced railway managers and staff with the restructuring of the railway industry on 1 April.

Mr. Freeman: Recuitment and retention of staff are matters for employers in the industry.

Quarried Stone, Rutland

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will require the transport of quarried stone, for the purpose of any quarrying of limestone between Market Overton and Thistleton in Rutland, to be taken by rail according to the original planning consent of 1954.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for the county planning authority.

ENVIRONMENT

Birch Coppice

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he made the decision to set aside his decision of 2 August 1993 to refuse British Coal's application to opencast at Birch Coppice in Warwickshire.

Mr. Baldry: As the hon. Member is aware, my Department issued a decision letter on 2 August 1993 refusing planning permission in respect of British Coal's application to opencast at Birch Coppice in Warwickshire. British Coal exercised its right to challenge that decision in the High Court on 6 September 1993. Having considered the grounds of the challenge, my Department instructed the Treasury Solicitors to submit to judgment on certain aspects of the challenge in February 1994. We are currently awaiting for the court to determine the matter.

If the court decides to quash the Secretary of State's decision, the appeal will then be referred back to the Secretary of State for him to redetermine. It does not follow that the original decision will automatically be overturned and permission granted.

In accordance with rule 18 of the Town and Country Planning Inquiry Procedure Rules, the Secretary of State will send to the persons entitled to appear at the inquiry who appeared at it a written statement indicating the matters in respect of which further representations are invited for the purpose of his further consideration of the appeal. This will provide parties with the opportunities to submit written representations or call for the reopening of the inquiry. It will then be a matter for decision by the Secretary of State whether or not the inquiry should be reopened. It is not possible to commence the redetermination process until the court has determined the matter and referred the case back to the Secretary of State. If this happens, the process will be put into effect as soon as possible and a final decision on the matter will be issued as soon as possible after the process has been completed.

Emissions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account is taken of the expected changes in PM10 levels in his Department's methodology for assessing the costs and benefits of proposed road schemes; and if he will seek expert advice on the case for reviewing the methodology to give greater weight to the cost implications for proposed road schemes of the effects of PM10 emissions.

Mr. Key: The effects of emissions are considered as part of the environmental assessment of trunk road schemes although they are not assigned monetary values. There is no PM10 standard in the United Kingdom as yet, but this is under consideration as indicated by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside on 21 March 1994 in his answer to a question from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), *Official Report*, column *114*. I shall await the results of this work with interest.

Robin Hood Railway Line

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what financial support he plans for phases 2 and 3 of the Robin Hood line in Nottinghamshire; under what powers he will provide such assistance; in what financial years such assistance will be given; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what funding he intends to make available for phases 2 and 3 of the Robin Hood line in Nottinghamshire; how this funding might be paid; in what financial years this funding will be made available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make funds available for stage 3 of the Robin Hood railway line from Mansfield to Worksop.

Mr. Freeman: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced on 6 May 1993 resources of £6·5 million are to be made available for phase 2 of the Robin Hood line. An application by Nottinghamshire county council for grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 is still being discussed. The £6·5 million will be a combination of grant and credit approvals under sections 53 and 54 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The current project programme indicates that resources will be required in the 1994-95 financial year.

I am not yet satisfied with the case for phase 3 and my Department is discussing with the county council the further work needed on the appraisal. If the council wishes to bid for resources for phase 3, they will need to indicate in a future transport policies and programme submission how it fits into their overall strategy and priorities.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the maximum speed of channel tunnel passenger trains through the tunnel under Blue Bell Hill, Kent when the channel tunnel rail link route he announced on 24 January, *Official Report*, columns 19-34, becomes operational.

Mr. Freeman: This is an operational matter for the railway operators concerned, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive. The presently assumed maximum timetabled speed of trains between the channel tunnel and London is 225 km/h—140 mph. Not all trains will run at the maximum speed. Freight and commuter services may operate more slowly than international passenger trains.

Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the levels of *(a)* atmospheric pollution, *(b)* oxides of nitrogen and *(c)* black smoke emissions in the Doncaster area in each year since 1985.

Mr. Atkins: Annual average concentrations of nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and black smoke in the Doncaster area from 1985 to 1993 are given in the tables.

1. Nitrogen Dioxide (ppb)

Year	*Site Address*	*NO_2 Conc (ppb)*
1986	Ambulance Station Armthorpe Road DN2 SLU	24·0
1986	College of Technology Waterdale	24·0
1986	Barnsley Road Scawsby	25·0
1986	Mere Lane Armthorpe	19·0
1991	Ambulance Station Armthorpe Road DN2 5LU	28·0
1993[1]	Old Guildhall Doncaster DN1 1RH (1-5 metres from road)	28·0
1993[1]	Old Guildhall Doncaster DN1 1RH (20-30 metres from road)	29·3
1993[1]	Ambulance Station Armthorpe Road DN2 5LU	21·5
1993[1]	East Lane House East Lane Stainforth Doncaster	18·8

[1] All nitrogen dioxide data for 1993 are still provisional.

2. Sulphur dioxide (ppb)

Year	Site[1] 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7	Site 8	Site 9
1985	29	33	23	30	32	30	—	—	—
1986	30	32	20	24	27	31	—	—	—
1987	16	26	16	20	24	26	—	30	—
1988	12	19	—	16	15	19	15	19	11
1989	11	18	—	17	18	19	17	19	13
1990	12	17	—	14	16	21	16	22	12
1991	17	18	—	14	16	21	17	23	11
1992	—	26	10	12	16	15	14	18	6
1993	—	—	13	13	17	17	6	20	9

Sites[1]

1. Welfare Block, Coalite, Works, Askern, nr Doncaster.
2. Mere Lane, Armthorpe, Doncaster.
3. Church St. Armthorpe, Doncaster.
4. Woodlands Clinic, Central Avenue.
5. College of Further Education, Mexborough.
6. The Library Moorends.
7. Homscarr Middle School, Grange Lane, Rossington, Doncaster.
8. East Lane House, East Lane, Stainforth, Doncaster.
9. Ellison St. Thorne, Doncaster.

3. Black Smoke (ug/m³) (British Standard Unit)

Year	Site[1] 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7	Site 8	Site 9
1985	42	43	30	31	29	60	—	—	—
1986	65	49	31	34	28	85	—	—	—
1987	68	48	30	41	35	81	—	98	—
1988	35	21	—	27	25	68	20	61	19
1989	18	19	—	24	21	56	16	43	23
1990	12	14	—	13	15	21	13	45	11
1991	17	19	—	17	21	18	18	48	12
1992	—	31	11	11	20	16	12	31	11
1993	—	—	13	13	21	21	15	25	11

[1] *Sites*
As in table 2.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he plans to take to reduce levels of PM10 in British cities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Measures to reduce emissions of particles from cars and light vans by 40 per cent. will be applied in 1996 under the consolidated cars directive 91/441/EEC. In addition a further stage of EC directive 91/542, covering emissions from heavy goods vehicles, buses and coaches, has been agreed for implementation in 1996, which will reduce particulate emissions from these sources by about 50 per cent.

Further action to reduce levels of fine particles will be considered in the light of advice from the Department of Health's independent Committee on Medical Effects of Air Pollutants and from the expert panel on air quality standards, which recommends air quality standards to the Secretary of State for the Environment and which is currently considering a standard for particles.

Environmental Action Fund

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the bodies that will receive moneys under the environmental action fund for the year 1994-95; and how much each is to be given.

Mr. Atkins: The list of organisations receiving support from the environmental action fund in 1994-95 is as follows:

Organisation/Application	*Gran (£)*
ACTAC	30,204
Advisory Committee on the Protection of the Sea	25,000
Airfields Environment Federation	8,544
Atmospheric Research and Information Centre—Information	15,408
Atmospheric Research and Information Centre	22,000
Bat Conservation Trust (Core Funding)	27,600
Black Environment Network	16,869
Botanic Centre	55,000
Bristol Environment and Energy Trust	27,000
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	516,500
Business in the Environment	20,000
Byker City Farm	16,875
Cash From Trash	32,000
Civic Trust	143,100
Common Ground	25,000
Community Development Foundation	34,263
Community Recycling Network	35,000
COSQUEC	9,000
Cotswold Canals Trust	20,717
Council for Environmental Education	125,000
Council for Environmental Education (Info in Action)	21,000
Create	63,393
CSV—Action Earth	10,000
CSV—Brumcan	19,100
CSV—Older People in the Environment	31,000
CSV—Scouts Environmental Challenge Fund	30,265
CSV—South West Action	18,000
CSV	144,000
CTAC	19,125
Cycling Project for the North West	20,718
Derby Rainbow	21,200
Devon Wildlife Trust	25,000
ECO Environmental Information Trust	25,000
Environ	12,200
Environment Council—Information for Local Action	11,149
Environment Council	40,000

Organisation/Application	Gran (£)
Family First Ltd.	9,625
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	130,000
Friends of the Earth Trust Ltd.	30,000
Game Conservancy Trust (Project Funding)	15,345
Game Conservancy Trust (Strategic)	50,943
Global Action Plan	35,000
Green Alliance	30,000
Institute of Business Ethics	11,087
Irish Sea Forum	10,000
Landlife	24,775
Learning Through Landscapes	45,000
London Ecology Centre Trust	35,500
Mersey Basin Trust—Schools project	15,000
Mersey Basin Trust	65,000
Merseyside Environmental Trust	22,000
National Association for Environmental Education	17,000
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	52,000
National Federation of City Farms	18,795
National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection	41,820
National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardens	35,000
National Stone Centre	11,735
Neighbourhood Energy Action—ethnic minorities	20,000
Neighbourhood Energy Action—rural energy	25,750
North East Environment Network	18,191
Northern Support Network	12,000
Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council	19,000
Open Spaces Society	12,000
Pedestrians Association	10,050
Peterborough Environment City Trust	36,700
Projects in Partnership	20,000
RSNC	358,500
RSNC—The Wildlife Trusts Partnership	26,250
Royal Society of the Arts	24,000
Royal Town Planning Institute	11,168
Scout Association	19,128
Sea Watch Foundation	22,200
Sheffield Environmental Training	15,000
Southampton Environment Centre	7,117
Southwark Mediation	20,642
SUSTRANS	25,000
Thames Explorer Trust	10,000
The Environment Trust	21,297
The Environment Trust—Lower Lea Project	63,000
Toy Pirates	20,000
Tree Advice Trust	40,000
Tree Council	48,000
UK CEED	25,000
Upland Cumbria Initiative	12,500
Walter Segal Self Build Trust	49,065
Waste Not Recycling	39,245
Waste Watch—Recycling	35,304
Waste Watch—Wasteline	52,110
Waste Watch—Strategic	114,683
West Midlands Environmental Network	14,000
Wey and Arun Canal Trust	11,000
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust	29,735
Wildfowl and Countryside Link	17,450
Woodland Trust (Award Scheme)	5,500
Woodland Trust (Strategic Development Officer)	19,000
Woodland Trust (Community Liaison)	10,000
World Wide Fund for Nature—Agenda 21	30,275
World Wide Fund for Nature	27,000
Wyecycle	15,000
YMCA Otterburn Hall Trust	22,000

Opencast Mining

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy toward reapplications to opencast the same site following privatisation of coal.

Mr. Baldry: Each case will be considered on its merits, but I will consider the need for specific policies in the revision of minerals planning guidance 3. There is no time limit before a reapplication may be made.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the occasions in the last 20 years when very special circumstances have been shown under the Opencast Coal Act 1958 to allow a second application to be granted to opencast a site previously opencast.

Mr. Baldry: Figures are available only since 1984. Since that time, there have been five occasions on which special circumstances have been shown to allow compulsory rights orders to be confirmed in respect of sites previously opencast. Applications for a second compulsory rights order for the same site will be considered on their merits.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the 1994-95 charging schemes for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Atkins: Charges to cover the costs of regulating processes under integrated pollution control—IPC—and premises subject to Radioactive Substances Act 1993—RSA93—regulation were introduced in 1991 under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The Act requires Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to balance costs and income, taking one financial year with another.

With the agreement of the Treasury, and following consultation with industry and other bodies, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales have now made revised IPC and RSA93 charging schemes, specifying the revised scales of fees and charges which will take effect from 1 April 1994. Copies of the revised schemes have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The charges are based on the cost of HMIP's regulatory activities. For 1994-95, the rate per inspector day will be £993, and increase of 2·9 per cent. over the rate for 1993-94.

For IPC, the scheme comprises an application fee to cover the assessment of the operator's proposals and preparation of the authorisation, a variation fee to cover the costs of assessment of any proposals for substantial variation to a process and an annual subsistence charge for the holders of authorisations to cover the costs of inspection and oversight of the plant.

The application fee for 1994-95 is £2,570 per component for processes which have previously been subject to air pollution control and £3,860 per component for processes coming under regulation by HMIP for the first time. The variation fee is £1,290 per component.

The annual subsistence charge is £1,730 per component. This included a charge of £150 to recoup the under-recovery of costs, including setting up costs, in earlier years. In addition, some operators will pay a charge for the monitoring of their processes by contractors engaged by HMIP; the amount of the monitoring charge will directly reflect the cost of this work to HMIP.

Under the RSA93 charging scheme, nuclear licensed premises are billed individually on the basis of regulatory time spent and costs incurred at each site, in accordance with the inspector day rate.

Non-nuclear premises are charged on the basis of flat-rate fees on a similar basis to the IPC scheme, covering applications, substantial variations and subsistence. For premises authorised to accumulate and dispose of radioactive waste—"band 3 premises", for example, research establishments and major universities—the application and variation fee will be £1,425 and the subsistance charge £995. For those premises authorised to accumulate and dispose of small quantities of substances, or substances with a lesser risk, a lower subsistence charge of £85 will be levied. For premises registered to keep and use radioactive material—"band 4 premises", for example, industrial users of radioactive sources—the application and variation fee will be £515. The subsistence fee for band 4 premises will be £85, but the majority of such premises will be exempt from this because they handle small sources and do not require routine inspection.

For 1991-92, the first year of operation of the charging schemes, charges were initially set too low. To ensure equity with those operators applying for authorisations and registrations in later years when more realistic charges have been set, holders of authorisations and registrations arising from applications in 1991-92 pay a supplementary subsistence charge. This charge will continue in 1994-95 at the same rate as in 1992-93 and 1993-94: under IPC, £610 per component for applications charges at the full rate, £410 per component for those charged at the reduced rate; under RSA93, £210 and £80 for band 3 and band 4 premises respectively.

Copies of the schemes will shortly be sent to relevant operators and to other interested bodies.

Council Houses

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of higher council house rents in Wakefield on housing benefit expenditure.

Sir George Young: The increase in Wakefield city council's rent guideline for the purpose of housing revenue account subsidy in 1994-95 is £2·79 per dwelling per week. On the basis of returns made by Wakefield, if the council increases its actual rents by this amount, the Department estimates that additional rent income will be £5·803 million, of which £3·482 million will be granted in rebates.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account is taken of capital expenditure for the purposes of council house maintenance in assessments for housing revenue account subsidies.

Sir George Young: Each housing authority's entitlement to housing revenue account subsidy takes into account annual loan charges on the cost of additional borrowing to finance capital expenditure up to a level related to that authority's annual capital allocations for this purpose.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his estimate is of the expenditure required to bring all of Britain's council house stock up to fully habitable levels at 1994 prices.

Sir George Young: Estimates of the cost of making dwellings fit for habitation in England are contained in the report of the 1991 English house condition survey published in September 1993. For all public sector housing, the backlog of such work is estimated at £780 million at 1994 prices. Matters affecting the housing stock in Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the capital and revenue expenditure was, per council house tenancy, on housing maintenance and repairs for each year since 1979.

Sir George Young: Capital and revenue expenditure, in cash terms, on maintenance and repairs per council dwelling in England was as follows:

Year	*Revenue* £	*Capital* £
1979-80	n/a	n/a
1980-81	171	139
1981-82	189	129
1982-83	218	203
1983-84	256	250
1984-85	272	284
1985-86	289	294
1986-87	296	342
1987-88	326	405
1988-89	365	454
1989-90	406	720
1990-91	487	434
1991-92	509	381
1992-93	545	390
1993-94	[1]595	[1]394

[1] Estimate.
n/a = Not available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the proportion of the 1994-95 housing revenue account subsidy which will be provided for housing benefits reimbursement.

Sir George Young: It is estimated that, in 1994-95, £3,549 million of housing revenue account subsidy will be paid to housing authorities in England as reimbursement for their rent rebate expenditure—net of the amount funded by HRA surpluses. This is 81 per cent. of the total provision for housing revenue account subsidy for 1994-95 of £4,381 million.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities receive a nil or negative housing revenue account subsidy for the housing element component.

Sir George Young: In 1993-94 there is a negative entitlement to the housing element of housing revenue account subsidy for 282 English housing authorities. No authority has a nil entitlement.

Unitary Development Plans

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list when each of the unitary development plans for each authority in Greater Manchester was published; when they will run to; and when he expects each authority to start preparing the next unitary development plans.

Mr. Baldry: The deposit drafts of the Greater Manchester UDPs were published on the following dates:

	Date
Bolton	September 1992
Bury	October 1993
Manchester	October 1992
Oldham	March 1993
Salford	November 1992
Stockport	February 1994
Tameside	March 1993
Trafford	April 1993
Wigan	April 1993

The Rochdale UDP has not yet been placed on deposit, a consultation draft was published in April 1993.

We have advised local planning authorities that the general policies for the development and use of land contained in part 1 of a UDP should make provision for development for a period of at least 15 years. The more detailed policies and proposals contained in part 2 should generally make provision for development for a period of 10 years.

Local planning authorities may prepare proposals to alter or replace existing plans at any time. Plans should be reviewed regularly and the appropriate timing of review will depend on local circumstances, I would generally expect plans to be reviewed at least once every five years.

Housing Investment Programme

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing investment programme allocation for each local authority in 1978-79, 1993-94 and 1994-95 in cash and in constant prices.

Sir George Young: I have today placed in the Library a table of housing investment programme allocations by local authority for the years in question.

Countryside Organisations

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of merging English Nature and the Countryside Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: A decision whether to merge English Nature and the Countryside Commission has yet to be taken. The likely costs and benefits of merger are being considered as part of the current study into this matter. Conclusions have not yet been reached.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the statement and briefing published by the Countryside Commission on 28 February concerning the future of English Nature and the Countryside Commission was authorised by his Department.

Mr. Atkins: No.

Cwm Selar

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the Environment Commissioner of the European Union in relation to the implications of the 1992 habitats directive of the European Union on the proposed opencast coal site development on the Cwm Selar site of special scientific interest, Cwmgwrach, Vale of Neath.

Mr. Atkins: There have been no such consultations.

Nature Reserves

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the responsibility for, or administration of, national nature reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have no such plans. However, the current study into bringing together English Nature and the Countryside Commission embraces all the activities of both bodies, including English Nature's responsibility for national nature reserves.

Institute of Terrestrial Ecology

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the role and functions of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology.

Mr. Atkins: None. The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology is a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council, which is not one of my responsibilities. However, it is a highly successful and competitive contractor to many DOE research programmes.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to enhance the role or functions of local authorities in relation to sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Housing Capital Receipts

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current estimate of the additional capital receipts that have been made available for investment by local authorities in England as a result of the relaxation in the rules governing use of such receipts which applied between 13 November 1992 and 31 December 1993.

Mr. Curry: Latest figures from local authorities indicate that the level of additional receipts was about £1·8 billion, which is more than the £1·75 billion figure suggested by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State following the announcement of the relaxation in the 1992 autumn statement.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested in respect of permanent staff in post on 23 March 1994 is set out in the table.

	Male		*Female*	
Grade	*full-time*	*part-time*	*full-time*	*part-time*
Grade 1	1	0	0	0
Grade 2	8	0	0	0
Grade 3	47	0	5	0

Grade	Male full-time	Male part-time	Female full-time	Female part-time
Grade 4	5	0	3	0
Assistant Comptroller (Patent Office)	2	0	0	0
Grade 5	173	0	21	10
Executive Director Lower Insolvency Service	3	0	0	0
Superintendent Examiner (Patent Office)	8	0	0	0
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 1	1	0	0	0
Grade 6	144	7	26	4
Grade 7	779	6	106	32
Insolvency Grade A	12	0	0	0
Insolvency Grade B	66	0	4	0
Principal Examiner (Patent Office)	24	0	2	0
Senior Examiner (Patent Office)	150	1	14	3
Chief Investigations Officer	1	0	0	0
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 2	2	0	0	0
Petroleum Specialist 2	1	0	0	0
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 3	7	0	1	0
Petroleum Specialist 3	3	0	0	0
Senior Electrical Engineer 1	4	0	0	0
Senior Executive Officer	313	1	56	12
Higher Executive Officer D	18	0	16	0
Higher Executive Officer	704	3	259	42
Executive Officer	840	12	575	96
Administrative Trainee	9	0	4	0
Senior Economic Assistant	6	0	8	1
Economic Assistant	4	0	1	0
Senior Assistant Statistician	2	0	2	0
Assistant Statistician	4	0	2	0
Senior Information Officer	10	0	7	1
Information Officer	19	0	9	0
Assistant Information Officer	8	0	5	0
Higher Graphics Officer	0	0	1	0
Legal Officer	2	0	3	0
Senior Librarian	3	1	4	0
Librarian	9	1	10	0
Assistant Librarian	11	0	13	3
Photographic Officer	1	0	0	0
Process and General Supervisory C	2	0	0	0
Process and General Supervisory D	2	0	0	0
Senior Scientific Officer	258	1	36	1
Higher Scientific Officer	251	1	74	11
Scientific Officer	120	1	49	10
Senior Personal Secretary	1	0	44	0
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	96	0	1	0
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	77	0	4	0
Professional and Technical Officer	27	0	1	0

Grade	Male full-time	Male part-time	Female full-time	Female part-time
Professional and Technical Officer IV	1	0	0	0
Senior Telecommunications Technical Officer	12	1	0	0
Higher Telecommunications Technical Officer	44	0	0	0
Telecommunications Technical Officer	110	0	0	0
Insolvency Grade C	100	1	24	7
Insolvency Grade D	207	6	74	25
Insolvency Grade E	64	0	74	0
Examiner (Patent Office)	29	0	3	0
Translator I	2	0	0	0
Translator II	2	0	5	2
Translator III	1	0	0	0
Deputy Chief Investigations Officer	8	0	0	0
Investigations Officer	39	2	1	0
Communications Officer IV	1	0	2	0
Chief Typing Manager	1	0	4	1
Typing Manager	0	0	26	3
Support Manager 1	1	0	0	0
Legal Trainee	0	0	0	0
Higher Scientific Officer D	7	0	4	0
Senior Management Trainee	2	0	1	0
Chief Gas Examiner	1	0	0	0
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 4	13	0	2	5
Petroleum Specialist 4	9	0	0	0
Area Gas Examiner	0	0	1	0
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 5	0	0	2	0
Petroleum Specialist 5	2	0	0	0
Gas Examiner	4	0	0	0
Chief Gas Meter Examiner	1	0	0	0
Assistant Chief Gas Meter Examiner	1	0	0	0
Gas Meter Examiner 1	2	0	0	0
Gas Meter Examiner 2	9	0	0	0
Gas Meter Examiner 3	10	0	0	0
Higher Mapping and Charting Officer	1	0	0	0
Administrative Officer	879	8	1,093	208
Administrative Assistant	454	11	543	94
Graphics Officer	0	0	2	0
Support Manager 2	5	0	4	0
Support Manager 3	11	0	25	2
Support Grade 1	33	0	85	16
Support Grade 2	209	14	231	198
Senior Photographer	2	0	0	0
Photographer	1	0	0	0
Industrial Technical Grade 1	131	1	7	1
Part time Graduate Trainee	7	0	2	0
Technician 2A	5	0	1	0
Assistant Telecommunications Technical Officer	0	0	0	0
	23	0	0	0

Grade	Male full-time	Male part-time	Female full-time	Female part-time
Trainee Telecommunications Technical Officer	0	0	1	0
Personal Secretary	2	0	316	34
Typist	7	0	318	112
Assistant Scientific Officer	50	0	33	3
Graphics Technical Grade	0	0	1	0
Mapping and Charting Officer	3	0	0	0

Robin Hood Railway Line

Mr. Ashton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will allocate some of the coalfield regeneration fund to construct stage 3 of the Robin Hood railway line between Mansfield and Worksop.

Mr. Sainsbury: Lord Walker is currently considering proposals to support stage 3 of the Robin Hood line which have recently been put to him by the local regeneration partners.

British Coal (Environmental Impact Assessments)

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the future of the environmental impact assessment unit at British Coal, following implementation of the Coal Industry Bill.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that responsibility for environmental impact assessment of particular projects has been devolved to British Coal's operational groups, under the overall policy guidance of British Coal's headquarters operations department. After privatisation, it will be for successor mining companies to decide how to meet the statutory requirements for environmental impact assessment.

Exports (Israel)

Mr. David Young: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if it is his policy to refuse export licences for equipment or machinery capable for use in armaments manufacture which are bought for export to Isreal.

Mr. Needham: We announced in June 1982, following the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon, that we would withhold approval of licences for the export to Isreal of all British military equipment. In 1983 it was decided to allow the export of electronic and other small non-lethal components provided they did not form part of equipment due to be put into immediate service with Israeli forces in south Lebanon.

Her Majesty's Government do control the export of sensitive goods for arms manufacture. However, it is not our policy to refuse such licences as a matter of course.

All applications for export licences for licensable equipment or machinery capable of use in armaments manufacture are considered on their merits and in line with these policies.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the letter, dated 3 March from the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs to the hon. Member for Bradford, West, if he will list the powers available to local authorities and the police to address the problems arising from the sale of counterfeit and unsafe goods at car boot sales; what representations he has received from local authorities, the police and others concerning the effectiveness of current powers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* The powers under which local authorities may act against counterfeit or unsafe goods are contained within the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, the Trade Marks Act 1938, as amended in 1988, and the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and specific consumer safety regulations. The police may take action against counterfeit goods under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. In addition to these specific powers against counterfeit or unsafe goods, local authorities and the police have a number of powers to control temporary markets and car boot sales available to them under other legislation.

The Government are also aware of the problems of trade in counterfeit goods where traders seek to use disclaimers about the goods to prevent prosecution under the Trade Descriptions Act. That is why we are seeking to improve the powers available to local authorities and the police through the provisions of the Trade Marks Bill, which has just completed its passage through another place. The Bill addresses the use of disclaimers by making it an offence to sell counterfeit goods, even if the goods are acknowledged as copies at the point of sale.

There has been a small number of representations on this subject.

Negligent Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will introduce legislation under which individual shareholders would be able to bring class actions against negligent auditors;

(2) if he will introduce legislation under which individual shareholders will be able to bring class actions against negligent auditors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to seek to change the present state of the law.

Code of Central Government Enforcement

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the print run of the code for central Government enforcement; and to whom it is being distributed.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The initial print run of "Working with Business: a Code for Enforcement Agencies" was 70,000.

The code was initially distributed to all Government Departments, DTI regional offices and to all the enforcement agencies listed in the code for them to distribute to their customers and to any other interested parties as required.

The code has also been sent to all local authorities, the British Retail Consortium, the Federation of Small

Businesses, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and all branches of the Confederation of British Industry.

In addition, numerous copies of the code have been sent out to any individual, company or organisation that has expressed an interest in seeing it.

SL Homes Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what connections have been reported to his Department between Scottish Legal Life Assurance Ltd. and SL Homes Ltd.; and what assessment his Department has made of whether Scottish Legal Life Assurance Ltd. is conducting its affairs in a fit and proper manner.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Scottish Legal Life Assurance Society Ltd. is a friendly society. Until April 1993 its supervision was the responsibility of the registrar of friendly societies. With the coming into force of the Friendly Societies Act 1992, responsibility has shifted to the Friendly Societies Commission.

The society's 1990 return showed that all nine members of the society's committee of management were directors of SL Homes Ltd. The chief registrar's report for 1990-91 announced that an inspector had been appointed under section 87 of the Friendly Societies Act 1974 to examine the affairs of the society, and a number of changes were subsequently made to the management structure. The latest return lodged by the society is for the year 1992. It showed that one member of the committee was a director of SL Homes Ltd., and that the society had an outstanding investment with the SL Homes Group of £3,980,637.

Under the Friendly Societies Act 1992, it is for the Friendly Societies Commission, and not for my Department, to satisfy itself as to the manner in which Scottish Legal Life Assurance Society Ltd. is conducting its affairs. The commission is required to submit to the Treasury and Parliament each year a report on the discharge of its functions.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions and in regard to which countries he has made offers of funds under aid and trade provision in the absence of, or in advance of, applications for funding for particular projects; if he will list in each case the dates on which these offers were made; and what sums of money were involved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's Government have entered into the following framework agreements with recipient Governments:

Country	*Date*	*Level of Business to be supported*
Cameroon	December 1983	£40 million
China (concessional financing agreement)		
CFA I	May 1986	£300 million
CFA II	September 1988	£300 million
Egypt	March 1983	£64 million
India	February 1986	£300 million
Indonesia (concessional loan agreement)		
CLA I	July 1986	£140 million
CLA II	February 1989	£100 million
CLA III	April 1993	£65 million
Malaysia	January 1981	£77 million
	September 1988	£200 million
Mauritius	October 1983	£12·25 million
Pakistan	July 1989	US$50 million
Thailand	May 1989	General protocol with no specific amount
World Bank	September 1986 (renewed September 1989)	£200 million

These framework agreements range from formal signed agreements, for example for China and Indonesia, and lines of credit, for example Egypt and Cameroon, to indications of possible levels of business, for example India and Malaysia. In each case, the levels indicated relate to support available for agreed projects—covering United Kingdom and EC officially supported packages—using a combination of aid and trade provision grants and export credits through Export Credits Guarantees Department. The content of these exchanges is confidential between Governments.

St. Helena

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what development aid was given to the island of St. Helena in the years 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Total gross bilateral aid to St. Helena in the three financial years 1990-91 to 1992-93 was as follows:

Year	*£*
1990-91	11,759,000
1991-92	9,136,000
1992-93	9,060,000

RMS St. Helena

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost of the RMS St. Helena.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The construction cost of the RMS St. Helena was £32·4 million, financed by Her Majesty's Government during the period 1987 to 1991. The annual operating subsidy, which varies, amounts to £911,000 in 1993-94.

PRIME MINISTER

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the dates occupants of his office, or members of the Cabinet Office, have used the Malaysian airline MAS, for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

The Prime Minister: My Office has not used Malaysian airlines for official travel. I refer the hon.

Gentleman to the answer from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in respect of members of the Cabinet Office.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what major building projects, valued at over £1 million are being, or have been, wholly or partly financed in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by the Cabinet Office; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

The Prime Minister: None.

Isle of Man

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister when he last met the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man.

The Prime Minister: I have not had the opportunity to meet the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man as Prime Minister, and I do not recall meeting him prior to November 1990.

Euphrates River

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what information is available to Her Majesty's Government about the amount of water taken from the Euphrates and its tributaries and sources by water requirements in *(a)* Turkey and *(b)* Syria.

The Prime Minister: There are a variety of figures available on the quantities of water withdrawn from the River Euphrates and its tributaries and sources, by Turkey and Syria. The following figures are taken from the World Resources Institute report for 1990-91. Within the national boundaries of Syria 4,500 million cubic metres of water per year—MCM/yr—were generated and 4,700 MCM/yr extracted. The figures for Turkey were 28,200 MCM/yr generated and 3,100 MCM/yr extracted.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what evidence is available to Her Majesty's Government that draining constitutes the reason why water courses, linked to the Euphrates river, are dried up.

The Prime Minister: A stretch of 70 km of the Euphrates river is dry. On the evidence available there is no other possible explanation.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Accommodation (Commercial Organisations)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee, pursuant to the answer given by the chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee to the hon. Member for Derbyshire North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *512-13*, what consideration has been given to charging rent to those commercial organisations there listed for the space they occupy in the Palace of Westminster; and what considerations underlie the policy of not charging such rent.

Mr. Channon: As explained in the reply to the question to which the hon. Member refers, many of the arrangements with commercial organisations are long established, and enable the House to enjoy the benefit of services provided by the bodies concerned, taking account of the fluctuating nature of the House's requirements. The financial arrangements are kept under review.

Television Monitors

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee if he will make arrangements for television monitors to be placed in offices in the Norman Shaw South parliamentary building used by hon. Members' secretaries and research staff.

Mr. Waller: The location of television monitors is a matter which it would be appropriate for the House to consider in the context of the information Committee's report on the provision of a parliamentary data and video network.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee if he will make arrangements for access to television and radio channels to be made available to hon. Members with offices in the Norman Shaw South parliamentary building.

Mr. Waller: Proposals for access to television and radio channels are included in the Information Committee's report on the provision of a parliamentary data and video network, which recommends the extension of the pilot network to further buildings on the parliamentary estate. The report has not yet been considered by the House.

TREASURY

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Nelson: Total expenditure in 1993-94 amounts to £3,100, part of which was met by the Government hospitality fund.

Russia

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the G7 proposes to help the Russian Government to strengthen their efforts to achieve their macroeconomic stabilisation and to establish a credible programme of social support.

Mr. Nelson: Macroeconomic stabilisation in Russia depends on the implementation of appropriate policies by the Russian Government. At their meeting in Kronberg on 26 February, G7 Finance Ministers encouraged the International Monetary Fund and the Russian Government to reach agreement on a suitable economic programme, which could be supported by IMF resources under the second tranche of the systemic transformation facility. The G7 confirmed that all the other elements of the $43 billion package announced in Tokyo in April 1993 remained available to Russia as reform was progressively implemented.

Bilateral donors have provided technical assistance on the development of a suitable social safety net in Russia.

This includes assistance from the United Kingdom through the know-how fund. G7 Finance Ministers underlined the importance of a credible programme of social support to enhance public acceptance of the reform process and urged the World bank and Russia to co-operate in accelerating disbursement of the elements of the $3 billion special privatisation and restructuring programme which addressed the social dimension of reform.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Nelson: MAS has been used for official travel on one occasion in March 1993 at the cost of £1,122.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Nelson: None.

Kenya (Debt)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the level of Kenya's external debt to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Kenya's outstanding debt to the United Kingdom public sector totals £59·8 million, all of which is owed to the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

New Road Proposals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Treasury requirements as to the cost-benefit analysis of new road proposals.

Mr. Portillo: The Treasury requires that new road proposals should provide good value for money. Treasury guidelines on the appraisal of public sector capital projects are set out in the publication "Economic Appraisal in Central Government: A Technical Guide for Government Departments".

Gross Domestic Product

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of gross domestic product and gross domestic product per head for *(a)* the north-west region of England, *(b)* the north-east region of England and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates of GDP are compiled by standard economic region, and by county. The latest available regional estimates, for 1992, were published in the December 1993 issue of "Economic Trends", available in the House of Commons Library. The north-east of England, comprising Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear, is not separately designated within the north standard region. However, figures for the north-east can be derived from the latest county estimates, relating to 1991. In 1991, total GDP for the north-east was £18,991 million, and GDP per head was £7,320.

Council Tax

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, columns *577-78*, what measures he intends to take to improve the rate of processing appeals against council tax banding in the London borough of Lewisham.

Mr. Nelson: The Valuation Office agency and valuation tribunals have been set targets for the clearance of appeals which will ensure four out of five appeals will be cleared by 31 December 1994. Any remaining appeals will be cleared as quickly as possible in 1995.

Steps have already been taken in Lewisham by deploying additional resources including the use of overtime and Saturday working whenever possible to ensure that these targets are met.

EDUCATION

Optical Fibre Network

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage the rapid development of a national broadband optical fibre network.

Mr. Boswell: The Government have encouraged the higher education funding councils to establish a new administrative framework to support and develop the national broadband optical fibre network known as Super Janet. Fifty-nine higher education institutions and research centres are currently connected and it is intended to connect at least another 50 users over the next three years.

Autism

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of local education authorities provide educational support services for children with autism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not collected centrally. Under the Education Acts 1981 and 1993, it is the responsibility of schools and local education authorities to identify, assess and make provision for children with special educational needs, including those with autism.

Advertising

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the actual expenditure by each of the non-departmental public bodies for which he has responsibility in each year of their existence since 1964 on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is his latest estimate for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not held by the Department.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his latest estimate of the expenditure in

1993-94 and 1994-95 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and whether this included expenditure on those items by the non-departmental public bodies for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Boswell: The latest estimate for advertising and other promotional materials by the Department for the financial years 1993-94 and 1994-95 are given in the table:

	£000s 1993-94	£000s 1994-95
Television advertising	0	0
Radio advertising	29·2	0
Newspaper advertising	1,413·0	900·0
Other promotional material	7,332·4	6,700·0

These figures do not include expenditure by the non-departmental public bodies for which the Department for Education has responsibility.

"National School Tests in 1994"

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the printing and production costs of the leaflet "National School Tests in 1994", ISBN 0 85522 441 X; how much his Department paid the Post Office to distribute these leaflets across post office counters; and how many copies were printed.

Mr. Robin Squire: The printing and production cost of producing 4 million copies of the leaflet "National School Tests in 1994" was £50,000. There was an initial print run of 3 million copies followed by a reprint of 1 million to meet demand.

Distribution of 1·2 million leaflets with child benefit payments in all main post offices in England during March cost £99,000.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what element of the grant to grant-maintained schools has been identified for teachers' pay in the 1994-95 annual settlement.

Mr. Robin Squire: There is no annual settlement covering annual maintenance grants for grant-maintained schools. In 1994-95 these will be based on the funding available to local authority schools, either by reference to the provisions of the relevant scheme for the local management of schools or by means of the common funding formula. The local authority finance settlement takes account of the broad range of pressures on local education authorities, including pay settlements and price inflation, as well as the scope for savings.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the allowance made for teachers' pay in the 1994-95 grant-maintained schools' annual settlement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Grant-maintained schools receive an annual maintenance grant which they may spend according to their own view of priorities. It contains no specifically identified element for teacher salaries.

Nursery Education

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many three and four-year-old children are in receipt of nursery or primary education in each education authority area; and what percentage this represents of the total number of children of that age group in each area.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Pupils aged 3 and 4 in maintained nursery and primary schools in LEAs in England in January 1993

LEA	Pupils	Percentage of Population
Camden	2,017	51
Greenwich	4,266	63
Hackney	3,147	52
Hammersmith and Fulham	2,109	58
Islington	2,755	59
Kensington and Chelsea	1,232	41
Lambeth	3,470	48
Lewisham	3,693	53
Southwark	4,101	59
Tower Hamlets	4,102	70
Wandsworth	4,048	67
Westminster	1,613	46
Barking and Dagenham	3,252	72
Barnet	4,731	58
Bexley	2,247	37
Brent	4,589	69
Bromley	1,341	18
Croydon	4,255	47
Ealing	5,668	74
Enfield	4,033	55
Haringey	4,457	78
Harrow	2,603	48
Havering	2,346	40
Hillingdon	3,339	50
Hounslow	4,212	73
Kingston upon Thames	2,138	62
Merton	3,650	78
Newham	4,930	64
Redbridge	2,334	39
Richmond upon Thames	1,895	46
Sutton	1,777	38
Waltham Forest	3,568	55
Birmingham	20,313	68
Coventry	5,087	58
Dudley	4,257	53
Sandwell	7,492	92
Solihull	3,635	70
Walsall	6,768	94
Wolverhampton	6,092	87
Knowsley	4,166	84
Liverpool	10,766	83
St. Helens	3,264	70
Sefton	4,900	63
Wirral	5,362	58
Bolton	5,599	73
Bury	3,100	61
Manchester	9,971	75
Oldham	4,655	71
Rochdale	4,140	66
Salford	5,584	88
Stockport	4,343	57
Tameside	4,693	73
Trafford	3,795	66
Wigan	4,901	57
Barnsley	4,028	68
Doncaster	6,146	75
Rotherham	4,323	61
Sheffield	8,329	64
Bradford	10,008	69
Calderdale	3,740	69
Kirklees	6,743	64

LEA	Pupils	Percentage of Population
Leeds	12,903	67
Wakefield	6,297	71
Gateshead	3,504	69
Newcastle upon Tyne	5,202	75
North Tyneside	4,320	89
South Tyneside	3,591	86
Sunderland	6,049	73
Avon	12,952	52
Bedfordshire	7,714	48
Berkshire	6,539	31
Buckinghamshire	5,720	31
Cambridgeshire	8,135	44
Cheshire	13,880	53
Cleveland	14,879	92
Cornwall[1]	5,348	45
Cumbria	7,020	58
Derbyshire	14,980	61
Devon	7,141	28
Dorset	5,588	37
Durham	11,826	77
East Sussex	6,512	38
Essex	9,279	23
Gloucestershire	4,439	32
Hampshire	8,988	21
Hereford and Worcester	3,821	21
Hertfordshire	13,511	50
Humberside	14,639	61
Isle of Wight	1,143	41
Kent	15,029	36
Lancashire	19,972	52
Leicestershire	9,759	39
Lincolnshire	6,348	43
Norfolk	6,398	35
North Yorkshire	8,813	50
Northamptonshire	8,388	49
Northumberland	5,570	74
Nottinghamshire	15,591	57
Oxfordshire	3,511	22
Shropshire	3,906	35
Somerset	4,261	35
Staffordshire	16,050	57
Suffolk	5,744	32
Surrey	6,748	26
Warwickshire	6,259	49
West Sussex	3,802	22
Wiltshire	3,962	25
England[2]	656,193	51

[1] Includes Isles of Scilly.
[2] Includes Corporation of London.

Primary Schools

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of primary school classes in each local education authority are taught by one teacher to *(a)* over 30 pupils and *(b)* over 40 pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is given in the table.

Percentages of single teacher classes (i) over 30 and (ii) over 40 in maintained primary schools in each LEA in England January 1993

LEA	31 and over	41 and over[1]
Corporation of London	0·0	0·0
Camden	4·5	0·0
Greenwich	8·7	0·2
Hackney	4·0	0·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	8·3	0·0
Islington	4·3	0·0
Kensington and Chelsea	2·6	0·0
Lambeth	3·7	0·0
Lewisham	8·0	0·0
Southwark	8·8	0·0
Tower Hamlets	3·7	0·0
Wandsworth	8·5	0·0
Westminster	4·5	0·0
Barking and Dagenham	5·8	0·0
Barnet	8·3	0·3
Bexley	26·1	0·2
Brent	9·3	0·3
Bromley	31·8	0·0
Croydon	14·8	0·0
Ealing	15·5	0·0
Enfield	27·0	0·0
Haringey	3·2	0·0
Harrow	20·5	0·0
Havering	17·8	0·0
Hillingdon	23·8	0·3
Hounslow	22·8	0·5
Kingston upon Thames	46·8	0·0
Merton	16·6	0·4
Newham	6·8	1·2
Redbridge	48·1	0·0
Richmond upon Thames	13·1	0·0
Sutton	34·6	0·0
Waltham Forest	18·9	0·0
Birmingham	24·4	0·0
Coventry	18·2	0·1
Dudley	16·4	1·1
Sandwell	29·2	0·2
Solihull	25·3	0·0
Walsall	21·7	0·0
Wolverhampton	17·4	0·0
Knowsley	25·4	0·0
Liverpool	19·7	0·1
St. Helens	23·0	0·0
Sefton	27·4	0·0
Wirral	13·5	0·0
Bolton	32·9	1·3
Bury	30·2	0·0
Manchester	19·7	0·9
Oldham	35·6	0·1
Rochdale	42·1	0·2
Salford	20·8	0·1
Stockport	26·1	0·1
Tameside	41·9	0·1
Trafford	42·2	0·0
Wigan	29·5	0·2
Barnsley	17·1	0·3
Doncaster	18·3	0·1
Rotherham	7·7	0·0
Sheffield	16·8	0·1
Bradford	15·8	0·2
Calderdale	22·6	0·0
Kirklees	21·2	0·4
Leeds	22·7	0·2
Wakefield	27·4	0·1
Gateshead	9·6	0·2
Newcastle upon Tyne	24·2	0·4
North Tyneside	15·8	0·2
South Tyneside	16·7	0·2
Sunderland	11·7	0·1
Isles of Scilly	0·0	0·0
Avon	26·0	0·0
Bedfordshire	19·1	0·4
Berkshire	22·1	0·1
Buckinghamshire	24·9	0·2
Cambridgeshire	21·9	0·0
Cheshire	30·9	0·1
Cleveland	19·0	0·0
Cornwall	28·9	0·0
Cumbria	18·8	0·1
Derbyshire	30·0	0·1
Devon	22·1	0·0
Dorset	34·6	0·1
Durham	23·1	0·2
East Sussex	31·1	0·0

LEA	31 and over	41 and over[1]
Essex	20·5	0·0
Gloucestershire	18·2	0·1
Hampshire	24·2	0·0
Hereford and Worcester	15·0	0·2
Hertfordshire	20·4	0·0
Humberside	22·1	0·2
Isle of Wight	21·9	0·0
Kent	27·4	0·1
Lancashire	31·6	0·1
Leicestershire	17·7	0·4
Lincolnshire	20·2	0·0
Norfolk	14·6	0·3
North Yorkshire	17·5	0·0
Northamptonshire	15·1	0·0
Northumberland	27·3	0·0
Nottinghamshire	19·0	0·1
Oxfordshire	11·8	0·1
Shropshire	17·1	0·2
Somerset	26·0	0·0
Staffordshire	29·5	0·4
Suffolk	9·6	0·1
Surrey	17·2	0·0
Warwickshire	25·8	0·1
West Sussex	14·9	0·0
Wiltshire	20·3	0·1
ENGLAND	21·5	0·1

[1] Included in the figures for classes of 31 and over.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Boswell: The figures are as follows:

	Male			Female			
	Full time	Part time	Total	Full time	Part time	Total	Total
Grade 1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Grade 2	3	0	3	0	0	0	3
Grade 3	12	0	12	0	0	0	12
Grade 4	3	0	3	1	0	1	4
Grade 5	34	0	34	12	0	12	46
Grade 6	13	0	13	2	0	2	15
Grade 7	108	1	109	42	2	44	153
SEO and equivalent	73	3	76	36	3	39	115
HEO and equivalent	182	3	185	164	21	185	370
EO and equivalent	200	0	200	273	35	308	508
AO and equivalent	157	5	162	404	63	467	629
AA and equivalent	136	0	136	226	25	251	387
Total	922	12	934	1,160	149	1,309	2,243

These figures include 376 staff in post in the Teachers Pensions Agency.

School Meals

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much each education authority charges for school meals to children not on income-related benefits.

Mr. Forth: It is for each local education authority to decide how much to charge for the school meals provided for children not entitled to free school meals. Information on charging for school meals is not collected centrally.

Private Higher Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those academic institutions in the private higher education sector whose courses have not been accredited by the Higher Education Quality Council and the Higher Education Funding Councils of England, Wales and Scotland, but where mandatory local education authority grants will apply at the lower rate.

Mr. Boswell: Neither the Higher Education Quality Council nor the three Higher Education Funding Councils accredit courses. A number of courses at private higher education institutions are designated under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations. Students holding mandatory awards for attendance on those courses have their maintenance grants calculated in the same way as all other award holders. The fees payable on their behalf under the regulations are normally £715 in the current academic year; higher rates apply for courses at institutions which receive recurrent grant out of public funds.

Consultation Documents

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all the documents issued for consultation in the last year, indicating the time provided for consultation and the recipients of each consultation document.

Mr. Boswell: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Surplus School Places

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many surplus school places there were *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of school capacity in each local education authority in 1979 and each year since 1987.

Mr. Forth: The Department collected comprehensive information on surplus school places through a detailed survey in 1991. For the figures derived from that survey, I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on 31 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns *517-21*. Detailed information by local education authority is not available for earlier years.

My right hon. Friend intends to make regulations later this year under section 21 of the Education Act 1993 requiring all LEAs and, where it has relevant responsibilities, the new Funding Agency for Schools, to

submit information to the Secretary of State annually, beginning in 1994, on the numbers of surplus places in LEA-maintained and grant-maintained schools respectively.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Boswell: The information given is based on the total number of public appointments made by the Department by the end of 1993 and includes information on ethnic minority appointments available at that time.

Department for Education
Public appointments December 1993

	Number	*Per cent.*
Total number of public appointments held in 1993	248	
Total number of appointments held by ethnic minority members in 1993	9	3·6
Asian	4	1·6
Black	5	2·0

Name	*Ethnic group*
School Curriculum and Assessment Authority	
Mrs. Shahwar Sadeque	Asian
Royal Ballet School Governing Body	
Mr. Bruce Gill	Black
Further Education Funding Council—Regional Committees	
GREATER LONDON	
Mr. Abdul Bhanji	Asian
Mr. John Taylor	Black
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE	
Mr. David Nerurkar JP	Asian
NORTH WEST	
Mr. Wally Brown	Black
WEST MIDLANDS	
Professor Kumar Bhattacharyya	Asian
National Youth Agency	
Ms Althea Efunshile	Black
Ms Theo Sowa	Black

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons;

(2) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Boswell: The information we hold on individuals appointed or being considered for appointment to public bodies for which we have responsibility is limited to whatever personal information they volunteer as well as details we solicit relating to their professional background. This is because appointments are made or approved solely on the basis of aptitude, merit and suitability for the job.

We do not keep a record of the political affiliation of appointees or potential candidates. To add to the information already obtained, Ministers normally interview candidates before making or approving appointments. We are satisfied that these procedures are sufficient to avoid the possibility of unsuitable appointments.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Boswell: There is no statutory requirement placed on the Secretary of State to consult or inform organisations or individuals prior to making or approving appointments to paid or unpaid posts. The constitutions, articles and trust deeds of some public bodies do place a requirement on Ministers to consult with interests which they consider relevant; these bodies include the Further Education Unit Management Board, the Further Education Staff college and the National Youth Agency.

Reading

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what further plans he has to develop programmes to improve the reading skills of children;

(2) if he will continue to support the reading recovery programme;

(3) what plans he has to ensure that the expertise gained by those involved in reading recovery programmes continues to be utilised;

(4) what evaluation he has made of programmes sponsored by his Department and local education authorities to improve the reading skills of children in their early years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The best way to improve the reading skills of children is to ensure rigorous teaching in our schools, particularly our primary schools; and to continue with rigorous national tests which focus on the basics. Sir Ron Dearing's report on the national curriculum highlighted the need for primary education to concentrate on the basic skills, including reading, and said that this should be a priority for the discretionary time which will be released as a result of slimming down the national curriculum overall—to be concentrated outside the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. We now await Sir Ron's advice on a revised national curriculum.

We are also strengthening the initial teacher training regime by requiring students to spend more time in schools and by specifying that all primary initial teacher training

courses should include at least 150 hours of work on English with a minimum of 50 hours on the teaching of reading.

In addition, we are supporting a number of literacy programmes including:

(i) a three-year trial of reading recovery in 20 local education authorities at a total cost of £14·2 million, supported through our grants for education support and training programme. This trial will be completed in March 1995. The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority is also sponsoring an independent research project on the effectiveness of reading recovery compared with other methods of early reading intervention, to be completed by the end of the year. Any further action on reading recovery will be considered in the light of this research and of our evaluation of the GEST-funded trial;

(ii) thirteen other literacy projects in 12 inner-city local education authorities at a total cost of £2·4 million in the current year, again supported through the GEST programme;

(iii) the family literacy programme undertaken by the adult literacy and basic skills unit. We have increased our grant to ALBSU for this programme for £0·25 million in the current year to £1·2 million in 1994-95;

(iv) Volunteer Reading Help, which is a charity which links volunteers with children who teachers feel would benefit from one-to-one help with their reading. The enable the organisation to expand further, we shall be nearly doubling our grant to VRH in 1994-95 to £90,000.

Sixth Forms

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answers of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *505*, and 1 March, *Official Report*, column *686*, how many pupils there are expected to be in each of the new sixth forms he has approved since April 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: The number of pupils in the sixth forms concerned was expected to be:

	Number
(a) Grain-maintained	
Baverstock GM School, Birmingham	70
Small Heath School, Birmingham	150
Sawtry Village College, Cambridgeshire	150
The Merrill Community School, Derbyshire	100
Chellaston School, Derbyshire	200
Beauchamps GM School, Essex Bromfords School, Essex	125
The King John School, Essex	282
West Hatch School, Essex	180
The Arnewood School, Hampshire	236
The Burgate School, Hampshire	120
Ringwood School, Hampshire	120
The Maplesden Noakes School, Kent	100
Sheringham High School, Norfolk	120
Highams Park School, Waltham Forest	180
Queen Elizabeth School, Warwickshire	180
Moseley Park GM School, Wolverhampton	135
(b) LEA-maintained	
Ullswater Community College, Cumbria	260
Martin Kemp-Welch School, Dorset	99
Wymondham School, Norfolk	120
St. Peter's RC Comprehensive School, Solihull	180
New school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years in Halifax, Calderdale, to replace two 11 to 16 schools	120

Teachers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy towards the employment in local education authorities and grant-maintained schools of teachers without formal and recognised teaching qualifications.

Mr. Robin Squire: Unqualified teachers may not normally be employed in either local education authority maintained or self-governing—grant-maintained—schools. Some exceptions are, however, specified in statutory regulations. They include student teachers, those who with my right hon. Friend's approval are employed as licensed or overseas trained teachers, and instructors with special qualifications or experience who may be employed when no suitable qualified teacher is available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, columns *133-34*, when the information about the appointment of newly qualified teachers to permanent teaching posts in 1993 will be available.

Mr. Robin Squire: The data are unlikely to be available for statistical use before spring 1995 when the appointment details of newly qualified teachers have been returned by local authorities on their annual returns for financial year 1993-94. The required information will then be placed in the Library.

Postgraduate Legal Training

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will reconsider his decision not to allow mandatory grants for postgraduate legal training.

Mr. Boswell: The Education Act 1962 restricts mandatory awards to full-time courses leading to a first degree or comparable qualification, or to the DipHE or HND, and to courses for the initial training of teachers. We have no present plans to expand the scope of mandatory awards to include postgraduate law, or other, courses.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the meetings between Ministers and officials in his Department with hon. Members representing constituencies in London in the last year.

Mr. Patten: The details[1] requested are as follows:

Secretary of State
Hugh Dykes MP (Harrow, East)—4 March 1993
Nicholas Scott MP (Chelsea)—20 December 1993
Minister of State
John Marshall MP (Hendon, South)—12 January 1994
Richard Tracey MP (Surbiton)—25 February 1994
Mr. Boswell
None.
Mr. Forth
Sir Michael Neubert MP (Romford)—26 October 1993
Mr. Squire
Richard Tracey MP (Surbiton)—12 October 1993
Michael Shersby MP (Uxbridge)—2 December 1993
Sir Michael Neubert MP (Romford)—21 January 1994

Note:
1. The details cover all Ministers' meetings concerning Departmental business with hon. Members since 1 March 1993.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the ratio between the number of unemployed persons, and the number of vacant jobs in the Doncaster travel-to-work area.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested. The information that is available is shown in the table, although the figures cannot meaningfully be expressed as a ratio, as jobcentre vacancies represent only a third of all vacancies nationally, and this proportion is likely to vary between different regions, different skills and different occupations.

Furthermore, within any one area, there is not necessarily a strong match between the skills of the unemployed and the nature of the vacancies available. It should also be noted that the area covered by jobcentres in Doncaster does not correspond exactly with Doncaster travel-to-work area.

Unadjusted Unemployment and Vacancies February 1994

Claimant Unemployment	*Unfilled Jobcentre Vacancies*[1]
15,017	492

[1] There are currently six Jobcentres covering the Doncaster TTWA, five in Doncaster and one in Thorne.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish his Department's estimate for England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, and for each year since 1990 of the numbers on the unemployment register; and what were the numbers and percentages of those on the unemployment register in each case leaving the register *(a)* to take up full-time employment, *(b)* to take up part-time employment, *(c)* to take up full-time or part-time training and *(d)* to take early retirement.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information on the levels of claimant unemployment and on the numbers leaving claimant unemployment can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library. Detailed information is not available on the destinations of the claimants who leave unemployment. However, past survey evidence indicates that the majority of people who leave claimant unemployment go into jobs.

Tattoos

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will explore ways in which he can assist job seekers with disfiguring tattoos to have them removed by the health service or other organisations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Service provides a very wide range of back to work help for job seekers, which can include advice about the removal of disfiguring tattoos. I understand from colleagues in the Department of Health that this treatment is available from the national health service if, in the opinion of a consultant, it is necessary for clinical reasons.

Wages

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish his estimate of the average gross weekly wage for men, women and all workers in each standard region of Great Britain for the latest available period.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the average weekly earnings of employees in the standard regions of England, and in Scotland and Wales, is published in part A of the 1993 new earnings survey. Tables 12 and 13 cover full-time males and full-time females respectively, and table X5 covers all full-time employees.

A copy of the report is available in the Library.

Work Experience Schemes

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many participants are currently taking part in Government-run or financed work experience schemes; and what percentage are claiming unemployment benefit while on the scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest figures available show that at the end of February there were 12,227 participants in Government-run or financed work experience programmes. None of these people was in receipt of unemployment benefit.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of state for Employment what consultation there has been with Health and Safety Executive customers before the distribution arrangements for its free and priced publications were changed from HMSO to Prolog; if he will state the terms of the agreement with Prolog; and what market research was conducted on the working of the previous arrangement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A review of distribution of the Health and Safety Executive's publications was carried out in 1993 by HSE and external consultants. This review focused on the existing arrangement with HMSO for the distribution of priced publications and other arrangements that existed for the distribution of free publications. The review did not involve consultation with customers. Following the review and an open tender, HSE decided that its customers could be accessed more satisfactorily and economically through a single contract with Prolog for warehousing, distribution and direct mail services. The contract with Prolog is for a three-year period from 4 October 1993.

EC Social Charter

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those topics of legislation contained in the social charter of the European Community signed by 11 members at Strasbourg *(a)* which can be implemented within the treaties of the Community operative prior to the coming into force of the treaty on European Union and *(b)* those which may flow from the latter treaty.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The social charter, signed by the other 11 member states, was a political declaration and as

such contained no specific proposals for legislation. The social action programme, which followed the social charter, listed particular proposals for Community action. All of these proposals have a legal basis in the treaty of Rome, but many of them require unanimity.

The agreement of the Eleven on social policy contained in a protocol annexed to the treaty on European Union contains considerably more explicit provision for the other member states to adopt social legislation, in many cases by qualified majority voting.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *719*, what information is collected, and in what form, on visits by the Health and Safety Executive to outdoor education centres.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following visits to outdoor education centres, inspectors prepare reports which include factual information about the centres, their size and the types of activities undertaken. The reports include an assessment of how providers manage health and safety.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what basis his Department will decide which outdoor education centres will be inspected by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Decisions on which education centres are inspected are a matter for the Health and Safety Executive, not the Department.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department holds a comprehensive list of the outdoor education centres in England.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 15 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *625*.

Employment Rehabilitation Courses

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the criteria used by Employment Service staff to decide whether a client they refer to an employment rehabilitation course should remain on their disability or unemployment-related benefits or be placed on a rehabilitation allowance; if those who remain on unemployment-related benefits may participate in full-time rehabilitation courses of more than 21 hours per week; and what changes are planned in these arrangements as a result of the introduction of the new incapacity benefit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Terry Rooney, dated 28 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about whether a client referred to an employment rehabilitation course should remain on disability or unemployment related benefits.

Clients attending full-time rehabilitation programmes are entitled to claim Rehabilitation Allowance according to their circumstances or may choose to remain on their existing benefits. My people will discuss the options with each client and help them to decide which course of action will be most advantageous in their particular circumstances.

Clients may continue to claim benefits for unemployment (unemployment benefit, Income Support or a combination of both) for as long as they remain eligible, with the exception of those in receipt of Income Support as a sole benefit. They must claim Rehabilitation Allowance to satisfy the Benefits Agency rules about payment of benefits.

Similarly, as long as all the conditions of entitlement remain satisfied, a person who remains incapable of work may continue to receive benefits for incapacity (Sickness Benefit, Invalidity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance). Department of Social Security (DSS) inform us that there are no plans to change these rules under the new incapacity benefit.

I hope this is helpful.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is listed in the tables.

Non-industrial staff in post 1 January 1994 education group

	Men hours			*Women hours*		
Grade	*full-time*	*part-time*	*all*	*full-time*	*part-time*	*all*
Administrative assistant	743	11	754	1,860	304	2,164
Administrative assistant ADP	5	—	5	35	32	67
Enrolled nurse	—	—	—	—	—	—
Support grade band 2	327	9	336	105	145	250
Teleprinter operator	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trainee typist	—	—	—	—	—	—
Typist	2	—	2	442	221	663
Total AA level	1,077	20	1,097	2,442	702	3,144
Administrative officer	7,848	126	7,974	18,680	5,320	24,000
Administrative officer ADP	12	—	12	16	1	17
Assistant photographer	—	—	—	—	—	—
Driver	—	—	—	—	—	—
Personal secretary	2	—	2	330	42	372
Personal secretary trainee	—	—	—	—	—	—
Support grade band 1	67	1	68	114	21	135
Trainee graphics officer	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total AO level	7,929	127	8,056	19,140	5,384	24,524

Grade	Men hours full-time	Men hours part-time	Men hours all	Women hours full-time	Women hours part-time	Women hours all
Assistant information officer	2	—	2	10	2	12
Assistant librarian	5	1	6	13	4	17
Assistant scientific officer	7	—	7	3	—	3
Assistant statistician	9	—	9	9	—	9
Economic assistant	7	—	7	4	—	4
Executive officer	5,009	54	5,063	8,438	2,452	10,890
Graphics officer	2	—	2	2	—	2
Graphics technical grade	—	—	—	2	—	2
Graphics technical grade (GO4 RR)	4	—	4	2	—	2
Management trainee	19	—	19	32	4	36
Photographic officer	4	—	4	—	—	—
Professional and technology officer	3	—	3	—	—	—
Psychologist graduate trainee	2	—	2	13	—	13
Scientific officer	55	—	55	35	2	37
Senior personal secretary	—	—	—	55	2	57
Social worker	8	—	8	6	2	8
Support manager 3	15	—	15	9	—	9
Technical grade 1	5	—	5	1	—	1
Technical grade 2	1	—	1	—	—	—
Translator EO	—	—	—	—	—	—
Typing manager	—	—	—	43	3	46
Total EO level	5,157	55	5,212	8,677	2,471	11,148
Administration trainee	2	—	2	4	—	4
Assistant agricultural assistant	40	—	40	7	—	7
Chief typing manager	—	—	—	2	—	2
Controller of typists	—	—	—	—	—	—
Departmental sister	—	—	—	—	—	—
Higher Executive Officer	2,083	12	2,095	1,419	227	1,646
Higher Executive Officer ADP	—	—	—	—	—	—
Higher Executive Officer AT	—	—	—	—	—	—
Higher Executive Officer D	10	—	10	9	—	9
Higher Graphics Officer	1	—	1	—	1	1
Higher Instructional Officer	80	—	80	2	—	2
Higher Photographic Officer	2	—	2	—	—	—
Higher Professional and Technology Officer	17	—	17	—	—	—
HPTO/Assistant Inspecting Officer (Railways)	1	—	1	—	—	—
Higher Psychologist	17	—	17	38	3	41
Higher Scientific Officer	75	—	75	21	4	25
Higher Social Worker	3	—	3	2	—	2
Information Officer	23	—	23	21	3	24
Inspector Class 2	112	—	112	74	—	74
Instructional Officer 1 1987	115	—	115	9	—	9
Librarian	—	—	—	9	4	13
Research Officer Resource and Planning	1	—	1	—	—	—
Research Officer Social Science	—	—	—	3	—	3
Senior Assistant Statistician	6	—	6	7	1	8
Senior Economic Assistant	12	—	12	3	—	3
Senior Enrolled Nurse	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Physiotherapist	1	—	1	2	1	3
Support Manager 1	2	—	2	—	—	—
Support Manager 2	1	—	1	4	—	4
Training Officer TW1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Translator HEO	—	—	—	—	—	—
UVP Field Organiser	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ward Sister	1	—	1	3	—	3
Total HEO Level	2,605	12	2,617	1,639	244	1,883
Agricultural Inspector	96	—	96	10	—	10
Employment Nursing Adviser	4	—	4	38	1	39
Inspector 1B	214	3	217	74	27	101
Inspector (Nuclear Installations)	62	—	62	2	—	2
Inspector of Mines	20	—	20	—	—	—
Inspector of Quarries	14	—	14	—	—	—
Petroleum Specialist 5	—	—	—	—	—	—

Grade	Men hours			Women hours		
	full-time	part-time	all	full-time	part-time	all
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Executive Officer	708	3	711	229	28	257
Senior Graphics Officer	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Industrial Relations Officer	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Information Officer	20	—	20	8	1	9
Senior Instructional Officer	20	—	20	1	—	1
Senior Librarian	1	—	1	2	—	2
Senior Photographic Officer	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Professional and Technology Officer	12	—	12	—	—	—
SPTO/Inspecting Officer (Railways)	17	—	17	—	—	—
Senior Psychologist	13	1	14	15	1	16
Senior Research Officer Resource and Planning	—	—	—	2	—	2
Senior Research Officer Social Science	10	—	10	18	6	24
Senior Scientific Officer	78	1	79	15	—	15
Senior Social Worker	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Training Adviser	24	—	24	7	3	10
Specialist Inspector	100	1	101	12	—	12
SPTO Marine Surveyor Grade 1	1	—	1	—	—	—
Training Officer TWI Higher Grade	—	—	—	—	—	—
Training Services Officer 1	1	—	1	—	—	—
Training Services Officer 2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total SEO Level	1,415	9	1,424	433	67	500
District Inspector of Mines (1982)	1	—	1	—	—	—
Grade 7	536	4	540	142	29	171
Inspector 1A	167	1	168	12	2	14
Petroleum Specialist 4	132	—	132	3	—	3
Petroleum Specialist 4 (SIMI)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Principal Agricultural Inspector	32	—	32	—	—	—
Principal Inspecting Officer (Railways)	11	—	11	—	—	—
Principal Inspector (Nuclear Installations)	79	—	79	2	—	2
Principal Marine Surveyor	2	—	2	—	—	—
Principal Specialist Inspector	106	2	108	7	—	7
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Employment Nursing Adviser	2	—	2	2	—	2
Senior Inspector of Quarries	2	—	2	—	—	—
Total Grade 7 Level	1,070	7	1,077	168	31	199
Chief Employment Nursing Adviser	—	—	—	1	—	—
Deputy Superintending Inspector of Agriculture	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Superintending Inspector of Factories	24	—	24	3	—	3
Employment Medical Adviser	16	8	24	9	1	10
Grade 6	113	—	113	11	—	11
Nursing Consultant	1	—	1	3	—	3
Petroleum Specialist 3	19	—	19	—	—	—
Principal Inspector of Quarries	1	—	1	—	—	—
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 3	2	—	2	—	—	—
Superintending Inspector (Nuclear Installations)	25	—	25	—	—	—
Superintending Specialist Inspector Band C	23	—	23	—	1	1
Total Grade 6 Level	224	8	232	27	2	29
Chief Nursing Consultant	—	—	—	1	—	1
Deputy Chief Inspector of Agriculture	2	—	2	—	—	—
Grade 5	90	—	90	18	3	21
Petroleum Specialist 2	5	—	5	—	—	—
Principal Inspector of Mines (1982)	11	—	11	—	—	—
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 2	1	—	1	—	—	—
Superintending Inspector of Factories	17	—	17	7	—	7
Superintending Specialist Inspector Band B	12	—	12	—	—	—
Total Grade 5 level	138	—	138	26	3	29
Chief Inspector of Agriculture	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Chief Inspector of Factories	6	—	6	—	—	—
Deputy Chief Inspector (Nuclear Installations)	5	—	5	—	—	—
Deputy Chief Inspector (Specialist)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Director of Medical Services	1	—	1	—	—	—
Grade 4	11	—	11	—	—	—
Senior Area Director	11	—	11	—	—	—

Grade	Men hours full-time	Men hours part-time	Men hours all	Women hours full-time	Women hours part-time	Women hours all
Senior Employment Medical Adviser	18	2	20	5	—	5
Total Grade 4 level	52	2	54	5	—	5
Deputy Chief Inspector of Mines	2	1	3	—	—	—
Grade 3	24	—	24	1	—	1
Petroleum Specialist 1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total Grade 3 level	26	1	27	1	—	1
Chief Inspector of Mines	1	—	1	—	—	—
Grade 2	4	—	4	1	—	1
Total Grade 2 level	5	—	5	1	—	1
Grade 1	1	—	1	—	—	—
Grade 1A	1	—	1	—	—	—
Total Grade 1 level	2	—	2	—	—	—
Total	19,700	241	19,941	32,559	8,904	41,463

Non-industrial staff in post 1 January 1994 ED group

Grade	Total hours Full-time	Total hours Part-time	All
Administrative Assistant	2,603	315	2,918
Administrative Assistant ADP	40	32	72
Enrolled Nurse	—	—	—
Support Grade Band 2	432	154	586
Teleprinter Operator	—	—	—
Trainee Typist	—	—	—
Typist	444	221	665
Total AA Level	3,519	722	4,241
Administrative Officer	26,528	5,446	31,974
Administrative Officer ADP	28	1	29
Assistant Photographer	—	—	—
Driver	—	—	—
Personal Secretary	332	42	374
Personal Secretary Trainee	—	—	—
Support Grade Band 1	181	22	203
Trainee Graphics Officer	—	—	—
Total AO Level	27,069	5,511	32,580
Assistant Information Officer	12	2	14
Asssistant Librarian	18	5	23
Assistant Scientific Officer	10	—	10
Assistant Statistician	18	—	18
Economic Assistant	11	—	11
Executive Officer	13,447	2,506	15,953
Graphics Officer	4	—	4
Graphics Technical Grade	2	—	2
Graphics Technical Grade (GO4 RR)	6	—	6
Management Trainee	51	4	55
Photographic Officer	4	—	4
Professional and Technology Officer	3	—	3
Psychologist Graduate Trainee	15	—	15
Scientific Officer	90	2	92
Senior Personal Secretary	55	2	57
Social Worker	14	2	16
Support Manager 3	24	—	24
Technical Grade 1	6	—	6
Technical Grade 2	1	—	1
Translator EO	—	—	—
Typing Manager	43	3	46
Total EO Level	13,834	2,526	16,360
Administration Trainee	6	—	6
Assistant Agricultural Inspector	47	—	47
Chief Typing Manager	2	—	2
Controller of Typists	—	—	—
Departmental Sister	—	—	—
Higher Executive Officer	3,502	239	3,741
Higher Executive Officer ADP	—	—	—
HEO AT	—	—	—
HEOD	19	—	19
Higher Graphics Officer	1	1	2
Higher Instructional Officer	82	—	82
Higher Photographic Officer	2	—	2
Higher Professional and Technology Officer	17	—	17
HPTO/Assistant Inspecting Officer (Railways)	1	—	1
Higher Psychologist	55	3	58
Higher Scientific Officer	96	4	100
Higher Social Worker	5	—	5
Information Officer	44	3	47
Inspector Class 2	186	—	186
Instructional Officer 1 1987	124	—	124
Librarian	9	4	13
Research Officer Resource and Planning	1	—	1
Research Officer Social Science	3	—	3
Senior Assistant Statistician	13	1	14
Senior Economic Assistant	15	—	15
Senior Enrolled Nurse	—	—	—
Senior Physiotherapist	3	1	4
Support Manager 1	2	—	2
Support Manager 2	5	—	5
Training Officer TW1	—	—	—
Translater HEO	—	—	—
UVP Field Organiser	—	—	—
Ward Sister	4	—	4
Total HEO Level	4,244	256	4,500

Grade	Total hours Full-time	Part-time	All
Agricultural Inspector	106	—	106
Employment Nursing Adviser	42	1	43
Inspector 1B	288	30	318
Inspector (Nuclear Installations)	64	—	64
Inspector of Mines	20	—	20
Inspector of Quarries	14	—	14
Petroleum Specialist 5	—	—	—
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 5	—	—	—
Senior Executive Officer	937	31	968
Senior Graphics Officer	—	—	—
Senior Industrial Relations Officer	—	—	—
Senior Information Officer	28	1	29
Senior Instructional Officer	21	—	21
Senior Librarian	3	—	3
Senior Photographic Officer	—	—	—
Senior Professional and Technology Officer	12	—	12
SPTO/Inspecting Officer (Railways)	17	—	17
Senior Psychologist	28	2	30
Senior Research Officer Resource and Planning	2	—	2
Senior Research Officer Social Science	28	6	34
Senior Scientific Officer	93	1	94
Senior Social Worker	—	—	—
Senior Training Adviser	31	3	34
Specialist Inspector	112	1	113
SPTO Marine Surveyor Grade 1	1	—	1
Training Officer TWI Higher Grade	—	—	—
Training Services Officer 1	1	—	1
Training Services Officer 2	—	—	—
Total SEO Level	1,848	76	1,924
District Inspector of Mines (1982)	1	—	1
Grade 7	678	33	711
Inspector 1A	179	3	182
Petroleum Specialist 4	135	—	135
Petroleum Specialist 4 (SIMI)	—	—	—
Principal Agricultural Inspector	32	—	32
Principal Inspecting Officer (Railways)	11	—	11
Principal Inspector (Nuclear Installations)	81	—	81
Principal Marine Surveyor	2	—	2
Principal Specialist Inspector	113	2	115
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 4	—	—	—
Senior Employment Nursing Adviser	4	—	4
Senior Inspector of Quarries	2	—	2
Total Grade 7 Level	1,238	38	1,276
Chief Employment Nursing Adviser	1	—	1
Deputy Superintending Inspector of Agriculture	—	—	—
Deputy Superintending Inspector of Factories	27	—	27
Employment Medical Adviser	25	9	34
Grade 6	124	—	124
Nursing Consultant	4	—	4
Petroleum Specialist 3	19	—	19
Principal Inspector of Quarries	1	—	1
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 3	2	—	2
Superintending Inspector (Nuclear Installations)	25	—	25
Superintending Specialist Inspector Band C	23	1	24
Total Grade 6 Level	251	10	261
Chief Nursing Consultant	1	—	1
Deputy Chief Inspector of Agriculture	2	—	2
Grade 5	108	3	111
Petroleum Specialist 2	5	—	5
Principal Inspector of Mines (1982)	11	—	11
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 2	1	—	1
Superintending Inspector of Factories	24	—	24
Superintending Specialist Inspector Band B	12	—	12
Total Grade 5 Level	164	3	167
Chief Inspector of Agriculture	—	—	—
Deputy Chief Inspector of Factories	6	—	6
Deputy Chief Inspector (Nuclear Installations)	5	—	5
Deputy Chief Inspector (Specialist)	—	—	—
Deputy Director of Medical Services	1	—	1
Grade 4	11	—	11
Senior Area Director	11	—	11
Senior Employment Medical Adviser	23	2	25
Total Grade 4 Level	57	2	59
Deputy Chief Inspector of Mines	2	1	3
Grade 3	25	—	25
Petroleum Specialist 1	—	—	—
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist 1	—	—	—
Total Grade 3 Level	27	1	28
Chief Inspector of Mines	1	—	1
Grade 2	5	—	5
Total Grade 2 Level	6	—	6
Grade 1	1	—	1
Grade 1A	1	—	1
Total Grade 1 Level	2	—	2
Total	52,259	9,145	61,404

Training Allowances

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what responsibility the Birminghan training and enterprise council has to ensure that all young people in the youth training guarantee group receive a training allowance up to their 18th birthday; how this responsibility

will be met if local training providers are not paid by Birmingham TEC to provide allowances after 17-year-olds have reached NVQ level 2; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand that Birmingham training and enterprise council acknowledges its responsibility to ensure that all young people in the youth training guarantee group receive a training allowance up until their 18th birthday. For the 1994-95 financial year it will be a contractual requirement for the TEC's training providers to ensure that young people are able to remain in training and in receipt of a training allowance until their 18th birthday. The TEC will pay all training providers a contribution towards the training allowance and trainee support costs.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *288*, if he will list the number of contracts and their cost with management consultants in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the period April 1993-March 1994, the Employment Department let 20 management consultancy contracts which had been drawn up by its business consultants lead buying unit to a value of £212,300. Information on contracts drawn up by the Department could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

DEFENCE

Chemical Weapons (Vaccines)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 4 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *474*, if he will set out the reason for his policy of not to disclose stocks of nerve agent pretreatment sets.

Mr. Hanley: It is not my Department's practice to disclose information relating to stock levels of nerve agent pretreatment as it relates to operational capability.

Eskmeals Testing Range

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now publish the results of the monitoring of the Eskmeals testing range conducted by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Aitken: As my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside made clear in his answer on 2 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *799*, environmental monitoring at Eskmeals is carried out by the Ministry of Defence. Copies of environmental monitoring reports and data going back to 1981 were placed in the House of Commons Library last July.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what major building projects, valued at over £1 million, are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Hanley: There is no record of my Department having financed any major building projects valued at over £1 million in Doncaster, Barnsley, Rotherham or Wakefield since 1990. Information relating to the period before 1990 could be provided only at disproportionate cost as this would involve researching Property Services Agency archives.

Drug Testing

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the results of the trials on random drug testing conducted by the Army last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The purpose of the trials carried out last year was to assess the proposed methodology for compulsory drug testing. The trials showed that adjustments were necessary. These have been made.

Redundancies

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *117*, if he will give details of the number of redundancies by rank and the total to date in each of the three services as a result of "Options for Change"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the Answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 29 November, *Official Report*, columns *371-76*.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *337*, if he will list the number of contracts, and their cost, with management consultants in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Aitken: My Department does not maintain statistics centrally on the number and value of contracts placed with management consultants; thus, an answer to this question could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Auxiliary Oil Replenishment Vessels

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the auxiliary oil replenishment vessels 1 and 2 to enter service with the Royal Navy.

Mr. Aitken: The RFA's Fort Victoria—AOR-01—and Fort George—AOR-02—are currently undergoing post-acceptance trials and defect rectification work. They are planned to enter full service with the Royal Navy this summer.

Marsh Arabs

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence is available to Her Majesty's Government of shelling of villages occupied by indigenous peoples of the marshes where the Tigris meets the Euphrates.

Mr. Hanley: Evidence drawn from aerial surveillance and other sources indicates that there has been systematic destruction of villages belonging to the indigenous people of the southern marshes of Iraq. This has not necessarily been caused by shelling.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Public Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Goodlad: Consultation for appointments to public bodies is carried out as appropriate with other Government Departments and outside organisations depending on the circumstances of the appointment and the body involved.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

Wilton Park Academic Council—All appointments:
- (a) Secretary of State
- (b) No salaries are paid
- (c) Three years renewable at the Secretary of State's discretion for a further three years
- (d) See:

1987—Mrs. Liliana Archibald *(Chairman)*—*December 1995
Director, Holman Wade Ltd.

1992—Mr. John Hanson, CBE—ex officio
Director General, British Council

(Vacant)—ex officio
Head of EC Office, London

1991—Dr. Connie Martin—ex officio
Secretary General, Anglo-German Foundation

1987—Dr. John Scates—ex officio
International Director, CBI

1991—Professor Jack Spence—ex officio
Director of Studies, Chatham House

1983—Mr. Michael Kaser—*December 1995
St. Antony's College, Oxford

1989—Dr. Janet Morgan—*June 1995
Director, WH Smith

1989—Mr. Bruce George, MP—*June 1995
Labour, Walsall South

1989—Mr. John Lyons, CBE—*June 1995
Formerly General Secretary Engineers' and Managers' Association

1990—Mr. Peter Temple-Morris, MP—*December 1996
Conservative, Leominster

1990—Sir Julian Bullard, GCMG—*December 1996
Pro-Chancellor, Birmingham University

1993—Mr. Anthony Bruce—June 1996
Deputy Director Exports, The General Electric Company plc

1993—Mrs. Juliet Campbell, CMG—June 1996
The Mistress, Girton College, Cambridge

1993—Professor Helen Wallace—June 1996
Director, Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex

1993—Mr. Nicholas Harvey, MP—June 1996
Liberal, North Devon

1993—Mr. Edward Mortimer—November 1996
Foreign Affairs Editor, The Financial Times

1994—Mr. Michael Walsh—June 1997
Secretary, International Department, Trades Union Congress

Wilton Park Departmental Board
All appointments
- (a) Secretary of State
- (b) No salaries are paid
- (c) No formal arrangements
- (d) Mrs. Ruth Watts Davies
  Miss Valerie Le Moignan

Wilton Park Conference Centre
Director
- (a) Secretary of State
- (b) On a scale comparable to HCS 5
- (c) Three years renewable
- (d) Mr. Richard Langhorn

Westminster Foundation for Democracy
Governors
- (a) Secretary of State
- (b) None
- (c) Three years
- (d) Sir James Spicer, MP
  Ian Taylor, MP
  The Rt. Hon. and Hon. Sir Archie Hamilton, MP
  Geoffrey Hoon, MP
  Sir Russell Johnston, MP
  Mrs. Margaret Ewing, MP
  Ms Carole Tongue, MEP
  Mr. Tony Clarke
  Professor Peter Frank
  Mr. Timothy Garton Ash
  Lady Howe, JP
  Mr. Gavin Laird, CBE
  Mr. Ralph Land, OBE
  Dr. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky

Anglo-Irish Encounter
Joint Chairman
- (a) Secretary of State
- (b) No salary is paid
- (c) Indefinite
- (d) Sir David Goodall, GCMG

Anglo-Irish Encounter
Joint Secretary
- (a) Secretary of State
- (b) No salary is paid
- (c) Indefinite
- (d) Mr. Donald Cape, CMG

British Council
Chairman
- (a) Secretary of State

(b) Honorarium of £9,215, 3 per cent. in 1993
(c) Three years
(d) Sir Martin Jacomb

British Council
(i) Deputy Chairman, (ii) Vice-Chairman, (iii) Vice-chairman
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) (i) Lord Chorley, FCA
(ii) George Robertson, MP
(iii) Rt. Hon. Timothy Renton, MP

Imperial War Museum
Board of Trustees
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) (i) Ian Smart
(ii) Sir Edward Jackson

Great Britain China Centre
Chairman
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) Graham Greene, CBE

British Association for Central and Eastern Europe
Chairman
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP

Britain-Russia Centre
Chairman
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) Sir Curtis Keeble, KCMG

Marshall Aid Commemoration Committee
Chairman
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) Sir Donald Tebbit

Marshall Aid Commemoration Committee
Members of the Board
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) Professor Sir James Ball
Sir Roger Bannister
Professor Christine Bolt
Sir Arthur Bryant
Professor Lord Desai
Professor Harry Dickinson

University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies
Member of the Board
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Five years
(d) Lord Wilson of Tillyorn

University College of Wales
Wilson Chair of International Politics
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Five years
(d) (i) Mr. Stefan Terlezki
(ii) Mr. Robert Harvey

Commonwealth Institute
Chairman and Vice Chairman
(a) Secretary of State
(b) None currently because the post is vacant. In the past the chairman has received an honorarium of £15,000 per annum.
(c) Three years renewable
(d) Posts vacant

Commonwealth Institute
Governors of the Board
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salaries are paid
(c) Three years renewable
(d) David Thomson *(Acting Chairman)*
Sir Michael Caine
Mr. Colin Shepherd, MP
Mr. George Oakes, MP
Mr. J. S. Maclure
Mr. Cy Grant
Baroness Flather
Sir Mark Russell
Dr. Ann Robinson
The hon. David Douglas-Home
Ms Diane Warwick

Number 1 Diplomatic Service Appeals Board
(i) Chairman; (ii) Official side member; (iii) TUS side member; (iv) Independent member
(a) Secetary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) (i) Sir Ewen Fergusson
(ii) Mrs. Juliet Campbell
(iii) Mr. Frank Trew
(iv) Ms Kamlesh Bahl

Number 2 Diplomatic Service Appeals Board
(i) Chairman: (ii) Official side member; (iii) TUS side member; (iv) Independent member
(a) Secretary of State
(b) No salary is paid
(c) Three years
(d) (i) Sir Mark Russell
(ii) Mr. Rodney Bedford
(iii) Miss Sally Bull
(iv) Lady Jaqueline Dyson

Overseas Development Administration
All appointments are made by the Minister of State

The ODA Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Research Overseas
Term of office—three to five years
No salaries are paid
Dr. C. O. N. Moser
Professor A. W. Rew, MA (Econ)PhD
Professor J. F. J. Toye, MA (Cambs)MSc, PhD
Dr. H. Afshar
Professor P. Blaikie
Professor K. Davey
Ms D. Elson
Dr. J. Heyer
Professor N. Stern

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission
Term of office—three years
No salaries are paid
Sir Michael Caine *(Chairman)*
Professor S. B. Saul *(Deputy Chairman)*
Professor R. A. Howie
Professor B. M. Ogilvie
Professor. J. G. G. Ledingham
Mrs. D. L. Wedderburn
Professsor S. Marks
Profesor Gillian Beer
Dr. C. Booth
Dr. R. O. Iredale
Dr. P. Parsloe
Professor A. Little
Professor D. Jennings
J. Hanson
Professor A. Diplock, DSC

Overseas Service Pension Scheme
No salaries are paid
P. D. M. Freeman
D. Trotter
C. D. Stenton
Miss D. R. Phillips
D. H. Loades

Indian Family Pension Scheme
No fixed term of office
No salaries are paid
D. Trotter
Major General D. L. T. Horsford
Major R. J. Henderson
Lt. Colonel P. Kemmis-Betty
Major R. Mottram
R. V. Fenton
J. M. Phelps
J. P. C. Coventry
G. E. D. Walker
Mrs. P. Lamarque
Mrs. M. Ramsay-Brown

The Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC)
Term of office—three years
Sir Peter E. Leslie *(Chairman)*—£25,730
Sir Michael Caine *(Deputy Chairman)*—£8,856
Professor M. L. O. Faber, M. McWilliam, E. B. Waide, Professor I. D. Carruthers, J. B. Zochonis, Sir William Ryrie } £4,821

The Crown Agents
Term of office—three years
D. H. Probert *(Chairman)*—£30,000
A. K. Stewart-Roberts *(Deputy Chairman)*—£6,640
P. F. Berry *(Managing Director)*—£68,100
Mrs. D. Miller, MBE, JP, Miss K. Mortimer, F. Cassell, CB, J. D. Andrewes, F. T. Sumner } £5,320

Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board
Term of office—three years
No salaries are paid
D. H. Probert
A. K. Stewart-Roberts
P. F. Berry
Mrs. D. Miller, MBE, JP
Miss K. Mortimer
F. Cassell, CB
J. D. Andrewes
F. I. Sumner

Institute of Development Studies Governing Body
Term of office—three years
No salaries are paid
Sir Michael Caine
Ms Kate Mortimer
Dr. Carol Cosgrove
Dr. Alexander Shakow
Mr. Bowen Wells, MP
Mr. Derek Enright, MP

Governing Body of Queen Elizabeth House
Term of office—three to five years
No salaries are paid
Sir Peter Marshall, KCMG
Professor Shula Marks
Mr. Paul Ackroyd
Professor Adrian Wood

Government Hospitality Fund Advisory Committee for the Purchase of Wine
(a) The Rt. Hon. Alastair Goodlad (Minister in charge of GHF)
(b) No salaries are paid
(c) No fixed term
(d) Sir Ewen Fergusson, GCMG, GCVO
Major John Surtees, OBE, MC
Mr. Sebastian Payne
Mr. Anthony Hanson
Mr. Mark Savage

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Mr. Goodlad: Information on the political activities of candidates for appointments to public bodies is obtained from a variety of sources depending on the body in question. In many cases, the political activities of the appointee are not relevant.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Goodlad: Appointees to public bodies are considered on the basis of their experience and background in relation to the appointment in question. Political views are considered when membership of a political party is relevant to the appointment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Goodlad: Names of individuals to be considered for appointments to public bodies are, depending on circumstances, submitted from a variety of sources including other Government Departments and, as appropriate, the body to which the appointments is to be made.

Zaire

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about Sudanese Government forces being assembled in Zaire; and what representations he has made to the Government of Zaire about this.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made no such representations. A Zairean Government communiqué of 4 March strongly denied the presence of Sudanese Government troops in Zaire.

North Korea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has had about the adequacy of the inspections of the

International Atomic Energy Agency in North Korea; and what access the Korean authorities gave the team to the seven agreed nuclear sites.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency has stated that IAEA inspections carried out between 3 and 14 March did not permit the agency to conclude that nuclear material had not been diverted for military use in North Korea since February 1993. Agency inspectors were not allowed to proceed with a full inspection at one of North Korea's seven declared nuclear facilities.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether North Korea now has diverted sufficient plutonium to make at least one nuclear weapon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The director general of the IAEA told his board of governors on 21 March that as a result of inspections carried out between 3 and 14 March, the agency could not conclude that nuclear material had not been diverted for military use in North Korea since February 1993. In addition, North Korea has not granted the IAEA access to two undeclared sites, inspection of which would help to clarify whether there had been diversion of material prior to that date. The Security Council is currently considering the matter.

Occupied Territories

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in providing Palestinians with international protection in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom co-sponsored United Nations Security Council resolution 904 which calls for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territories, including a temporary foreign or international presence. The nature of such a presence is the subject of negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the degree of commitment of Israel and the PLO to early elections in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Israel and the PLO are committed by the declaration of principles signed on 13 September 1993 to the goal of holding elections not later than nine months after the entry into force of the declaration. The declaration entered into force on 13 October 1993.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he is giving to the establishment of a Palestinian police force in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We will train senior officers of the Palestinian police in the United Kingdom later this year. We are also providing full riot protection equipment for 200 members of the Palestinian police.

Western Sahara

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made towards holding a referendum in the Western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Secretary-General submitted his latest report on 10 March. The report is being considered by the Security Council.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of the United Nations mission in the Western Sahara on the participation by Morrocans in a referendum in the Western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Indentification Commission is trying to establish the identification of all those eligible to vote in the referendum on the Western Sahara and to register them.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which United Nations employees are currently held by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army in Sudan; and what representations he has made about this.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We know of no United Nations employees being held by the SPLA. The United Nations announced on 6 March the release of United Nations staff detained on 24 February by the SPLA in violation of Operation Lifeline Sudan principles.

East Timor

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the numbers of people who have died violently in East Timor since the Indonesian takeover.

Mr. Goodlad: There is no reliable source for such information.

Israel

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United States of America to discontinue all military aid to Israel until further Israeli settling in the Palestinian areas ceases and there are adequate safeguards to the Palestinians from existing settlers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United States of America to press Israel to dismantle all settlements in Palestinian territory.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have kept in close touch with the Americans on this issue. We regularly make demarches to the Israelis urging them to cease the construction of settlements which is illegal and an obstacle to peace.

Entry Clearance Officers

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column 699, what is his definition of a man year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A man year is the amount of time spent per year by a person doing entry clearance officer work. It is based on a standard formula which takes

account of time not available because of public holidays, leave, sickness, etcetera. It includes also the time of staff on temporary duty, such as summer seasonal relief.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answers of 16 March, *Official Report*, columns *699-700*, if he will make a statement on the reasons for entry clearance officers at posts overseas being instructed to reply direct to letters from solicitors in the United Kingdom, but not to reply direct to letters received from hon. Members.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I explained in my letter of 7 July 1993 to hon. Members, the migration and visa correspondence unit was established specifically to handle MPs' inquiries about entry clearance matters; and to ensure more effective and efficient handling of such inquiries which had previously been subject to the risk of delay or of overseas mail going astray. MPs' representations are thus accorded priority at all times. Resource constraints preclude letters from others, such as solicitors, being given the same level of service.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Goodlad: The latest figures available are:

	Number of men employed		*Number of women employed*	
	full-time	*part-time*	*full-time*	*part-time*
Open structure				
Grade 2	1	—	—	—
Grade 3	3	—	1	—
Grade 4	1	—	—	—
Grade 5	56	—	9	2
Grade 6	94	—	8	—
Grade 7	291	9	55	3
Occupational groups				
Senior Executive Officer	72	1	21	2
Higher Executive Officer (D)	3	—	—	—
Higher Executive Officer	162	1	79	9
Executive Officer	242	1	170	32
Administrative Officer	289	2	397	40
Administrative Assistant	66	—	50	3
Senior Economic Assistant	2	—	—	—
Economic Assistant	1	—	—	—
Senior Information Officer	5	—	6	—
Information Officer	11	—	20	—
Assistant Information Officer	5	—	5	—
Senior Librarian	—	—	3	—
Librarian	—	—	6	—
Assistant Librarian	5	—	13	—
Museum Curatorial Grade D	—	—	2	—
Museum Curatorial Grade E	—	—	1	—
Museum Curatorial Grade F	2	—	—	—
Senior P and T Officer	43	—	2	—
Higher P and T Officer	48	—	1	—
P and T Officer	19	—	—	—
Technical Grade 1	8	—	—	—
Higher Mapping and Charting Officer	1	—	—	—
Mapping and Charting Officer	1	—	—	—
Mapping and Charting Technical Grade 1	—	—	1	—
Typing Manager	—	—	9	1
Personal Secretary	—	—	139	13
Typist	1	—	71	12
Senior Scientific Officer	64	—	17	—
Higher Scientific Officer	39	—	23	—
Scientific Officer	22	—	12	1
Assistant Scientific Officer	9	—	13	—
Catering Manager 1	1	—	—	—
Catering Manager 2	1	—	—	—
Catering Manager 3	2	—	1	—
Higher Photographic Officer	1	—	—	—
Photographic Officer	1	—	—	—
Higher Graphics Officer	—	—	1	—
Graphics Officer	—	—	—	1
Dep Reg Vet Officer	2	—	—	—
Agricultural Officer 1	18	—	1	—
Agricultural Officer 2	5	—	—	—
P & GS Grade B	3	—	—	—
P & GS grade C	5	—	—	—
P & GS Grade D	9	—	—	—
P & GS Grade E	11	—	—	—
Stores Officer Grade B	1	—	—	—
Stores Officer Grade C	1	—	1	—
Stores Officer Grade D	5	—	—	—

	Number of men employed		Number of women employed	
	full-time	part-time	full-time	part-time
Support Manager 1	4	—	—	—
Support Manager 2	3	—	6	—
Support Manager 3	25	—	20	—
Support Grade Band 1	142	—	78	3
Support Grade Band 2	147	1	123	—
Senior TTO	18	—	—	—
Higher TTO	69	—	—	—
TTO	101	—	1	—
Assistant TTO	91	—	4	—
Communications Officer IV	—	—	1	—
Industrial grades	32	4	12	18
Departmental Groups				
Senior Grade	130	—	5	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 4	257	—	11	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 5	371	1	52	8
Diplomatic Service Grade 6	228	1	32	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 7M	330	—	90	7
Diplomatic Service Grade 7D	75	—	36	1
Diplomatic Service Grade 8	48	—	9	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 9	388	—	391	10
Diplomatic Service Grade 10	261	1	184	1
Legal Adviser	1	—	—	—
Second Legal Adviser	1	—	—	—
Deputy Legal Adviser	2	—	—	—
Legal Counsellor	4	—	2	—
Senior Assistant Legal Adviser	6	—	3	—
Assistant Legal Adviser	2	—	2	—
Research Counsellor	3	—	—	—
Senior Principal Research Officer	10	—	4	—
Principal Research Officer	14	2	12	1
Senior Research Officer	23	—	8	1
Research Officer	1	—	—	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 8C	14	—	—	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 9C	7	—	—	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 5T	1	—	—	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 6T	1	—	—	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 7T	20	—	—	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 8T	44	—	1	—
Diplomatic Service Grade 9T	15	—	—	—
Secretary 1	—	—	105	1
Secretary 2	1	—	435	9
Secretary 3	1	—	6	—
Chief Overseas Security Officer	41	—	—	—
Overseas Security Officer	144	—	2	—
Nurse	—	—	4	—
Doctor	4	—	1	—
Senior Lecturer	3	—	7	—
Senior Field Investigating Officer	1	—	—	—
Field Investigating Officer 2	13	—	3	—
Translator 1	1	—	—	—
Translator 2	1	—	3	3
Translator 3	1	—	1	—
Chief Cypher Superintendent	3	—	—	—
Cypher Superintendent	12	—	—	—
Cypher Supervisor	31	—	—	—
Telecommunications and Cypher Officer	97	—	6	—
Operator Technician	1	—	—	—
Queen's Messenger	27	—	—	—
Queen's Messenger Escort	4	—	—	—

Marsh Arabs

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is available to Her Majesty's Government about the reason for the burning of settlements in the marshes where the Tigris meets the Euphrates.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The destruction of settlements in the marshes of southern Iraq may be related to marsh drainage construction projects, counter-insurgency operations or harassment of Shia Arabs by the authorities in Baghdad. United States, United Kingdom and French aircraft deployed to patrol the southern no-fly zone continue to monitor the situation closely. Iraq's motives are unlikely to be clear until the United Nations monitors are allowed access to the area, as required by the United Nations resolutions. But judging from Saddam's past record of brutality towards his own people, the wide-scale burning of settlements is likely to be part of an aggressive campaign against those who live in the marshes.

Mr. Van den Broek

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge Mr. Van den Broek to refrain from commenting on issues which are the province of member states.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. Mr. Van den Broek is entitled to express his personal opinions.

Paul Goodall

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that Abdul Hadi Al Gahtani who is in jail in Zemica, Bosnia is brought to trial over his alleged participation in the murder of Paul Goodall.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain in close touch with the Bosnian authorities about their continuing investigations into the murder of Paul Goodall. They are fully aware of our concerns that the murderer is identified and brought to justice.

Nauru

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to reply to the Australian request of August 1993 for a contribution to the Australian settlement of the Nauru rehabilitation claim.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom Government has made an ex gratia payment to Australia of A$12 million in respect of the Australia/Nauru settlement agreement of 10 August 1993. In return Australia has agreed not to pursue any further claims against the United Kingdom on this matter. The British Government have accepted no liability with respect to any claims made by Nauru or Australia.

SCOTLAND

Sporting Estates

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made, on a per acre basis, of the yield to the Scottish economy from sporting estates.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend does not collect this information.

Salmon

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons were employed in the salmon netting industry; and how many salmon netting stations were operative, in (i) 1979 and (ii) at the most recent available date.

Sir Hector Monro: Statistics are produced on salmon and sea trout netting effort but not on employment in the Scottish salmon netting industry nor on the number of salmon netting stations. The available statistics are included in the "Statistical Bulletin on Scottish Salmon and Sea Trout Catches".

Deer Forests and Grouse Moors

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the acreage of Scotland under *(a)* deer forest and *(b)* grouse moors.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend does not collect this information.

Isle of Man

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Ministers of the Isle of Man to discuss transport links, promotion of the common Celtic heritage and other matters of mutual interest.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has had no meetings with Ministers of the Isle of Man.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to make it a requirement to notify the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department of an outbreak of sheep scab; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has about the incidence of sheep scab in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: I have seen a number of reports recently about sheep scab outbreaks in Scottish flocks. However, this is a disease which can be controlled readily by individual farmers who are well aware of the preventive measures and procedures needed to deal with it. Most of the detailed measures on the control of sheep scab were removed in July 1992 and the Government have already announced that they will complete this process. We have no other plans to require the notification of sheep scab.

Prisoners

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total number of prisoners in custody in Scotland on the first day of each month from May 1992 until the latest month for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 24 March 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the total number of prisoners in custody in Scotland on the first day of each month from May 1992 until the latest month for which figures are available.

The table below gives that information to date.

	1992	*1993*	*1994*
January	—	5,157	5,080
February	—	5,490	5,372
March	—	5,886	5,561
April	—	5,893	—
May	5,276	5,739	—
June	5,361	5,879	—
July	5,406	5,853	—
August	5,184	5,835	—
September	5,348	5,916	—
October	5,376	5,214	—
November	5,337	5,253	—
December	5,387	5,340	—

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total numbers of prisoners in custody in

Scotland on *(a)* 1 June 1979, *(b)* 1 June 1983, *(c)* 1 June 1987 and *(d)* 1 April 1992 and on the latest date for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 24 March 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the total number of prisoners in custody in Scotland on 1 June 1979, 1 June 1983, 1 June 1987, 1 April 1992 and on the latest date for which figures are available.

Information relating to the numbers in custody on the first of each month is not available for 1979, 1983 or 1987. In 1979 the average daily population (based on the full calendar year) was 4,585. In 1983 and 1987 the average daily population for the month of June in each year was 5,116 and 5,407 respectively. On 1 April 1992 the population was 5,348 and on 18 March 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, the population was 5,498.

Dougarie Estate

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the reasons for the decision not to prosecute in the case arising from the shooting of a short-eared owl on Dougarie estate, Isle of Arran.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not the policy of the Crown to give details of the reasons for decisions taken in individual cases. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate is, however, aware of the circumstances of this case and is satisfied that the procurator fiscal's decision not to proceed to trial was a proper one in the circumstances as then known to him.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total numbers of prison spaces in Scotland on *(a)* 1 June 1979, *(b)* 1 June 1983, *(c)* 1 June 1987 and *(d)* 1 April 1992 and on the latest date for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 24 March 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about prison places in Scotland.

During any year a number of cells are unavailable for use for a variety of reasons, including redecoration or damage repair work, refurbishment (including in some cases, to provide night sanitation) or for other policy reasons (eg being retained in the event of an emergency). Information on cells in use is not available for the earlier of the years you requested. However the design capacity of the estate was as follows:

	1979	*1983*	*1987*
Design capacity (as at end of each calendar year)	5,279	5,318	5,691

At the beginning of April 1992, the design capacity was 5,692 with 5,103 spaces available for use. The latest position (as at Friday 18 March 1994) is that the design capacity is 5,736, with a total of 5,167 spaces available for use.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Improvement Programmes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison improvement programmes have been cancelled over the past 12 months; if he will list the prisons in England and Wales where this has happened; and what are the reasons for such cancellations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Ian Dunbar to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about whether any building improvement programmes have been cancelled within the past twelve months.

Two schemes have been cancelled during the last twelve months at Brixton and Stocken on value for money grounds. An alternative solution is currently being considered for Brixton.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from *(a)* hon. Members, *(b)* members of the general public and *(c)* chambers of trade and other trade organisations requesting tighter controls and regulation of car boot sales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since April 1992, representations have been received from 11 hon. Members and from 11 members of the public. No representations have been received from chambers of trade and other trade organisations.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently being held in police stations in south Yorkshire.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners currently held in police stations in South Yorkshire.

On the night of 22 March 1994, the latest date for which full information is available, there were 55 prisoners in police stations in the South Yorkshire area.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners on average were being held in each of the police stations in South Yorkshire (i) for each month since January 1993 and (ii) for each day in February and March 1994; and if he will make a statement as to what causes he has identified for any trends in these figures.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of prisoners held in police stations in South Yorkshire from January 1993 to date.

During the period from 1 January 1993 to 8 February 1994, no prisoners were held in police stations in South Yorkshire.

The attached table shows the position from 9 February 1994 to 22 March 1994.

Since 1 January 1994, the prison population in England and Wales has risen by over 3,300. This has caused considerable pressure on prison accommodation, particularly in the north of England.

Date	*Police station*	*Actual number*
9 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	14
10 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	19
11 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	3
12 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	3
13 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	3
14 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	9
15 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	20
16 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	22
	Rotherham	3
17 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	25
18 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	1
19 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	1
20 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	1
21 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	4
22 February 1994	Nil	—
23 February 1994	Nil	—
24 February 1994	Nil	—
25 February 1994	Nil	—
26 February 1994	Nil	—
27 February 1994	Nil	—
28 February 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	15
1 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	16
2 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	18
3 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	16
4 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	11
5 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	14
6 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	14
7 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	30
8 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	21
9 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	22
10 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	25
11 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	4
12 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	8
13 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	8
14 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	20
	Thorne	10
	Rotherham	15
15 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	26
	Thorne	10
	Rotherham	15
16 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	26
	Rotherham	15
	Thorne	12
	Doncaster	4
17 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	26
	Thorne	12
	Doncaster	13
	Rotherham	16
18 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	25
	Rotherham	15
	Thorne	10
19 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	25
	Thorne	12
	Doncaster	4
	Rotherham	16
20 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	25
	Thorne	12
	Doncaster	4
	Rotherham	16
21 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	25
	Thorne	11
	Rotherham	15
	Doncaster	10
22 March 1994	Sheffield, Bridge st.	17
	Thorne	10
	Doncaster	11
	Barnsley	4
	Rotherham	13

Mixed-Sex Prisons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mixed-sex prisons there are in England and Wales; if he will list their locations; and what consideration he is giving to increasing their number.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about mixed sex prisons in England and Wales.

The following three Prison Service establishments in England and Wales currently and routinely hold both males and females: Durham, Risley (near Warrington) and Low Newton (near Durham). Male and female prisoners are held separately.

There are, at present, no plans to increase the number of establishments holding both males and females.

Doncaster Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by category, the establishment number of prisoners to be held at Doncaster prison when it is opened.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 March 1994:

HM Prison Doncaster

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Doncaster prison.

Doncaster has a certified normal accommodation of 771 places. As a local prison serving the courts, the population mix will fluctuate with the number and age of prisoners committed to it. It is expected that two thirds of the prisoners will be male young offenders and one third adult males. The population will include those on remand, those convicted awaiting sentence, those sentenced awaiting allocation to a training prison and some who will serve their entire sentence in the prison.

Joy Gardner

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the report sent by the Police Complaints Authority to the Crown Prosecution Service concerning the

death of Joy Gardner will include an investigation into the role of immigration officials involved in Mrs. Gardner's case in the period up to the attempted deportation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The report of the investigation by the assistant chief constable of Essex police, which was supervised by the Police Complaints Authority, is concerned with any possible criminal and disciplinary consequences of the actions of police officers.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when his Department was first made aware that Joy Gardner was still in the United Kingdom after her six month visa had expired;

(2) how and by whom his Department was first made aware that Joy Gardner was still in the United Kingdom after her six months visa had expired; and from what other sources he later received the same information.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Immigration Department first became aware that Mrs. Gardner was still in the United Kingdom after expiry of her leave to enter when her husband visited the public inquiry office in Croydon on 11 September 1990 and applied on her behalf for leave to remain on the basis of marriage. This was the only source from which the information that she had overstayed was received.

Volunteering

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to involve representatives of local government in the planning and oversight of the "Make a Difference" initiative on volunteering.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I very much hope that local government will want to play a full and active part in "Make a Difference". My officials have already met local authority associations to discuss ways in which local government can be involved, and several local government representatives attended the launch on 1 March.

National Lottery Charities Board

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce the members of the proposed National Lottery Charities Board.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to announce the chairman very shortly. He will then be discussing with him or her the appointment of the 16 board members and will make these as soon as possible.

Youth Detention

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much it costs per head to detain youths in *(a)* prisons and *(b)* other forms of detention centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martyn Jones, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question about the cost of detaining young offenders.

Young people remanded to prison are held in local prisons and remand centres at an average weekly cost of £526. Sentenced young offenders are held in closed young offender establishments at an average weekly cost of £634 or open ones at £492.

Isle of Man

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has not had the opportunity to meet the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man.

Fire Safety Inspections

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fire safety inspections were undertaken by fire services in England and Wales in the past year; how many complaints were received about the conduct of these inspections; and how many complaints were found to be justified.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The total number of inspections carried out by fire services in England and Wales during the calendar year January to December 1992 was 840,724.

During the period January to March 1993, some 225,505 inspections were carried out. Figures for the calendar year January to December 1993 are not yet available.

A survey of brigades in 1993 showed that 81 complaints were received about the conduct of inspections. On investigation, 50 of those complaints were found to be justified.

Prisoners

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average proportion of category A prisoners and category B prisoners within the prison population in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the average proportion of category A prisoners and category B prisoners within the prison population in each of the last ten years.

The information for 30 June of each year is given in the attached table. Information on category A prisoners is available for the period requested but information on category B prisoners is only readily available from 1991 onwards.

Population of category A and B prisoners in Prison Service establishments on 30 June, 1984-1993

	Security category			
	Category A		Category B	
On 30 June	Number	Percentage of adult sentenced population[1]	Number	Percentage of adult sentenced population[1]
1984	417	1·6	n/a	n/a
1985	429	1·6	n/a	n/a
1986	458	1·7	n/a	n/a
1987	656	2·2	n/a	n/a

On 30 June	Security category: Category A Number	Category A Percentage of adult sentenced population[1]	Category B Number	Category B Percentage of adult sentenced population[1]
1988	644	2·1	n/a	n/a
1989	664	2·2	n/a	n/a
1990	564	2·0	n/a	n/a
1991	592	2·0	4,822	16·4
1992	597	2·0	4,751	15·8
1993	578	2·1	5,149	18·4

[1] Some sentenced prisoners will have had no category assigned to them. A small number of category A and category B prisoners may be young offenders rather than adults.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of prisoners in each of the last 10 years *(a)* serving life sentences, *(b)* serving sentences of over 10 years, *(c)* serving sentences of over four years and *(d)* serving sentences for crimes of a violent or sexual nature.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what was the average number of prisoners in each of the last 10 years *(a)* serving life sentences, *(b)* serving sentences of over 10 years, *(c)* serving sentences of over four years and *(d)* serving sentences for crimes of a violent or sexual nature.

The available information is for 30 June each year and is published annually in successive volumes of "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (Tables 1.8 and 1.9 of the latest volume, for 1991, Cm 2157 give annual data for the period 1981 to 1991). A copy of this publication is available in the House of Commons Library. Provisional information for 1992 and for 1993 where available is given in the attached table.

Sentenced population in Prison Service establishments on 30 June[1]

Length of sentence	1992	1993
Life	3,000	3,095
Over 10 years less than life	1,399	n/a
Over 4 years less than life[2]	9,965	n/a
Offence		
Violent or sexual offences[3]	10,233	[4]10,700

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Includes those serving a sentence of over 10 years.
[3] As recorded. Some 13 per cent. of the sentenced population in 1992 and 6 per cent. in 1993 had no offence recorded centrally.
[4] Estimated.

Evidence (Video Link)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to allow adult victims of sexual offences to give evidence by video link, subject to judicial discretion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have no plans to introduce such legislation, but we have undertaken to review the position of vulnerable adult witnesses following the completion of research into the effectiveness of new provisions relating to the evidence of children, which were introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Blakenhurst Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoner custody officers are currently employed at Blakenhurst; and how many have resigned or been sacked since the prison opened;

(2) how many prison custody officers have been employed at Blakenhurst by United Kingdom Detention Services since it opened; and if he will provide details;

(3) what information he has as to how many former members of the state prison service now work at Blakenhurst;

(4) what is the grade of the Crown Monitor at Blakenhurst prison;

(5) how many disturbances have taken place at Blakenhurst since it opened; and if he will give details.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

HM Prison Blakenhurst

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about Blakenhurst prison.

Since its opening a total of 308 people have been employed as prisoner custody officers at Blakenhurst. 30 people have resigned and two have been dismissed. There are 276 prisoner custody officers currently employed at the prison; 13 former members of the Prison Service work there.

The Controller is a Governor III grade Crown servant.

There have been a total of two disturbances and five occasions on which there have been peaceful acts of indiscipline at Blakenhurst since its opening. The details are listed in the attached Annex.

Police (Training)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the training given to *(a)* special constables and *(b)* regular police officers upon joining, after two years in post and thereafter.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The training of special constables is a matter for individual chief officers but usually takes place either at weekends or as part of a series of evening training sessions. Initial induction is followed by a basic training programme and development courses as appropriate.

All regular police officers go through a 31-week foundation course immediately they join, partly in force and partly at one of the district training centres. During their two-year probationary period, they spend a further six weeks following centrally produced training programmes, in addition to any further specialist or general training which their forces may provide locally.

On promotion to sergeant, officers attend a six-week sergeants development course, run by groups of forces on a regional basis. A further regionally run inspectors management development course follows promotion to

inspector. Some specialist training—such as detective training, advance driving courses and dog training—is also organised on a regional basis.

A comprehensive programme of development related to the roles and responsibilities of more senior officers is provided by the Police Staff college, Bramshill. In addition to this leadership programme, the college offers a range of short courses and also runs an accelerated promotion course for officers of high potential.

Other establishments which provide national training facilities are the Crime Prevention Centre and the specialist support unit for community and race relations.

In addition to the training mentioned above, individual forces provide their own training either directly or through external courses.

Suspect Escorts

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost in each of the past three years of transporting under police escort suspects from the area in which they were arrested back to the area where the alleged crimes took place for trial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not collected.

Trials

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the use of technology to enable all people charged with crimes to be tried in the area in which they were arrested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no current plans to use technology in the way suggested. The Government do, however, keep under review developments in this sector, and are examining a number of ways in which the conduct of court business might be aided by the use of new technology.

Prisoner Escapes

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the estimated number of prisoner escorts in each of the last five years; and what proportion of those involved the use of custom-built cellular vehicles;

(2) how many prisoners escaped from prison escorts in each of the last five years; and how many of those escapes were from custom-built cellular vehicles;

(3) how many escapes have occurred from Group 4 prisoner escorts since April 1993; and if he will give details of each case;

(4) how many category A prisoners have escaped from prison service escorts in the last five years; and how many of those escorts involved cellular vehicles.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about escapes from escorts, and the estimated number of prison escorts over the last five years, and the proportion in which custom built cellular vehicles were used.

The information you requested is not recorded centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Escapes from prison escort over the last five years and the number of escapes from cellular vehicles—the following table lists all escapes from escort of prisoners supervised by Prison Service staff from both the public and private sectors and from the private escort contract. It does not, however, include prison escorts conducted by the police forces in England and Wales.

Year	*Number of inmates*
1989	118
1990	119
1991	144
1992	147
1993	[1]192

[1] Thirty of these escapes would have been the responsibility of police escorts in previous years and are not reflected in prior year figures.

Information about escapes from Prison Service cellular vehicles is not readily available and could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

Escapes from Group 4 since April 1993 with details of escapes.

From 1 April 1993 to 28 February 1994 40 inmates escaped from Group 4 prisoner escorts.

The following table provides details of the escapes:

Location of escape	*Number of prisoners*
Attendance at court	31
En route from vehicle	8
Outside hospital	1
Total	40

Before Group 4 undertook prisoner escort work, 34 of the above inmates who escaped would have been the responsibility of police escorts.

This information is derived from the Incident Management Support Unit, a part of the Directorate of Custody.

Category 'A' prisoners and escapes from Prison Service escorts over the last 5 years.

No Category 'A' prisoner has escaped from a Prison Service escort in this period.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have escaped while under escort from Preston prison in the past 12 months; how many of those escapes were from private taxi hire; and how many of those escapes were from custom-built cellular vehicles.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the escape of prisoners whilst under escort from Preston prison in the past 12 months.

During the past year three prisoners from Preston prison have escaped whilst under escort. Two of these escapes were whilst the prisoners concerned were receiving treatment in an outside hospital. In the first of these incidents the prisoner was recaptured almost immediately by the escorting prison officers. In the later incident the prisoner was recaptured by the police within three hours of his escape. The remaining incident involved the escape of a prisoner from a privately hired bus. This prisoner was subsequently recaptured by the police some six weeks after his escape.

There have been no escapes from private taxi hire vehicles or custom built cellular vehicles during the past year.

Prisoner Escorts

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff Group 4 employ to carry out prisoner escort duties in Humberside and the east midlands.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

COURT ESCORT AND CUSTODY SERVICE IN HUMBERSIDE AND THE EAST MIDLANDS

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the court escort and custody service in Humberside and the East Midlands.

Group 4 have a current operational strength of 334 prisoner custody officers, including supervisory officers, for the prisoner escort and court custody duties required under the contract. This excludes senior managers at their area headquarters.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Securicor will begin escorting prisoners in London; and in what area of London this service will first be handed over to Securicor.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the court escort and custody service contract in the Metropolitan Police District.

The contract with Securicor will be introduced in five phases, commencing on 27 June 1994. The contract will commence in North East London and will cover Pentonville and Holloway prisons.

Prisoner Populations

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the average certified accommodation and the average prisoner population for each month at Blakenhurst since the prison opened;

(2) what was the average prisoner populations and the average certified normal accommodation at The Wolds for each month since April 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the average certified accommodation and the average prisoner population for each month at Blakenhurst since the prison opened and at the Wolds for each month since April 1992.

I attach tables showing the prison population and Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) at the Wolds and Blakenhurst for the last day of each month.

Population and CNA of the Wolds at the last day of each month 1992 to 1994

Last day of Month	CNA[1]	Population
1992		
April	320	48
May	320	100
June	320	112
July	320	143
August	320	172
September	300	197
October	300	221
November	320	238
December	320	214
1993		
January	320	304
February	320	318
March	320	309
April	320	310
May	320	310
June	320	317
July	320	317
August	320	318
September	320	322
October	320	327
November	320	320
December	320	320
1994		
January	320	322
February	320	323

[1] The operational capacity was lower than the CNA during the period when the establishment was being opened.

Population and CNA of Blakenhurst at the last day of each month 1992-94

Last day of month	CNA[1]	Population
1993		
May	20	21
June	120	136
July	200	247
August	300	318
September	400	433
October	550	563
November	649	614
December	649	556
1994		
January	649	621
February	649	563

[1] The operational capacity was lower than the CNA during the period when the establishment was being opened.

Telephone Conversations (Taping Guidelines)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the guidelines issued to the Prison Service concerning the tape recording of telephone conversations between prisoners and third parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Derek Fatchett, dated 28 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the guidelines issued to the Prison Service concerning the tape recording of telephone conversations between prisoners and third parties.

Guidance on the operation of telephones for prisoners' use including the tape recording of conversations are set out in Prison Service Circular Instructions 21/1992 and Circular Instruction 50/1988, copies of which are in the Library.

Staff and Prisoner Assaults

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many staff assaults have occurred at The Wolds prison since it opened; and what is the average rate of staff assaults per 100 prisoners;

(2) how many recorded prisoner on prisoner assaults have taken place in each month since The Wolds prison opened;

(3) how many staff assaults have occurred at Blakenhurst since the prison opened; and what is the average rate of assaults per 100 prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

ASSAULTS AT THE WOLDS AND BLAKENHURST

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about assaults on staff at Blakenhurst and the Wolds and on prisoners at the Wolds.

The Wolds opened in April 1992. During its first year of operation there were 36 assaults on staff proved at adjudication, equivalent to 18 per 100 average population of prisoners. In the eleven months to February 1994 there were 29 such assaults, equivalent to an annual rate of 10 per 100 average population. Blakenhurst opened in May 1993 and in the first ten months of its operation there were 81 assaults on staff, equivalent to an annual rate of 28 per 100 average population. This experience is consistent with that of new public-sector prisons, where the number of assaults is often higher in the period after opening and then declines.

I attach a table showing the monthly figures of prisoner on prisoner assaults at the Wolds.

The Wolds	*Assaults on prisoners*
1992	
April	0
May	0
June	0
July	0
August	1
September	0
October	1
November	4
December	3
1993	
January	0
February	3
March	4
April	1
May	1
June	1
July	0
August	0
September	0
October	1
November	0
December	0
1994[1]	
January	2
February	1

[1]Provisional.

Ethnic Minorities

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many full-time equivalent teaching posts have been approved for each local education authority in (i) 1993-94 and (ii) 1994-95 for funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 in *(a)* maintained schools, *(b)* voluntary-aided schools and *(c)* central teams which provide a service throughout the authority;

(2) how many full-time equivalent teaching posts have been approved for each parliamentary constituency in (i) 1993-94 and (ii) 1994-95 for funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 in *(a)* maintained schools and *(b)* voluntary-aided schools;

(3) if he will list, for each constituency, the schools with teacher posts approved for funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 in (i) 1993-94 and (ii) 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave on 21 March, *Official Report*, columns *34-36*, to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), in which I set out, in relation to each relevant local education authority, numbers of posts designated to be filled by qualified teachers, approved for funding under section 11.

Comprehensive information is not available centrally about the current allocation of approved posts to individual schools within local education authority projects and such information could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. As to the position with regard to 1994-95, an encouraging proportion of authorities have notified us of their intentions to make good the shortfall arising from the reduction in section 11 funding. However, many authorities have yet to inform us of their plans.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many full-time equivalent teaching posts have been approved for each grant-maintained school for funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for *(a)* 1993-94 and *(b)* 1994-95; and what was the total grant in each case under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Comprehensive information is not available centrally about the current allocation of posts approved for funding under section 11 to grant maintained schools. The available information is shown in the table.

Grant-maintained schools are eligible to apply for funding direct. In some cases, schools which were already grant maintained applied successfully at the time of the last applications round and have had their own projects since 1 April 1992. Information in relation to those is shown in the table.

Other schools, which have since opted for grant-maintained status, were originally covered under local education authority projects. Local agreement is often reached for such schools to remain within those projects, notwithstanding their change of status. In such instances, section 11 grant continues to be paid to the local authority, and it is the responsibility of the school to make the contribution to the total cost which the authority would otherwise have made.

Alternatively, a school may leave the local education authority project and apply to set up its own. In such cases, the number and type of posts approved are agreed between

the school and the local education authority as being the allocation appropriately made to the school by the local education authority immediately before. Section 11 grant is then paid to the school at a level consistent with contemporary practice in relation to the payment of grant to the local authority, and it is the responsibility of the school to pay the balance of the total cost. Information about such schools is included in the table.

For convenience, the local authority area in whose area a school is located is indicated.

Name	LEA	Approved posts		Grant	
		1993-94	1994-95	1993-94	1994-95
Ashcroft	Bedfordshire	0·5	0·5	3,444	3,549
*Ash Green	Warwickshire	0·4	0·4	5,637	6,217
Avon Valley	Warwickshire	1·0	1·0	11,669	11,750
Beechview	Buckinghamshire	0·6	0·6	6,963	6,995
Bridgewater and Brindley Hall	Buckinghamshire	0·75	0·75	13,230	13,111
Burntwood	Wandsworth	4·0	4·0	57,024	55,687
Claremone	Harrow	1·0	1·0	13,519	13,629
Copland	Brent	2·5	2·5	37,853	33,860
Deacons	Cambridgeshire	4·5	4·5	33,315	24,823
Francis Bacon	Hertfordshire	4·0	4·0	23,107	24,645
Graveney	Wandsworth	5·0	5·0	71,186	69,720
Greenford	Ealing	3·4	3·4	46,819	39,461
Greenwood Dale	Nottinghamshire	2·0	2·0	25,783	26,111
Hall Green	Birmingham	0·85	0·85	9,326	9,320
*Hamilton	Buckinghamshire	3·0	3·0	40,946	41,410
*Hendon	Barnet	2·0	2·0	26,645	28,041
Holly Hall	Dudley	0·4	0·4	1,186**	3,778
Holy Trinity	Kent	0·87	0·87	10,308	10,819
London Oratory	Hammersmith and Fulham	3·1	3·1	39,595	38,025
Myton	Warwickshire	1·45	1·45	20,254	19,888
Northampton Boys	Northamptonshire	1·0	1·0	16,809	13,372
Northolt	Ealing	1·2	1·2	5,802	5,379
Oldfield	Avon	0·3	0·3	3,881	3,645
Radcliffe	Buckinghamshire	1·0	1·0	10,400	10,478
Raines Foundation	Tower Hamlets	1·0	1·0	26,803	27,146
*Reading Girls	Berkshire	1·0	1·0	12,410	12,733
Robert Napier	Kent	0·5	0·5	1,239	1,220
Small Heath	Birmingham	4·6	4·6	50,057	50,626
Stratford	Newham	3·0	3·0	53,106	54,277
Wood End	Ealing	1·3	1·3	8,968	6,815
*Wrenn	Northamptonshire	2·0	2·0	27,188	27,351

Notes:

1. Figures in relation to posts are in full-time equivalent terms.
2. The figures for Deacons include 1 instructor post and 1 bilingual assistant post; and for Small Heath, 1 home/school liaison assistant post. All others are designated teacher posts.
3. As to 1994-95, figures relate to posts eligible for funding from 1 April 1994. It is a matter for each school to decide, within its overall financial provision, how it intends to proceed in the light of reductions in section 11 funding. Schools marked* have indicated that they propose to make no substantive change in 1994-95. In other cases, responses are awaited from schools.
4. At present, section 11 grant is paid quarterly in arrears on the basis of actual expenditure incurred by the grant recipient. The 1993-94 grant expenditure figures relate to grant paid in respect of the school's own expenditure in the three quarters from 1 April to 31 December 1993.
5. In the case marked**, the expenditure is from 1 September 1993, the operative date for the school's project.
6. With effect from 1994-95, section 11 grant will be paid on the basis of an annual budget allocation. The figures for 1994-95 show the budget allocation which has been notified to each school in relation to the school's expenditure in 1994-95.
7. The table does not include schools whose new project proposals are in the process of consideration, or who have not yet been notified of a budget allocation figure for 1994-95.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent his Department will retain responsibility for funding teaching posts under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 after the creation of the single regeneration budget from April 1995; what will be the proportion of the funding thus retained; and what proportion will be transferred to the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Around 55 per cent. of the total provision in relation to 1994-95 for teaching and other posts approved for funding under section 11 will form part of the single regeneration budget when it comes into operation on 1 April 1994. The Home Office will continue to administer the balance of funding remaining under section 11 in respect of approved teacher and other posts.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Howard: The figures requested are given in the table below which sets out the total number of non-industrial Home Office staff by grade—including those in agencies, on outward secondment or maternity or special leave—and the number who are male and female and full-time and part-time employees. The information was extracted from the Home Office personnel system on 25 March 1994.

Grade	Part-time Female	Part-time Male	Full-time Female	Full-time Male	Total
Administrative Trainee (New)	0	0	2	6	8
Administrative Assistant	350	17	1,241	577	2,185
Administrative Officer	560	30	2,541	1,287	4,418
Assistant Director	0	0	0	9	9
Assistant Librarian	1	0	8	4	13
Assistant Statistician	0	0	1	0	1
Assistant Storeperson	0	0	8	96	104
Assistant Division Officer	0	0	0	4	4
Assistant Identification Officer	0	0	8	6	14
Assistant Immigration Officer	3	0	19	17	39
Assistant Information Officer	0	0	3	4	7
Assistant Inspector Fire Services 1	0	0	0	14	14
Assistant Inspector Fire Services 2	0	0	0	2	2
Assistant Inspector Fire Services 3	0	0	0	12	12
Assistant Scientific Officer	8	0	62	22	92
Assistant Chief Officer (HD Opps Study)	0	0	0	2	2
Church of England Chaplain	0	1	5	91	97
Church of England/Roman Catholic Part-time Chaplain	23	95	3	6	127
Chaplain General Prisons	0	0	0	1	1
Chief Immigration Officer	5	0	48	309	362
Chief Inspector Animals Sp. Inspector	0	0	0	1	1
Chief Typing Manager	0	0	4	0	4
Commandant	0	0	0	1	1
Communication Officer 2	0	0	0	1	1
Communication Officer 3	0	0	2	13	15
Consultant Vol Sers Unit	0	0	2	0	2
Divisional Officer Grade 1	0	0	0	1	1
Divisional Officer Grade 2	0	0	0	2	2
Executive Officer	166	8	1,018	936	2,128
Farm Manager 1	0	0	0	9	9
Farm Manager 1a	0	0	0	14	14
Farm Manager 2	0	0	0	10	10
Farm Manager 3	0	0	1	28	29
Farm Manager 4	0	0	0	19	19
Farms and Gardens Officer	0	0	0	4	4
Fireground Supervisor	0	0	0	1	1
Foreman	0	0	0	1	1
Governor 1	0	0	0	39	39
Governor 2	0	0	7	78	85
Governor 3	0	0	14	103	117
Governor 4	0	0	39	275	314
Governor 5	0	0	29	409	438
Governor 5 (Aps)	0	0	6	19	25
Grade 1 (Permanent Secretary)	0	0	0	1	1
Grade 2 (Deputy Secretary)	0	0	0	8	8
Grade 3 (Under Secretary)	0	0	7	21	28
Grade 4	0	0	0	3	3
Grade 5	5	1	18	71	95
Grade 6	3	0	10	89	102
Grade 7	27	0	131	457	615
Graphics Officer	1	0	2	11	14
Graphics Technical Grade	0	0	1	0	1
Head of Department 3	0	0	0	1	1
Head of Department 5	0	0	0	1	1
Head of Department 6	0	0	0	1	1
Head of Department iv	0	0	0	1	1
Head Pharmacist	0	0	0	1	1
Higher Tcoms Technical Officer	0	0	0	18	18
Higher Executive Officer	79	1	411	704	1,195
Higher Executive Officer (D)	0	0	8	18	26
Higher Graphics Officer	0	0	0	1	1
Higher Instructional Officer	0	0	2	26	28
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	0	0	5	126	131
Higher Scientific Officer	16	0	66	96	178
Higher Psychologist	1	1	33	11	46
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector Constabulary	0	0	0	1	1
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector Fire Services	0	0	0	1	1
Her Majesty's Inspector Constabulary	0	0	0	5	5
Her Majesty's Inspector Fire Services 1	0	0	0	2	2
Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire Services 2	0	0	0	7	7
Her Majesty's Inspector-Territorial	0	0	0	4	4
Immigration Officer	75	7	747	1,377	2,206
Information Officer	0	0	13	6	19
Insp. Animals SP Insp.	0	0	2	15	17
Inspector (Police)	0	0	0	1	1
Inspector Immigration	0	0	1	69	70
Instructor	0	0	0	1	1

Grade	Part-time Female	Part-time Male	Full-time Female	Full-time Male	Total
Instructional Officer 1	0	0	146	892	1,038
Instructional Officer 2	0	0	0	2	2
Interpreter	0	0	2	5	7
Lecturer Grade 2	0	0	6	18	24
Legal Officer	0	0	3	1	4
Librarian	0	0	5	2	7
Matron Housekeeper 0-150	0	0	1	0	1
Medical Officer	0	5	8	72	85
Medical Officer (P/T)	4	104	0	0	108
Night Patrol	5	2	75	851	933
Nursing Grade A	2	0	1	1	4
Nursing Grade C	2	0	46	4	52
Nursing Grade D	3	0	97	23	123
Nursing Grade E	1	0	93	43	137
Nursing Grade F	13	0	75	19	107
Nursing Grade G	0	0	20	8	28
Nursing Grade H	0	0	5	1	6
Personal Secretary	43	0	451	3	497
Principal Lecturer	0	0	0	3	3
Pharmacist	5	0	8	5	18
Pharmacy Technician	2	0	19	2	23
Physical Education Officer	0	0	0	1	1
Principal Medical Officer	0	0	2	6	8
Principal Officer	0	0	44	1,306	1,350
Principal Officer (Aps.)	0	0	9	24	33
Principal RC Chaplain	0	0	0	1	1
Prison Auxiliary	12	1	303	1,297	1,613
Prison Officer	3	7	1,802	17,026	18,838
Prison Officer (Aps.)	0	0	20	18	38
Prof. and Technology Officer	0	1	11	85	97
Psychologist	0	0	0	1	1
Psychological Assistant	2	0	26	14	42
Psychologist—Graduate Trainee	0	0	19	8	27
R.C. Chaplain	0	2	1	13	16
Registered Catering Manager	0	0	0	5	5
Research Officer (Social Science)	0	0	9	7	16
Scientific Officer	15	0	50	51	116
Senior Instructional Officer	0	0	1	1	2
Senior Telecommunications Technical Officer	0	0	0	2	2
Senior Research Officer	1	0	5	4	10
Senior Assistant Statistician	0	0	2	6	8
Senior Divisional Officer	0	0	0	1	1
Senior Executive Officer	20	3	115	289	427
Senior Information Officer	0	0	3	5	8
Senior Lecturer	0	0	0	3	3
Senior Legal Assistant	0	0	1	1	2
Senior Librarian	0	0	1	1	2
Senior Medical Officer	0	1	5	35	41
Senior Officer	0	0	164	3,350	3,514
Senior Personal Secretary	2	0	40	0	42
Senior Pharmacist	0	0	0	1	1
Senior Prof. and Technical Officer	0	0	1	149	150
Senior Psychologist	2	0	27	19	48
Senior Scientific Officer	9	1	22	165	197
Shop Assistant	1	0	0	0	1
Shop Manager	0	0	0	1	1
Staff Principal Pharmacist	0	0	0	5	5
Storeperson	0	8	21	437	466
Stores Officer Grade A	0	0	0	1	1
Stores Officer Grade B	0	0	0	4	4
Stores Officer Grade C	0	0	0	1	1
Stores Officer Grade D	0	0	1	4	5
Sup Insp Animals Sp Insp	0	0	0	3	3
Support Grade Band 1	14	0	88	47	149
Support Grade Band 2	173	12	262	273	720
Support Manager 1	0	0	0	1	1
Support Manager 2	0	0	3	1	4
Support Manager 3	0	0	11	1	12
Technical Officer Grade 1	0	0	4	14	18
Technical Officer Grade 2	0	0	3	5	8
Telecom Engineering Tech	0	0	0	4	4
Telecom Technical Engineer 2	0	0	0	4	4
Telecoms Technical Officer	0	0	0	1	1
Telephonist	0	0	1	0	1
Temporary Prison Officer	2	0	2	0	4
Trainee Graphics Officer	0	0	1	0	1
Trainee Typist	0	0	1	0	1

Grade	Part-time Female	Part-time Male	Full-time Female	Full-time Male	Total
Typing Manager	0	0	32	0	32
Typist	255	0	492	1	748
	1,914	308	11,194	34,246	47,662

North Wales Police Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will amend Home Office circular 176/1976 with a view to ensuring that the North Wales police authority can consider, in the appointment of a new chief constable, an officer or officers currently on the senior officer list who can speak Welsh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The circular was introduced after careful consideration and discussion with the local authority associations and police staff associations and the policy outlined in it has been adhered to consistently since 1976. The principles underpinning the guidance in the circular are still valid.

Male Offenders

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of male offenders reconvicted within two years commenced *(a)* probation with day centre on 4A requirements, *(b)* probation without requirements and *(c)* community service, in 1987.

Mr. Maclean: Reconviction statistics relate to "standard list" offences as defined in appendix 4 of "Criminal Statistics England and Wales, 1992". It is estimated from a sample of persons commencing supervision under the probation service in 1987 that the proportions of males reconvicted within two years were:

	Per cent.
Community service orders	56
Probation orders with a day centre or 4A requirement	66
Probation orders with no such requirement	54

Source: Reconvictions of those given Probation and Community Service Orders in 1987. Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 18/93.

Marriage Registrars

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which section within his Department liaises with marriage registrars.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office has no direct liaison with registrars. From time to time, staff in the immigration and nationality department are in contact with the registrar general of the Office of Population and Census Surveys.

HIV Infection (Prisons)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for reducing the risk of HIV infection in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: HIV/AIDS policy for prisoners already places strong emphasis on preventive measures, notably educational and counselling services. Following a wide-ranging review of policy and practice the potential for further risk reduction measures is being considered.

It will be appreciated that these are sensitive and difficult issues which need to be considered carefully, the more so because I understand that the first report has been received of an identified case of HIV transmission within prisons in England and Wales. The Public Health Laboratory Service has been asked to investigate the case and, if appropriate, advise on the further measures necessary to reduce the risk of other similar occurrences.

The Wolds Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what means are in place to monitor services at The Wolds prison which Group 4 contract out to third parties;

(2) what steps have been taken to enable a comparative cost analysis between The Wolds and the public sector following the criticisms made by the Prison Chief Inspector last year;

(3) if he will publish the reports made by the Crown Monitor at The Wolds;

(4) how much Group 4 will be paid to run The Wolds prison; and how any originally agreed sum has been subsequently varied;

(5) how many disturbances have occurred at The Wolds prison since it opened;

(6) how many custody officers are currently working at The Wolds prison; and what information he has as to how many custody officers have resigned or been sacked by Group 4 since The Wolds opened.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 28 March 1994:

HM Prison Wolds

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about Wolds prison.

On 28 February 1994 155 people certificated as prisoner custody officers (PCOs) were employed at Wolds prison. In 1992 four PCOs resigned and in 1993 ten did so. Two have been dismissed, both in 1993. In 1994 12 PCOs have resigned. It is believed that some of these have accepted offers of PCO posts elsewhere.

The Controller monitors all the services delivered under the contract, including those which, with Prison Service permission, are subcontracted. There are no plans to publish the Controller's reports. These are internal management reports and it would not be appropriate to release them. Reports by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons and the Board of Visitors have been published.

The Prison Service has made public the cost of operating Wolds on several occasions, before and after publication of the Chief Inspector's report, including responses to a number of Parliamentary Questions and at the time of the publication of the Chief Inspector's report on Wolds in August 1993, the announcement of the plans for private sector involvement in the

Prison Service in September 1993, and the announcement of award of the contract for Doncaster prison in January this year. Comparative cost analysis has also been undertaken and published at the time of the latter announcements. I should point out that the ability to draw meaningful comparisons is limited because the Wolds is the only adult remand prison. In addition, the Prison Service publishes comparative information about the performance of all prisons, directly and privately managed, on a regular basis in its Annual Report. Information on Wolds was included in the Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts for 1992-93 which was published in November 1993 (Cm 2385). The report shows that the net operating costs for Wolds for that financial year were £5·5 million and the cost per prisoner place per week was £333. The net operating cost includes all costs associated with the operation of Wolds, including payments made to Group 4. Figures for the 1993-94 financial year will be included in the next annual report.

Group 4 is currently paid at the rate of £4·8 million a year for the management of Wolds. Amounts paid to Group 4 are included in the total costs of operating Wolds referred to above. The contract with Group 4 allows for variations to be made to the services required under the contract and for annual reviews of the contract price in line with the movements of the appropriate prices and earning indices published by the Department of Trade and the Department of Employment. In the life of the contract the most significant changes have been variations to reflect the transfer of the court escort function from Wolds prison to the new court escort and custody service in Humberside and the East Midlands in April 1992; and the movements in the relevant indices.

Finally, you also requested information on disturbances at the prison. Details of incidents between the opening of the prison and 29 June 1993 have already been provided to Parliament (Official Report: 26 July 1993, col. WA 75-79). Since that time there have been three instances of concerted indiscipline, making a total of 28 incidents in all.

Pentonville Prison

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what improvements have been made in Pentonville prison relating to criticisms made by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons; which points of criticism remain unresolved; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received concerning conditions in Pentonville prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answers 25 March 1994]:* Judge Tumin made 128 recommendations in his report of November 1993. There were five main recommendations; the Prison Service has accepted four, of which one is already being implemented. The further 123 recommendations to the governor have largely been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.

Some 17 recommendations are under active consideration. The remaining eight recommendations require further discussion.

In line with the main recommendations, it is expected there will be full access to sanitation by the end of 1994 and "slopping out" will no longer be necessary. There is an agreed strategic plan for building work; B wing is being refurbished and work should be completed by May 1995. Work to refurbish and extend the kitchen started in October 1993 and modernisation of the health care centre is intended for the financial year 1996-97. A review of staffing in the health care centre is currently being evaluated and a working group has been established to consider other health care issues. Computer software for budget management is to be provided.

The remaining main recommendation was to review the policy of holding immigration detainees in Pentonville. The majority of people detained under immigration powers are already housed in Immigration Service accommodation. There will, however, remain a certain number of immigration detainees who will need to be accommodated in prisons because of their behaviour.

There have been no formal representations from interested outside bodies or pressure groups about conditions generally at Pentonville.

Deaths (Police Cells)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* deaths and *(b)* suicides of Prison Service prisoners occurred in police cells in 1993:

(2) how many deaths there were in police cells in 1993; and how many were suicides.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* The numbers of persons who died in police cells or detention rooms in 1993 are as follows:

	Total deaths	*Suicide verdict reached*	*Inquest awaited*
Provincial forces	12	2	2
Metropolitan police	6	0	0

None of the deaths involved Prison Service prisoners.

NORTHERN IRELAND

National Continence Week

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what projects his Department instigated in respect of National Continence Week.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Health and Social Services funded an advertising campaign on television and in the local press during National Continence Week which was supported with editorial coverage. It produced and distributed more than 50,000 leaflets, posters and stickers to promote the national help and advice line and encourage sufferers to seek treatment. The Department also collaborated with health and social services boards in drawing up a full programme of local events.

Agriculture (Incomes)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will show the average income of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, using 1985 as a constant, in each year since 1980 showing these incomes as a percentage of the average wage.

Mr. Ancram: Estimates of cash farm income in Northern Ireland for 1986-87 onwards are given in the table. Figures for previous years are not available on a consistent basis. Estimates of average farm income are not comparable with the average wage.

Estimates of the earnings of full-time hired agricultural workers in Northern Ireland are also given in the table.

Year	[1]Estimated cash income (£/farm) current terms	Year	Earnings of full-time hired agricultural workers (£/week) Current terms	[2]Real terms 1985 prices	[3]Percentage of average wage
1980-81	n/a	1980	66·54	94·12	66·7
1981-82	n/a	1981	71·60	90·52	62·7
1982-83	n/a	1982	77·01	89·65	61·9
1983-84	n/a	1983	85·86	95·61	64·3
1984-85	n/a	1984	88·60	93·96	61·2
1985-86	n/a	1985	90·44	90·44	58·9
1986-87	12,600	1986	102·40	99·03	63·6
1987-88	14,500	1987	104·47	97·00	59·2
1988-89	15,600	1988	111·75	98·89	58·9
1989-90	19,000	1989	121·70	99·92	58·9
1990-91	16,600	1990	129·09	96·84	57·2
1991-92	16,300	1991	143·52	101·72	58·4
1992-93	19,700	1992	145·07	99·09	53·8
1993-94[4]	21,600	[4]1993	153·15	102·99	54·2

n/a=Not available.
[1] Farm Business Survey account years ending on average in mid-February.
[2] Deflated by the Retail Price Index.
[3] Average earnings of all industries and services in Northern Ireland.
[4] Provisional.
Source: Northern Ireland New Earnings Survey.

Farm Workers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total number of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers in Northern Ireland in each year since 1980.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is given in the table. The figures are from the June agricultural censuses for each year and include estimates for minor holdings not covered by the census:

	Farmers, partners and directors	Working spouses	All other farm-workers
1980	38,471	5,833	19,215
1981	38,579	5,459	19,225
1982	38,406	5,183	19,336
1983	38,526	5,033	19,866
1984	38,285	4,863	19,976
1985	37,761	5,275	20,209
1986	37,552	5,374	19,627
1987	37,129	5,304	19,550[a]
1988	37,417	5,008	19,630
1989	36,709	4,903	20,084
1990	36,302	4,741	19,992
1991	35,991	4,562	19,259
1992	36,224	3,908	18,997
1993	34,408	5,790	19,426

Isle of Man

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met Ministers of the Isle of Man to discuss transport links, promotion of the common Celtic heritage and other matters of mutual interest.

Sir John Wheeler: Ministers from the Isle of Man had a meeting with Lord Arran on 14 October 1992. Those present were the Finance Minister, Minister of Health and Social Security and junior Health Minister all of whom were in Northern Ireland to discuss and seek advice on acute hospital planning.

The meeting also touched on opportunities for co-operation on a range of health service matters.

There has to date been no necessity for Ministers from both Governments to meet to discuss transport links or the promotion of the common Celtic heritage.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is provided in the tables.

Home civil servants at 1 March 1994 (non-industrial and industrial staff)

Grade	(a) Male (i) FT	(a) Male (ii) PT	(b) Female (i) FT	(b) Female (ii) PT
1	1	—	—	—
2	2	—	—	—
3	4	—	—	—
4	2	—	—	—
5	9	—	—	—
6	5	—	—	—
7	20	—	4	1
[1]SEO	4	—	3	—
HEO D	3	—	1	—
HEO	7	—	14	—
AT	—	—	1	—
[2]EO	12	—	14	—
SPS	—	—	7	—
TM	—	—	1	—
AO	9	—	9	1
PS	—	—	15	—
AA	2	—	4	1
Typist	—	—	13	3
CM1	1	—	—	—
CM3	1	—	—	—
Chef 1	2	—	1	1
SMG 3	1	—	—	—
SGB 1	6	—	—	—
SGB 2	4	—	1	2
GHJCC 6	2	—	—	—
GHJCC 2	2	—	2	10

Notes:
(a) Casual staff and prison service staff are not included.
(b) Casual staff and prison service staff are not included.
[1]SEO equivalent grades are included.
[2]EO equivalent grades are included.

Northern Ireland Civil Servants

Non-Industrials as at 24 March 1994	*Male Full time*	*Male Part time*	*Female Full time*	*Female Part time*
General Service Grades				
Head of Service	1	—	—	—
Permanent Secretary	6	—	—	—
Under Secretary	30	1	—	—
Grade 4	2	—	—	—
Assistant Secretary	100	—	12	—
Senior Principal	30	—	—	—
PO	341	—	49	6
PO (London)	—	—	1	—
DP	491	1	153	10
DP (London)	—	—	1	—
SO	574	—	385	34
SO (A)	9	—	2	—
AT	5	—	1	—
EOI	590	3	699	90
Social Sec Officer (1)	271	1	528	91
EOII	492	—	889	91
EOII (London)	—	—	2	—
AO	983	2	2,248	304
AA	808	1	2,181	193
Social Sec Officer 2A	98	—	178	15
Social Sec Officer 2B	528	6	1,159	192
AO (London)	—	—	1	—
AA	1	—	—	1
Accountant Gd 7	2	—	1	—
Accountant DP	4	—	—	—
Accountant SO	19	—	6	—
Accountant EOI	3	—	1	—
Auditor SO	26	—	8	—
Auditor DP	12	—	1	—
Total General Service Grades	5,426	15	8,506	1,027
Other Grades	6,549	25	2,751	360
Total Non-Industrials	11,975	40	11,257	1,387
Industrials as at 1 February 1994				
Craft	642	0	1	0
Non Craft	3,620	2	40	5
Total Industrials	4,262	2	41	5
Total Northern Ireland Civil Servants	16,237	42	11,298	1,392

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what assessment he has made of how many of those pupils currently covered by the assisted places scheme would have entered private education without the support offered by the scheme;

(2) what safeguards are used by his Office to ensure that schools covered by the assisted places scheme meet recognised educational standards;

(3) how much his Office has spent on the operation of the assisted places scheme in each year since 1981; how many pupils have been covered by the scheme in each year since 1981; and if there was any overspend on the budget allocated in each of these years;

(4) if he will list those schools in Northern Ireland which have pupils under the assisted places scheme in the current academic year; how many pupils are supported at each institution; and how much it cost his Office to provide this support;

(5) how much it costs his Department annually to publicise and administer the operation of the assisted places scheme;

(6) what assessment has been made of the assisted places scheme by his Office;

(7) if he will list the 20 independent schools which currently have the highest proportions of their school rolls made up by pupils covered by the assisted places scheme; and if he will give the percentage of pupils covered by the assisted places scheme and the size of the school rolls;

(8) what level of fee is charged by each institution covered by the assisted places scheme in the current academic year.

Mr. Ancram: There is no assisted place scheme or equivalent in Northern Ireland.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Egg and Poultry Industries

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the best estimate of the number of regulations affecting the egg and poultry industries currently in force.

Mr. Jack: My Department has responsibility for 33 regulations that apply specifically to the egg and poultry industries. Twenty-one of these are EC rules for marketing and international trade, six covering eggs and 10 covering poultry and five applying to both. There are a further 26 regulations covering livestock and food commodities which also affect the egg and poultry industries.

The veterinary medicines directorate also has responsibility for regulations made under the Medicines Act 1968 which affect these industries.

Food Farming and Fishing Industries

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many regulations affecting the food farming and fishing industries have been either relaxed or rescinded during the course of this Parliament.

Mr. Jack: Up to the end of February 1994, 11 statutory instruments which imposed burdens on the food, farming or fishing industries had been rescinded and 18 had been relaxed. These figures do not, however, reflect other deregulatory activities undertaken by the Department, for example, the deregulation of the milk and potato markets as provided for in the Agriculture Act 1993, measures proposed under the Deregulation Bill, or deregulation gains won in Brussels.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what major building projects, valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by her Department; and what was the cost of each project to her Department.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry is not funding, and has not funded since 1989, either wholly or in part, any such building projects in these four towns.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many dairy farmers there were in England in each year since 1985.

Mr. Jack: The number of farms classified as dairy farms in England, is given in the table. The figures are taken from the June agricultural census; figures for June 1993 are not yet available.

Number of dairy farms in England[1] (excluding minor holdings)

	Number
1985	28,300
1986	27,583
1987	26,138
1988	24,767
1989	23,849
1990	23,174
1991	22,701
1992	21,712

[1] Up to and including June 1992, farms were classified as "dairy" if the dairy enterprise, including followers, accounted for over one-third and commonly over two-thirds of total standard gross margin and was the largest enterprise group. A new system of farm classification was introduced in 1993 under which farms were classified as dairy if the dairy cows accounted for over two thirds of total SGM. Under this new system the number of dairy farms in 1992 was 19,115.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the *(a)* amount and *(b)* percentage of CAP money being paid to farmers in the United Kingdom (i) in each of the three years prior to June 1992 and (ii) in each year since June 1992; and what was the total amount of CAP expenditure in each of these years.

Mr. Jack: Information on CAP expenditure by member state, consisting of direct aid to farmers, and indirect aid through market support measures, for example, is available for 1989 to 1992 from the annual financial reports of the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, copies of which were deposited in the Library of the House of Commons. For 1993, provisional figures show total CAP payments to the United Kingdom of 2,736 mecu—£2,149 million—7·9 per cent. of corresponding total provisional expenditure of 34,585 mecu—£27,170 million. It is important to note that the first year in which the CAP reform agreement of June 1992 has a full budgetary impact is 1994.

Farming Incomes

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will show the average income of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, using 1985 as a constant, in each year since 1980 showing these incomes as a percentage of the average wage.

Mr. Jack: Estimates of the earnings of hired agricultural full-time workers in England are obtained from the earnings and hours survey and the wages and employment inquiry prior to 1991. These figures are given in the table. Figures for 1980 are not available separately for England.

None of the estimates of average farm income is comparable with the average wage. The table presents estimates of cash income for 1986-87 onwards. Estimates for previous years are not available on a consistent basis.

Earnings of hired full-time workers in England

Year	Estimated annual cash income average all types of farm (incl. hort.)[1] (£'000s per farm)	Current terms[2] (£ per week)	Real terms 1985 prices[2,3] (£ per week)	Percentage of average wage[4]
1981	[5]—	90·72	115·40	79·65
1982	[5]—	99·97	116·59	80·30
1983	[5]—	110·97	124·84	83·62
1984	[5]—	117·02	125·15	81·83
1985	[5]—	128·72	128·72	84·13
1986	14·4	135·66	132·33	83·13
1987	14·4	143·89	134·71	82·93
1988	12·7	151·37	135·47	80·86
1989	30·2	164·29	135·82	80·85
1990	32·2	182·43	137·36	82·47
1991	32·5	201·89	143·73	85·47
1992	37·1	208·16	142·56	83·03
1993	[5]—	214·02	144·81	83·41

[1] Accounting years end, on average, in February of the following year. Cash income represents the cash return to the group with an entrepreneurial interest in the business: farmers and spouses, non-principal partners and directors and their spouses and farm workers for their manual and managerial labour and on all their investment in the business. Source: farm business survey.
[2] Includes payments for basic, overtime and holiday hours, plus value of annual bonus, perquisites and other payments. It also includes the value of employer's contributions to employee's council tax.
[3] Deflated by the all items RPI.
[4] Average earnings of full time manual employees on adult rates—prior to 1983 men aged 21+ and women aged 18+—in all industries and services in Great Britain, whose pay was not affected by absence for the survey period. Source: new earnings survey.
[5] Figures not available.

Food Surpluses

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of surplus of *(a)* arable and *(b)* livestock food production in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) the EU in each year since 1990; and what is her estimate of these figures for each of the next three years.

Mr. Jack: There are many different definitions of surplus. However, if surplus is measured as production in excess of domestic consumption, the following table provides the latest estimates of self-sufficiency for the major agricultural commodities in the United Kingdom and the European Union. Estimates for future years are not available.

Self sufficiency for the major agricultural commodities in the United Kingdom and the European Union, 1990-92

Commodity	United Kingdom 1990	1991	1992	European Union 1990	1991[1]	1992[1]
Cereals	115·8	119·0	123·5	120·3	119·9	128·9
Sugar	53·9	53·0	53·0	128·1	133·7	122·7
Potatoes	89·2	90·7	91·8	99·7	101·3	100·8
Butter	71·5	60·2	54·4	124·5	111·2	[2]—
SMP	101·2	96·4	95·3	149·5	127·7	[2]—
Eggs	92	93·9	94·8	101·3	102·0	[2]—
Beef and Veal	91·0	91·5	85·2	107·9	115·0	112·5
Sheepmeat	89·5	84·9	82·8	81·4	84·9	82·8
Pigmeat	69·0	72·3	74·5	103·5	103·9	102·9
Poultrymeat	93·3	95·9	89·5	104·8	105·6	105·5

[1] Includes Eastern Germany.
[2] Not available.
Source: EUROSTAT.

Public Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will list the organisations and individuals outside her Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment; (2) if she will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Jack: A wide range of organisations are consulted with reference to appointments made by Ministers. Inquiries involve many divisions of the Ministry and to collate the details requested could not be achieved without disproportionate cost as the information is not held centrally.

Farm Subsidies

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers in the United Kingdom were paid over £1 million in subsidies; and what was the total amount of aid given to organic farming in Britain in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: It is not possible to establish, without disproportionate cost, the number of farmers in the United Kingdom paid over £1 million in subsidies.

No specific aid for organic producers has yet been paid but it is intended to begin an aid scheme later this year, made under the EC agri-environment regulation, which will encourage conversion to organic farming. Organic producers are of course able to benefit under all the schemes open to farmers generally. In addition, we have a programme of research and development into questions of concern to organic farmers and growers with funding of £1 million in the current financial year.

Farm Sizes

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms in the United Kingdom are in the size classification *(a)* under eight, *(b)* from eight to 40, *(c)* from 40 to 100, *(d)* from 100 to 200, and *(e)* over 200 farm size units; and what is the total business activity in each category, as measured by standard gross margins.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of holdings in the United Kingdom and total ESU by ESU size group as at June 1993

Size of business ESUs	Number of holdings	[1]ESUs
<8	106,850	245,801
8<40	72,170	1,498,247
40<100	43,940	2,789,421
100<200	15,558	2,107,439
200+	5,687	2,114,808
TOTAL	244,205	8,755,717

Note:
Data in this table exclude minor holdings.
[1] 1 European size unit (ESU) equals 1,200 ECU of Standard Gross Margin (average value 1987-1989).

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list for each civil service grade in her Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Jack: The information set out as at 1 March 1994 relates to non-industrial staff in MAFF, excluding agencies.

Grade	Full-time male	Full-time female	Part-time male	Part-time female	Total
Grade 1	1	0	0	0	1
Grade 2	5	0	0	0	5
Grade 3	21	1	0	0	22
Grade 4	8	0	0	0	8
Grade 5	81	10	0	0	91
Grade 6	88	9	1	3	101
Grade 7	557	124	3	13	697
SEO	364	75	1	17	457
HEO	610	290	6	37	943
EO	779	588	4	57	1,428
AO	661	1,070	9	146	1,886
AA	643	1,114	24	230	2,011
Total	3,818	3,281	48	503	7,650

The figures are given by grade equivalent and include all permanent staff, casuals and staff on temporary release. Part-time staff are counted as 1·0.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Maxwell Pensions Unit

14. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress made by the Maxwell Pensions Unit.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of state for Social Security what progress has been made by the Maxwell Pensions Unit on behalf of Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Hague: The Maxwell Pensions Unit continues to encourage an early resolution to Maxwell pensions disputes. It is providing substantial administrative support to the Maxwell Pensioners Trust initiative to secure an overall settlement to pensions disputes. The Government fully support this initiative, and we are continuing to urge all parties to participate constructively. A speedy settlement which keeps legal action to a minimum must be in everyone's best interests, especially the pensioners'.

Child Support Agency

15. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider changes in the Child Support Agency regulations where the amount of child support received by the parent with care extinguishes her entitlement to income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no specific proposals for further changes. We will, however, continue to keep the scheme under close scrutiny.

22. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to alter the formula for calculating maintenance payments under the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Scott: We have no specific proposals for further changes. We will, however, continue to keep the scheme under close scrutiny.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Doncaster, North can expect to receive replies to his letters to the Child Support Agency chief executive of 17 December, PBU 03452, and 7 January PBU 03670.

Mr. Scott: I understand that Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency, replied to the hon. Member on 24 March.

Private Pensions

16. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board to discuss the regulations of the private pensions sector.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board on 23 March.

Pensioners (Government Expenditure)

17. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much extra money the Government are spending each year on poorer pensioners, since the 1988 reforms.

Mr. Hague: The total extra help above the normal upratings that will be made available to pensioners on income-related benefits since 1988 will be worth around £1·2 billion in 1994-95.

Benefit Tourism

18. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is planning to combat benefit tourism.

23. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he is taking to limit the payment of United Kingdom benefits to foreigners.

Mr. Lilley: The Government have referred a proposal for an habitual residence test in the income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit schemes to the Social Security Advisory Committee and the local authority associations. Once the consultation process has been completed, regulations will be laid before Parliament.

25. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to ensure that people from abroad, who are allowed to enter this country on condition that they will be no burden on public funds, will not be allowed to claim benefit.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if people from abroad who come into this country on the condition that they will be no burden on public funds will be prevented from claiming benefit.

Mr. Hague: Persons from countries outside the European Union are generally admitted to this country on the understanding that they do not become a charge on public funds while they are here. The income support rules exclude them from receiving that benefit except in very closely defined circumstances. Regulations were recently laid before the House to take effect from 1 April which will bring the housing benefit and council tax benefit rules into line with the income support rules.

Benefits (Working Women)

20. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what social security benefits are payable, and what other measures his Department is taking, to help working women.

26. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department has taken to help women at work.

Mr. Hague: We have recently announced new measures which will particularly assist working women. About 150,000 families will benefit from the introduction in October 1994 of a disregard for child care in family credit which will be worth up to £28 a week. Improved maternity payments which take effect in July will benefit around 285,000 working women who give up work around the time of their baby's birth.

In addition, working women may be able to claim income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit depending on their hours of work and incomes, and child benefit and family credit if they have children.

Pregnant Workers Directive

21. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response his Department is making to the pregnant workers directive.

Mr. Hague: I announced the proposed changes to maternity benefits on 8 March in my reply to the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight).

Pensioners

24. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners in the west midlands are in receipt of either income support or housing benefit.

Mr. Hague: In May 1992, 130,000 pensioners were receiving housing benefit alone from local authorities in the standard west midlands region and 270,000 pensioners were receiving income support in the midlands administrative region for social security.

Notes:

1. *Sources:*
   i. Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System (1 per cent. sample).
   ii Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry (1 per cent. sample).
2. Pensioners have been defined as recipients aged 60 or over, or with a partner aged 60 or over.
3. All figures are in benefit units. A benefit unit may be a single person or a couple.
4. The standard west midlands region covers the counties of Shropshire, Warwickshire, Hereford and Worcester, Staffordshire and the metropolitan district of west midlands.
5. The midlands administrative region for social security covers most of the east and west midlands.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioner households were, in 1979 and in the last year for which figures are available, below the 1979 supplementary benefit level.

Mr. Hague: Official estimates are available only for 1979. They were published in the "Low Income Families" series. Following a technical review in 1988 LIF was superseded by the "Households Below Average Income" series, which provides estimates of the pattern of disposable income across the United Kingdom population and analyses change over time. The latest edition of HBAI, published in 1993, shows a reduction in the number of pensioners in the bottom 10 per cent. of the income distribution from 31 per cent. in 1979 to 11 per cent. 1990-91 when measured after housing costs or 36 per cent. and 22 per cent. respectively before housing costs.

Copies of both publications are in the Library.

Family Credit

27. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of families who are worse off as a result of claimants moving from income support to family credit in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not available. However, recent research by the Policy Studies Institute indicated that couples in work with family credit were on average £18 per week better off than when out of work.

VAT on Fuel

Mr. John Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what calculations he has made of *(a)* the amount of VAT at 8 per cent. on fuel will add to the cost of each unit of electricity consumed and *(b)* the number of units on which 50p will pay the additional VAT.

Sir John Cope: I have been asked to reply.

The answers would depend on the particular electricity company, and factors such as whether standard tariff or Economy 7 tariff is used.

The Government have made available a very substantial package of help, which will cost up to £1,250 million a year from April 1996 onwards.

Pensioners and disabled people are likely to find, on average, that this extra help from the Government will broadly cover all changes in the price of fuel, including VAT, over the course of this Parliament.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department gained for income support claimants in maintenance payments from absent parents in the last year before responsibility was transferred to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Scott: The total amount of maintenance obtained through DSS action for income support claimants in 1992-93 was £220 million.

Records of maintenance payments from liable relatives kept during the last year before responsibility for child maintenance was transferred to the Child Support Agency do not distinguish between payments from absent parents, spouses and the sponsors of immigrants.

Partial Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce a partial incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1988 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Hague: There is one such project. In Doncaster there is a joint Benefits Agency/Property Holdings project to assist the rationalisation of the district organisation. This project began in 1993 and is due to be completed during 1995-96 at an anticipated cost of £1·445 million.

Income Support

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details of the most recent estimate of the take-up rate of income support, by caseload and by entitlement; and, by reference to the former measure, how many individuals are not claiming their entitlement.

Mr. Hague: Estimates of the take-up of income related benefits for Great Britain were published in "Income Related Benefit Estimates of Take-up in 1990 and 1991" on 25 March 1994, a copy of which is in the Library.

Maintenance Prosecutions

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details for the last three years of the number of prosecutions and their outcomes for failure to maintain under section 105 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992, formerly section 26 of the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the table.

Criminal Proceedings: Section 26 of Social Security Act 1986

	1989	*1990*	*1991*
Against the liable person	39	11	4
Convictions	18	1	4
Sentenced to a term of imprisonment	2	—	—
Fine or imprisonment	8	1	2
Suspended sentence	—	—	—

Note: Figures are for calendar years ended 31 December.
Source: Department of Social Security Statistics 1993.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details of *(a)* the total number of claims to date received for prescribed disease D12—coal miners' chronic bronchitis and emphysema—*(b)* the total number of awards for prescribed disease D12 to date and *(c)* the total number of refusals for prescribed disease D12 and the grounds for these disallowances.

Mr. Scott: As at 20 March 1994, about 38,700 claims had been received for the prescribed disease D12, chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Of the claims so far decided, about 2,600 have been awarded benefit, and about 18,400 have been disallowed. Most of those disallowed failed to satisfy the medical conditions, about 940 failed to satisfy the occupational prescription requirements and a very small number were already being fully compensated for the diseases in an award for pneumoconiosis—PD D1. All figures are based on a 100 per cent. count and are subject to amendment.

Disability Working Allowance

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures *(a)* will be introduced and *(b)* are under consideration in order to improve the coverage and take-up of disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have announced three changes to improve take-up of disability working allowance. From October 1994 we will introduce a child care costs exemption of £40 per week in cash terms. From April 1995 there will be automatic remission of NHS charges for those with savings of £8,000 or less and we will extend access to disability working allowance for those undertaking training for work. We have commissioned extensive independent research to examine coverage and take up; final evaluation is expected to be completed in 1996.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount allocated for housing benefit reimbursement in 1993.

Mr. Hague: The total amount of housing benefit subsidy paid to local authorities in Great Britain for the 1992-93 financial year was £6,613 million; the estimated expenditure for 1993-94 is £7,861 million.
Source:
The Social Security Departmental Report: March 1994

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of *(a)* housing association tenancies, *(b)* council tenancies and *(c)* private tenancies received housing benefit in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The proportion of housing association, council and other privately rented tenancies in receipt of housing benefit in 1992-93 were 46 per cent., 62 per cent. and 45 per cent. respectively.
Data sources:
1. The housing benefit management information system quarterly caseload counts for 1992-93.
2. Housing and construction statistics dated December 1992, the latest date for which information is available.
Notes:
1. The quarterly caseload information includes estimates for non-responding authorities.
2. The housing and construction statistics are estimates based on the 1991 census and information from local authorities; the number of dwellings includes unoccupied dwellings.

Benefits (Young People)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on social security payments available to those aged under 25 years.

Mr. Hague: A wide range of social security benefits is available to those aged under 25, subject to their individual circumstances. Income support recipients under 25 years old are entitled to a lower rate of benefit than those aged 25 or over. There are a number or reasons for this, such as the lower earnings expectations of younger people and the fact that a large majority of younger people receiving benefits do not live independently. It would be wrong for benefit levels to offer an attractive alternative to work or to training for work or an incentive to leave home.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for each year since 1986, each publicity campaign run by his Department regarding personal pensions together with the cost of each campaign; and if he will place representative copies of press advertisements and other literature in the Library.

Mr. Hague: In January 1988 the Department of Health and Social Security ran a general campaign which included personal pensions at a cost of £1·2 million. In March 1994 the Department of Social Security ran a campaign costing £100,000.

I am placing copies of relevant material in the Library.

Pension Funds

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make a statement on his policy concerning pension funds and their trustees

following the decision on 26 July 1993 of Vinelott J. in McDonald and others *v.* Horn and others—Chancery division Nos. 2931M and 5995M of 1992;

(2) if he will make it his policy to enable pensioners to be funded in advance for disputes with their pension funds, subject only to leave from a High Court master; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will introduce measures relating to pension fund disputes which would help to reduce the uncertainty surrounding pre-emptive orders for costs; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will introduce measures to require the trustees of pension funds to appoint an independent trustee or arbitrator to report on the claims against such funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The Pensions Law Review Committee considered the role of pension scheme trustees and dispute resolution procedures as part of its wide-ranging review of pension matters. We are currently considering the PLRC's recommendations and will announce our conclusions in due course.

Quarry House, Leeds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the making of the television programme "Here and Now" at Quarry house, Leeds, constituted a breach of security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The element of the television programme "Here and Now" which involved internal filming in Quarry house did not constitute a breach of security. Those involved were authorised visitors to the building.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Hague: The information requested for permanent staff employed by the Department, including its agencies, on 28 February 1994 is in the table.

Grade (including equivalent professional and other grades)	*Male*		*Female*	
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
Grade 1	1	0	0	0
Grade 2	4	0	0	0
Grade 3	14	0	3	0
Grade 4	6	0	3	0
Grade 5	92	1	25	4
Grade 6	240	2	66	7
Grade 7	543	3	142	10
Senior Executive Officer	1,090	4	373	9
Higher Executive Officer (D)	11	0	6	0
Higher Executive Officer	3,418	9	2,295	228
Executive Officer	9,700	104	12,503	3,132
Administrative Officer	11,389	195	27,566	7,262
Administrative Assistant	4,585	117	8,058	2,311
Others	43	1	82	34
Totals	31,136	436	51,122	12,997

Notes:

1. The table excludes:—
   (i) staff on loan or secondment and not being paid by the Department.
   (ii) staff on unpaid leave for more than 3 months or on unpaid maternity leave.
   (iii) casual staff.

Invalidity Benefit

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the European Court of Justice to consider the case of women on invalidity benefit whose payments are reduced when they reach 60 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) on 3 March at column *821*.

Performance Targets

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what performance targets he is setting for his Department's executive operations for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The targets for 1994-95 which I have set for DSS executive operations are set out below. The targets support the continued success of the Government's "next steps" agencies and citizens charter initiative.

The targets represent a challenging level of performance and a year-on-year improvement in the service that the customers receive. In particular, I have set a comprehensive list of targets for the new War Pensions Agency to be launched in April.

As well as the performance targets, agencies have been set resource management targets requiring them to deliver their plans within their agreed financial allocation and, where appropriate, to make efficiency savings.

Targets for the Child Support Agency will be announced as soon as they have been finalised.

The business plans of the Benefits Agency, Contributions Agency and the Resettlement Agency have been published today, the War Pensions business plan will be published on 13 April. The Information Technology Service Agency's business plan will be published shortly. The Child Support Agency's business plan will be published after the targets have been finalised. I will arrange for copies of business plans to be placed in the Library.

The targets are:

Benefits Agency

1. Benefit Clearance Times[1]
   Social Fund Crisis Loans—the day the need arises.
   Income Support New Claims—71 per cent. of claims cleared in 5 days and 90 per cent. in 13 days.
   Sickness and Invalidity Benefit Claims—65 per cent. of claims cleared in 10 days and 95 per cent. in 30 days.
   Child Benefit—67 per cent. of claims cleared in 10 days and 95 per cent. in 30 days.
   Family Credit—60 per cent. of claims cleared in 13 days and 95 per cent. in 42 days.
   Disability Living Allowance—68 per cent. of claims in 30 days and 85 per cent. in 53 days.
2. Benefit Accuracy
   Income Support—to pay the correct amount in 92 per cent. of cases.
   Incapacity Benefits[2]—to pay the correct amount in 96·5 per cent. of cases.
   Family Credit—to pay the correct amount in 93 per cent. of cases.
   Disability Living Allowance—to pay the correct amount in 96 per cent. of cases.
3. Customer Satisfaction
   85 per cent. of customers to regard the Agency's service as satisfactory or better.
4. Resource Management
   To keep the net cash limited provision for the discretionary Social Fund budget approved by Parliament.

5. Financial Recovery
Recovery of Social Fund loans—£221 million.
Benefit savings from the detection and prevention of fraud —£654 million.
Recovery of Benefit overpayments—£75 million.
(1) clearance times cover the date of receipt of a written claim in the Agency to the date of decision/payment. All days refer to working days.
(2) Incapacity benefits is an overall term used to cover Sickness Benefit, Invalidity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Maternity Allowance.

Contributions Agency

1. Performance: compliance.
Collection of contribution arrears (excluding Central Payments Section) of £206 million.
Identification of £131 million Class 1 arrears as a result of compliance work.
Increase the number of surveys to 134,000 including 27,000 employer educational visits.
Actively identify 80,000 persons with Class 2 liability of whom 28,000 will have an immediate requirement to pay contributions.
2. Performance: records maintenance
Process 98 per cent. of available employers end of year returns by 31 December 1994.
Correct 91 per cent. of rejects from employers end of year returns by 31 March 1995.
3. Performance: information provision/customer service
Clear 99 per cent. of benefit enquiries handled clerically in 2 working days to 98 per cent. accuracy.
Despatch either a full reply, or an informative response, to 95 per cent. of all customer enquiries within 10 working days of receipt.
Complete action to register acceptable Personal Pension cases and process straight-forward Termination Notices for 94 per cent. of all cases within 24 working days of receipt.
Provide a level of public service considered to be satisfactory by at least 80 per cent. of customers surveyed.

War Pensions Agency

1. Performance targets
Disablement 1st claims (UK)—60 per cent. of claims cleared in 150 days
War Widows claims (UK)—80 per cent. of claims cleared in 70 days
Disablement second and subsequent claims—60 per cent. of claims cleared in 135 days
Claims accuracy (all claims)—95 per cent.
Entitlement appeals—70 per cent. of appeals processed in 275 days
Assessment appeals—70 per cent. of appeals processed in 190 days
2. Customer satisfaction target
85 per cent. of clients to regard the Agency's service as satisfactory or better, as measured by an independent survey.

Resettlement Agency

1. Disengagement Strategy
Cease direct operation of four resettlement units by granting funds to suitable organisations who will provide similar resettlement services in the same premises by 31 March 1995.
Progress replacement proposals for Leeds and Bishopbriggs Resettlement Units to enable completion of the disengagement programme by 31 March 1996.
2. Grant management
Agree with DSS HQ by 31 March 1995 the aims and objectives of the business which will remain after resettlement unit closes in 1996.
By 30 June 1994, review and evaluate the initial programme of monitoring visits to grant-aided organisations. Produce a plan to address the problems found by 30 June 1994. Determine a framework for the following year's monitoring programme by 1 September 1994. Revise the standard conditions of award by 31 December 1994.
3. Customer Care
Survey of residents to confirm that not less than 85 per cent. express satisfaction with standards.
4. Resettlement
By 31 March 1995 place 625 resettlement unit residents into suitable alternative accommodation in the community.

Information Technology Services Agency

1. Manage ITSA's resources within the net running cost regime.
2. Deliver an overall business efficiency improvement of 5 per cent.
3. Deliver 80 per cent. of services to customers to service levels for budget, time and quality as agreed within contracts.
4. Prepare ITSA for outsourcing the bulk of its IT Processing functions to Departmental timescales.
5. Departmental Information Technology Authority (DITA) —provide agreed regulatory services within allocated resources.

HEALTH

Devon Divisional Ambulance Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will call for a report into the circumstances in which a prosecution of Devon divisional ambulance office failed due to the loss of prosecution documents; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: No. This is a matter for the Crown Prosecution Service.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will itemise by regional health authority and family health service authority the expenditure by general practitioner fund-holders of management allowances on *(a)* employment of staff, *(b)* use of loan services, *(c)* training, *(d)* buying in specialist advice, *(e)* purchase of equipment and *(f)* other in each year since 1990-91.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 26 January at column *298*. More detailed information about the breakdown of reimbursement from the management allowance is available from regional health authorities.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the general practitioner fundholding practices in South Yorkshire; and if she will give the total spent out of the allocation for each practice for 1992-93 and the current year to date.

Dr. Mawhinney: There will be 152 fundholding practices in the Yorkshire region from 1 April 1994, covering 39 per cent. of the population. Regional health authorities are responsible for managing the general practitioner fundholding scheme in their areas. For local information about South Yorkshire the hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bryan Askew, chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority.

Private Health Insurance

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued about the provision to senior managers in the national health service of private health insurance.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Fraud

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will draw the attention of agencies with auditor responsibilities inside the national health service to the new guidelines issued by the Auditing Practices Board regarding the duty to report fraud.

Mr. Sackville: No. External auditors of the national health service operate independently in accordance with their own code of practice or auditing standards.

Tattoo Removal

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she is taking to encourage the provision of services enabling disfiguring tattoos to be removed;

(2) to what extent her Department helps or encourages organisations which remove disfiguring tattoos.

Mr. Sackville: The removal of tattoos is available through the national health service where it is considered to be clinically necessary.

Hospitals, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff were employed by the Doncaster royal and Montagu hospital NHS trust in *(a)* April 1992, *(b)* October 1992, *(c)* April 1993 and *(d)* October 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The most recent information available centrally is that 2,330 and 2,520 whole-time equivalent national health service staff were employed in Doncaster royal and Montagu hospital national health service trust on 30 September 1991 and 1992 respectively.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was, in cash terms, the rate of return on capital for the Doncaster royal and Montagu Hospital national health service trust in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what rate is projected for 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: The operating surplus of the trust in 1992-93 was £3·82 million, which represented a return of 7·2 per cent. on average net relevant assets. The forecast rate of return for 1993-94 and the projected rate for 1994-95 are estimated and unaudited information which is only appropriate for the internal performance management purposes for which it is collected.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many long-term hospital ward beds have been closed in the Doncaster area since the coming into effect of the community care provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1991.

Mr. Bowis: Information about available beds on long-term care wards in Doncaster since the community care arrangements were introduced in April 1993 is a matter for the local health authorities or trusts.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Doncaster Royal infirmary and Mexborough Montagu hospital NHS hospital trust achieved its target rate of return on capital in 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Yes.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff were employed by the Doncaster Healthcare NHS trust in *(a)* April 1993 and *(b)* October 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The most recent information available centrally is that 1,740 whole-time equivalent national health service staff were employed by the Doncaster Healthcare national health service trust on 30 September 1992.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was, in cash terms, the rate of return on capital for the Doncaster Healthcare NHS trust in 1993-94; and what rate is projected for 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: The rate of return for 1993-94 will not be available until the trust prepares its accounts later this year. The information for 1994-95 is estimated and unaudited and is appropriate only for the internal management purposes for which it is collected.

Public Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for appointments listed in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library.

A full list of members and their remuneration was placed in the Library in July 1993.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if she will list the organisations and individuals outside her Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Sackville: No central record is maintained of the organisations and individuals consulted. The Department's aim is to appoint people from a broad range of different backgrounds, and many professional and voluntary bodies are consulted when appointments are made to public bodies.

Nominations for the chairmen and ministerial non-executive appointments to regional health authorities and national health service trust boards are sought from the chairmen of the appropriate regional health authorities.

Surplus Property

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she intends to take to ensure that redundant hospitals are disposed of promptly;

(2) what steps she takes to ensure that health authorities and NHS trusts pay due regard to the Department's estate code on property transactions in the NHS in disposing of surplus property.

Mr. Sackville: None. Health authorities and trusts are expected to follow the guidance contained in "Property Transactions in the NHS", and to conduct disposals expeditiously and in accordance with the advice of professional agents. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated current value of the national health service estate in the North Western regional health authority region which is surplus and is to be disposed of.

Mr. Sackville: North Western regional health authority estimate the value of surplus property available for disposal over the next 10 years to be about £56 million.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning expenditure by Warrington Community NHS trust on maintaining empty properties; what guidance has been issued to trusts on these costs; and how they are counted for capital charging purposes.

Mr. Sackville: National health service trusts are responsible for managing their own estates.

The costs of maintaining property is a revenue cost accounted for through the trust's accounting procedures.

Capital charges are payable in respect of property in use based on an assessment of their existing use value. There is guidance on their reassessment of values for capital charges for empty property in the capital charges and trust equivalent manual.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to collect centrally information on hospital closures in England.

Mr. Sackville: No, these are for local decision except where statutory objections are raised. In her statement of 21 October 1993, *Official Report*, columns 398-412, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced changes to streamline and simplify central management. This requires that central reports are kept to a minimum.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, columns *231-32*, if she will list the known hospital closures contested by community health councils in each year between 1979 and 1988.

Mr. Sackville: Records of notification of proposed closures were not routinely collected before 1990. The previous reply provided all the information readily available.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by her Department; and what was the cost of each project to her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The information is as follows:

Building projects since 1989 valued at over £1 million

	Expenditure to completion or estimated out-turn cost £	*Recorded expenditure to date* £
Doncaster		
Doncaster royal infirmary phase 1 (west end development)	2,284,635	—
Doncaster west end development theatre and enabling works[1]	2,925,000	247,586
Barnsley		
None		
Rotherham		
Swallownest long-stay mental illness unit	2,952,022	—
Rotherham district general hospital phase 3B [redacted]tric unit[1]	6,869,000	4,449,518
Rotherham general phase 3A, acute-obstetric ward[1]	3,297,000	1,346,790
Wakefield		
None		

[1] Building projects currently under construction with a total value of over £1 million.

Dental Services

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of teeth of five-year-old children suffering from dental decay for *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* the most recent date for which information is available, analysed by district for England, in descending order of good health.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has commissioned the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to conduct surveys of the dental health of children at 10-year intervals. The most recent survey was carried out in 1993 and the report will be published later this year. Copies of previous survey reports and preliminary results of the 1993 survey are available in the Library.

Information on the dental health of five-year-old children is available from surveys by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry. Copies of the latest published report, which relates to a survey conducted in 1989-90, are available in the Library.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received in respect of dentists encouraging patients to join insurance schemes to cover dental care.

Dr. Mawhinney: We receive correspondence from hon. Members, dentists and members of the public on many aspects of dentistry including provision of private treatment.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have left the national health service in relation to dental care, in each family health service authority covering Coventry.

Dr. Mawhinney: Some 1,676 patients were deregistered in the Coventry family health services authority area between 3 July 1992 and 18 March 1994. The number who subsequently reregistered with another general dental practitioner is not known. On 3 July 1992 the number of patients registered with a national health service dentist in Coventry was 181,371. At 31 January 1994 the total was 181,463, an increase of 92.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she is monitoring the numbers of dentists who have left the national health service *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Coventry.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department collects information from all family health services authorities of the number of dentists who have given written notice to remove their names from the FHSA dental lists, and of the number of dentists who deregister patients. The Dental Practice Board supplies periodic reports on the numbers of dentists in contract to the FHSAs.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to review the level of dental charges *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Coventry area.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government keep the level of national health service dental charges under regular review. Patient charges are determined nationally, and are not subject to local variation.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has issued for dentists regarding the encouragement of patients to take out private insurance schemes.

Dr. Mawhinney: The regulations governing general dental services stipulate that a dentist shall not, with a view to obtaining the agreement of a patient to undergo care and treatment privately, advise a patient that the care and treatment which is necessary to secure and maintain his oral health is not available from that dentist under general dental services. Nor may a dentist seek to mislead a patient about the quality of care and treatment available under general dental services.

Complaints

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many written complaints relating to hospital and community services were made in each year since 1982.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 25 March at column *462*. Information for the year 1992-93 is not yet available.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the report of the review of the national health service complaints procedure.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) and for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 24 March at column *411*.

Family Health Services (Drugs Bill)

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the drugs bill for the family health services has been accounted for by prescription charges in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. The family health services drugs bill does not include the income received from prescription charges.

PM10 Emissions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by her Department of the number of excess deaths associated with emissions of PM10; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 17 March at column *828*.

Autism

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the efforts of the responsible bodies to make an early diagnosis and assessment of children with autism; what is the current assessment of the prevalence of autism in children; and how many autistic children have been so diagnosed.

Mr. Bowis: It is primarily a matter for the statutory authorities to monitor the arrangements for assessment in their area. It is estimated that the prevalence rate of autism is between four and five per 10,000 population.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which NHS trusts coming into operation on 1 April will have a turnover *(a)* in excess of £50 million, *(b)* between £20 to £50 million and *(c)* less than £20 million.

Mr. Sackville: The financial plans of the fourth wave of national health service trusts are currently being discussed with purchasing health authorities and the outposts of the National Health Service Management Executive and will be finalised during April. We expect that the information will be available shortly after that.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with whom Touche Ross had a contract to advise on the financial performance of fourth-wave trust hospitals in the west midlands; and how much the contract was worth.

Mr. Sackville: The contract to advise on the financial viability of fourth-wave trust applicants was between Touche Ross and the National Health Service Management Executive of the Department of Health. It is inappropriate to disclose the value of the contract on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Waiting Times

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of patients are seen and assessed for treatment within five minutes of arriving in accident and emergency departments;

(2) what percentage of patients are seen within 30 minutes of their out-patient appointment time.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the quarter ending 31 December 1993, 83 per cent.—estimated based on samples—of patients attending accident and emergency departments were assessed immediately and 80 per cent.—estimated based on samples—of patients were seen within 30 minutes of their specified appointment time in out-patient clinics.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each civil service grade in her Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Sackville: The information shows the position on 23 March 1994:

Grade including grade equivalents)	*Male*	*Female*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
UG1	3	0	3	0
UG2	8	0	8	0
UG3	20	5	24	1
UG4	17	11	28	0
UG5	126	78	181	23
UG6	92	44	132	4
UG7	425	150	527	48
SEO	285	117	391	11
HEO	398	326	683	41
EO	408	564	973	35
AO	347	986	1,273	60
AA	227	302	478	51
Others[1]	96	70	153	13
Totals	2,452	2,653	4,818	287

[1]There are a number of grades, mainly in the youth treatment service, which do not easily equate to unified grades.

Casual staff have been excluded, as have staff on loan to other Government Departments, on maternity leave of more than three months, and on unpaid career breaks/study leave.

NHS Estates

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the current staffing levels of National Health Service Estates, setting out the number of staff *(a)* on permanent contracts and *(b)* on temporary contracts.

Mr. Sackville: The staffing level of the National Health Service Estates agency is as follows:

73 Staff on permanent contract
24 Staff employed on three-year fixed term contracts.
2 Staff employed on five-year fixed term contracts.
2 Staff employed on temporary contracts of less than one year.
27 Staff employed via Manpower Agency contract.
1 Temporary member of staff employed via a specialist financial employment agency.

NHSME Pamphlets

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pamphlets the National Health Service Management Executive has published since October 1993; and if she will list the title, the recipients and the cost.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since October 1993 the National Health Service Management Executive has published 15 pamphlets, leaflets and brochures. The table gives the description, cost and to whom they were sent.

Distribution to NHS Managers

Title	*Cost £*
Ethnic Minorities Brochure	11,406
Private Finance Brochure	9,277
Health of the Nation One Year On	6,955
Targeting Practice for Nurses (including reprint)	[1]23,911
Management Executive News (7 monthly editions)	46,912
New World New Opportunities (reprint)	3,450
Patients Charter News (3 editions)	34,664
Value for Money Update	4,641
NHSME Annual Report	52,024
Primary Care Booklets	18,820
Patient Perception Booklets (9 Booklets on various subjects)	377,000
Health Service Indicators Publicity—Prices leaflet	1,010
Establishing Districts of Residence	1,495
This is the Information Management Group	2,660
Risk Management Manual	25,614

[1] estimate

Home Help

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest information on how much each local authority charges for home helps to people not on income-related benefits.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 17 February at columns *931-32.*

Medical Negligence

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 March, *Official Report,* column *538,* how many of the cases of medical negligence, and what costs, were associated with self-governing trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: None for 1990-91, as there were no national health service trusts then. For 1991-92, the returns were incomplete, as previously stated, and it would be invidious to extract from the information already provided, the figures for NHS trusts that supplied them, without comparable details for others or for individual directly managed units.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 March, *Official Report,* column *538,* when she expects the information on medical negligence claims for 1992-93 to be available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information for 1992-93 that has been supplied by national health service bodies by 31 March 1994 will be collated and will be available shortly after that.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer of 8 March, *Official Report,* column *168,* how many of the non-elective hospital admissions were from general practitioners fundholding practices in each region in each year;

(2) pursuant to her answer of 8 March, *Official Report,* column *168,* how many of the non-elective hospital admissions were *(a)* readmissions and *(b)* self-referrals in each year in each region.

Mr. Sackville: The information available centrally on in-patient activity does not separately identify non-elective readmission rates, the level of self-referrals or whether individual patients are registered with fundholding or non-fundholding general practitioners.

Highfield Primary School, Leeds

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what inquiry she is making into the role of Leeds health authority in providing sex and health education advice to Highfield primary school, Leeds.

Mr. Sackville: Leeds community and mental health services national health service trust employs the school nurse who has provided a sexual health education class at Highfield primary school. The school, the local education authority and the trust are co-operating in determining the facts about the class and will take any necessary action once the facts of the matter have been established.

Hospital Statistics

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give by region *(a)* the number of new accident and emergency cases during 1992-93 and *(b)* the total out-patient attendances during 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in "Outpatients and ward attenders for England: Financial Year 1992-93", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Radiation

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to examine ways of reducing children's artificial exposure to radiation, including X-rays.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* Practitioners carrying out medical exposures of radiation are required by regulation 4(3) of the Ionising Radiation (Protection of Persons Undergoing Medical Examination or Treatment) Regulations 1988 to keep doses of ionising radiation to the patient as low as reasonably practicable in order to achieve the required diagnostic or therapeutic purpose. A guide to good radiation practice was published in 1988 by the United Kingdom Health Departments, the National Radiological Protection Board and the Health and Safety Executive. These are the "Guidance Notes for the Protection of Persons against Ionising Radiations Arising from Medical and Dental Use", copies of which are available in the Library.

All practitioners wishing to administer radioactive medicinal products must hold a certificate issued under the Medicines (Administration of Radioactive Substances) Regulations) 1978. The Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee advises the Department and the United Kingdom Health Ministers on matters connected with the issue of certificates and has also issued guidance notes. Investigations concerning children are the subject of special advice within those guidance notes. The ARSAC keeps its advice under constant review.

Following the issue of health circular (89)18, copies of which are available in the Library, all health authorities were required to review the management of all departments making use of ionising radiation to ensure that they conformed to the statutory requirements and the guidance on good practice. They were also required to set up a system to review and periodically update their procedures in the light of changing guidance.

The Department of Health medical devices directorate issued safety guidelines for magnetic resonance diagnostic equipment in clinical use in 1993. Copies of the guidelines will be placed in the Library.

A further circular to the national health service is due to be issued later this year consolidating and updating advice on the statutory and management responsibilities in relation to the medical use of ionising radiations.

The Department is currently funding a research project designed to test the feasibility of parents keeping a radiation dose log book for their child's diagnostic and therapeutic radiation doses from birth until the age of five years.

The reduction in medical radiation doses for the whole of the population including children is under constant review. Officials are in contact with all the professional bodies involved in the medical use of ionising radiation and have regular discussions with them. Meetings and discussions are also held regularly with the royal colleges connected with radiology, the NRPB and the Health and Safety Executive.

The Royal College of Radiologists has produced a booklet entitled "Making the best use of a Department of Clinical Radiology—guidelines for doctors". This gives specific advice for paediatric radiology and copies will be placed in the Library.

NHS Administration

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff in the NHS Management Executive, the NHS Supplies Authority, the Prescription Pricing Authority, the medical advisers support group and the Medicines Research Centre in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply, 28 February 1994, c. 603]:* I regret that some of the figures in my previous reply were provided incorrectly as millions rather than thousands.

They should read:

"The total manpower costs for the medical advisers support group—properly named the Medical Advisers Support Centre —were £71,108 in 1990-91—part year in which the MASC was set up—£157,958 and £175,936 in 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively. The total manpower costs for the Medicines Research Centre—MeReC—were £83,000 in 1990-91—part year in whch the MeReC was set up—£114,247 and £111,828 in 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively."

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

The Attorney-General: The information is set out in the table below and is correct as at 1 March 1994.

Members of the legal secretariat to the Law Officers will be reflected, as appropriate, in the records of the Government Departments from which they are seconded.

	Male		*Female*	
Grade	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
Treasury Solicitor's Department				
1	1	—	—	—
2	1	—	1	—
3	8	—	—	—
4	2	—	1	—

Grade	Male Full-time	Male Part-time	Female Full-time	Female Part-time
5	31	—	9	2
6	50	1	11	2
7[1]	59	1	39	7
SEO[1]	13	—	2	—
HEO[1]	23	—	20	1
EO[1]	27	—	52	1
AO[1]	32	—	68	9
AA[1]	15	—	22	—
Crown Prosecution Service				
1	—	—	1	—
2	—	—	—	—
3	5	—	—	—
4	15	—	—	—
5	46	—	1	—
6	167	—	25	1
7[12]	1,130	13	790	182
SEO[1]	76	—	28	3
HEO[1]	132	—	149	15
EO[1]	363	4	833	96
AO[1]	353	5	978	99
AA[1]	165	2	677	113
Serious Fraud Office				
1	—	—	—	—
2	1	—	—	—
3	1	—	—	—
4	1	—	—	—
5	8	—	2	—
6	9	—	5	1
7[1]	10	—	3	—
SEO[1]	11	—	2	—
HEO[1]	12	—	5	—
EO[1]	12	—	12	—
AO[1]	13	—	21	—
AA[1]	4	—	9	1

[1] Figure includes equivalent Civil Service grades.
[2] Figure includes Senior Crown Prosecutor, Principal Crown Prosecutor and Crown Prosecutor.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Rail Information

38. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport about the degree of openness in the information being made available about the channel tunnel rail link and other rail developments.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have had no discussion with my right hon. Friend on this particular subject.

Tenders

39. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps his Department is taking to ensure that when tenders for public work are invited that they are in realistic commercial terms and without unnecessary contingent liabilities.

Mr. David Davis: The Government's guide to market testing, produced by my Department and published in August 1993, gives advice on how to invite tenders for central Government work. This is supplemented and updated as the need arises.

Civil Service

40. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in the size of the home civil service since 1987; and what change is expected in the next seven years.

Mr. David Davis: Since 1987, the size of the civil service has been reduced by 51,480 to 546,340 the lowest number in the past 50 years.

Plans for the next seven years are not available, but plans for the next three years are published in the "Statistical Supplement to the Financial Statement and Budget Report", Cm 2519, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report,* columns *84-85,* whether the Government will introduce a regular annual report on the performance of public services against charter promises; and what alternative means he proposes to enable citizens to ascertain whether service standards are being improved year on year.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is essential that public services themselves report regularly and publicly on their performance against service standards so that people can see that standards are being raised. As I said in my response to the hon. Member for York on 21 March, *Official Report,* columns *84-85,* reports on the initiative as a whole will be made to Parliament as and when appropriate.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report,* columns *84-85,* who will decide when it is appropriate for a report on the citizens charter to be made to Parliament; and if he will take steps to involve citizens of the United Kingdom about the timing of such reports.

Mr. Waldegrave: After consultation with colleagues I will decide when it is appropriate for a report on the citizens charter to be made to Parliament. There are no immediate plans to involve citizens of the United Kingdom about the timing of such reports.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. David Davis: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 25 March 1994, *Official Report,* column *440.*

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985, including this year to date, on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. David Davis: Information available shows that neither Ministers nor officials of the Cabinet Office,

including the Office of Public Service and Science and its agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS. An official of the Central Office of Information used MAS on one occasion in June 1989 at a cost of £819.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. David Davis: In the departments and agencies for which I am responsible, and in other areas which fall to the Cabinet Office vote, the figures for non-industrial civil servants are:

Grade Band	*Male*		*Female*	
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
Grade 1 (including 1A)	3	0	0	0
Grade 2	17	0	2	0
Grade 3	21	0	4	0
Grade 4	4	0	0	0
Grade 5	53	1	15	4
Grade 6	74	3	17	2
Grade 7	277	3	69	8
SEO	349	3	121	12
HEO (D) and AT	14	0	3	0
HEO	591	1	264	37
EO	557	2	367	54
AO	410	3	796	139
AA	167	5	298	89
Total	2,537	21	1,956	345

Figures at 23 March 1994.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants were in post in each Government Department *(a)* in 1990 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available; and how many jobs, from which Ministry, have been contracted out or turned over to external agencies.

Mr. Waldegrave: Details of the number of civil servants employed by each Government Department are available in the Library of the House. The figures for 1 October 1990 were laid on 15 January 1991, *Official Report,* column *462,* and for 1 October 1993 on 17 December 1993, *Official Report,* columns *972-73.* Between 1 April 1992 and 31 December 1993, 12,291 civil service posts were contracted out as part of the competing for quality programme. Information about numbers of posts contracted out prior to 1 April 1992 and about contracting out which may have resulted from other initiatives is not held centrally.

Some 336,585 civil servants are currently employed in agencies created as part of the next steps initiative.

Charters

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many charters are in the course of preparation and in what areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: The citizens charter second report, published on 16 March, sets out the good progress that has already been made on the citizens charter initiative, and show the plans for the future. Some 38 charters have now been produced. When it becomes an agency on 1 April, the Highways Agency will launch its own charter. Further and higher education charters for Northern Ireland will be published in the spring. Revised versions of the job seekers charter and the parents charter are also planned for the spring.

WALES

Health Promotion Authority for Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales concerning the removal of Mr. David Griffiths from the audit committee of the authority.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* None. This is a matter for the chairman and board of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales concerning the letter he received from Mr. David Griffiths, a board member of the authority;

(2) what representations he has received from Mr. David Griffiths, a member of the board of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, concerning the financial management and audit procedures of the authority;

(3) when he proposes to respond to the letter from Mr. David Griffiths, a board member of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, in relation to the financial management and audit procedure at the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* Mr. Griffiths wrote to me on 29 January 1994, setting out his concerns. He wrote a further letter on 18 March asking when he would receive a reply. The Chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales provided information to assist my reply. A response was sent to Mr. Griffiths on 23 March.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those representations that have been made to him favouring the inclusion of Llanelly in the proposed new unitary authority of Powys.

Mr. Redwood: Since publication of the Local Government (Wales) Bill, I have received representations about the inclusion of Llanelly in the proposed Powys unitary authority from:

Powys county council
Blaenau Gwent borough council
Llanelly community council
Roger Evans MP

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those representations that have been made to him favouring the inclusion of Pentyrch in the proposed new unitary authority of Cardiff.

Mr. Redwood: Since publication of the White Paper "Local Government in Wales: A Charter for the Future", I have received one representation from Taff Ely borough council expressing opposition to the inclusion of Pentyrch

in the proposed Cardiff unitary authority. Cardiff city council has written to express its support for the proposals in the White Paper, as have many members of the public.

Public Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Mr. Redwood: The general procedure for the making of public appointments is contained in the Cabinet Office publication "Guide to Public Appointments Procedures" which is available in the Library of the House. Applicants to the Welsh Office register of candidates for public appointment complete a nomination form giving biographical information including a self-assessment of their background and skills. References are taken up on candidates considered for an appointment and a conflict of interest declaration is required from everyone who is offered an appointment. I take all relevant information into account in seeking to appoint the best candidate for the post.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Redwood: I consult such individuals and organisations as may be appropriate.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Redwood: The information at 1 March 1994 is shown in "Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales" which is available in the Library of the House.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish for each district council and for Wales as a whole at constant prices *(a)* the number of council houses, *(b)* the amount of guideline housing revenue account subsidy for 1994-95 and *(c)* the amount shown in *(b)* divided by the number of council houses;

(2) if he will publish for each district council and for Wales as a whole at constant prices *(a)* housing revenue account subsidy for 1993-94, *(b)* guideline housing revenue account subsidy for 1994-95 and *(c)* the percentage change of *(b)* compared with *(a)*.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of council houses in each district and in Wales as a whole was given to the hon. Member in my reply of 9 March 1994, *Official Report*, columns *289-290*.

Information on the amount of housing revenue account subsidy claimed by each district council and for Wales as a whole in 1993-94 was given to the hon. Member in my reply on 14 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *634*.

An overall subsidy guideline for each district council is not provided. Local authorities calculate their housing revenue account subsidy entitlement for each year in accordance with formulae within the determinations which are issued annually. Copies of the determinations for 1994-95 have been placed in the Library of the House and authorities' subsidy claims for that year have not yet been received.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what targets he has set the Development Board for Rural Wales for the sale of its industrial estates on the open market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The development board has a commercial and industrial property disposal target of 150,000 sp ft in 1993-94. This is expected to raise receipts totalling some £2·7 million.

Seismic Activity, Newtown

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will initiate an urgent study into seismic activity in the Newtown area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Earthquakes in the Newtown area are adequately recorded by the British Geological Survey United Kingdom seismograph network which is operated by its global seismology research group from Edinburgh. BGS has already initiated a macroseismic survey of the recent earthquake in this area. It routinely undertakes such surveys after all significant earthquakes in the United Kingdom and did so following the nearby Bishops Castle earthquake in April 1990.

A more extensive study of the mid-Wales area was undertaken in 1984, by the British earthquake research group, following the event in April of that year. More generally, a study into "Earthquake Hazard and Risk in the UK" has been commissioned by the Department of the Environment from Ove Arup and Partners and the report was published in 1993 by HMSO. A copy of the report is in the Library of the House. A conclusion of the report is that, since there is only a small possibility of an earthquake —in the United Kingdom—causing significant damage, the risk to society is sufficiently low not to cause undue concern.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been taken to ensure the adequacy of emergency arrangements in the event of earthquakes in the Newtown area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: This is primarily a matter for Powys county council.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Redwood: The total number of persons employed by my Department are:

Grade	*Full-time*		*Part-time*		*Total*
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	
G1 and Equivalents	1	—	—	—	1
G2 and Equivalents	2	—	—	—	2
G3 and Equivalents	11	1	—	—	12
G4 and Equivalents	5	2	—	—	7
G5 and Equivalents	43	7	—	1	51
G6 and Equivalents	27	2	—	1	30
G7 and Equivalents	131	36	1	15	183
SEO and Equivalents	114	23	2	4	143
HEO and Equivalents	187	86	—	13	286
Administration Fast Stream	11	9	—	1	21
EO and Equivalents	213	219	—	60	492
AO and Equivalents	164	346	1	78	589
AA and Equivalents	174	228	—	50	452
Industrials	111	14	5	15	145

Tuberculosis

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information is held by his Department on the numbers of people and children infected by tuberculosis in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of notifications of tuberculosis in Wales by age is published annually in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Communicable disease statistics". The latest edition includes data for 1991 and is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Wales leave school without having been vaccinated against tuberculosis.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. However in the financial year 1992-93 there were 15,878 tuberculosis vaccinations given to children aged 15 and under. This figures does not include children in this age group who were vaccinated in a previous year.

Dental Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general dental practitioners there are within each family health services authority in Wales; and how many in each area are accepting new patients who are entitled to receive free NHS dental treatment.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not available centrally in the format required. Family health services authorities have notified the Welsh Office that the position as at 24 March 1994 was as follows:

	(a) Number of general dental practitioners	*(b) Number accepting all new NHS patients*
Clwyd	106	[1]40
Dyfed	107	70
Gwent	154	22
Gwynedd	65	16
Mid Glamorgan	134	69
Powys	42	25
South Glamorgan	146	35
West Glamorgan	126	126

Notes:

1. These figures are not statistically validated.
2. Columns *(a)* and *(b)* may include dentists registered with more than one family health services authority.
3. [1] Denotes number of practices—number of GDPs not available.
4. Column (b) indicates number of dentists accepting all new patients. It does not include those dentists accepting only children and/or adults exempt from NHS charges.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many salaried dentists are employed by each family health services authority in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are two salaried dentists employed by Gwynedd family health services authority and one by Dyfed family health services authority. A further salaried dentist will be employed by Powys family health services authority from 19 April 1994.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many community dentists are employed by each health authority and each hospital trust in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Provisional information, relating to staff in post in the community dental service, is given in the table.

	Staff in post as at 30 September 1993[1]
Health Authorities	
Gwynedd	8·3
Mid Glamorgan	14·3
Powys	1·0
South Glamorgan	15·5
West Glamorgan	11·8

	Staff in post as at 30 September 1993[1]
NHS Trusts	
Carmarthen and District	1·5
Ceredigion and Mid Wales	3·7
Clwydian Community Care	10·4
Gwent Community	14·1
Llanelli Dinefwr	1·8
Pembrokeshire	5·6
Powys Health Care	4·0

[1] Whole-time equivalents. Excluding locum staff.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the transfer of funding from South Glamorgan health authority to other Welsh health authorities; what consultations he has had in relation to the basis of the formula for allocating the capitation funding; what consultations he has had with the chairman of South Glamorgan health authority concerning the abatement of purchasing power; and if he will list the numbers of patients, specialties, operations and treatments affected by the alteration in the formula.

Mr. Redwood: Health authorities were consulted in January 1991 on options for a weighted capitation formula to be used to determine each authority's share of available revenue resources. After considering the responses from authorities, my predecessor informed the House on 21 March 1991, *Official Report*, columns *178-80*, of his decision as to the most appropriate basis for this formula.

South Glamorgan HA's present share of revenue resources exceeds its formula share. It is intended that all authorities will attain their formula shares by 1998-99, with the shares of presently underfunded authorities increasing and those of overfunded authorities, including South Glamorgan, decreasing.

Although South Glamorgan HA's percentage share will decline, its cash allocation will be dependent upon the growth resources available and on inflation. The 10-year resource assumptions provided to health authorities for planning purposes show how their formula shares and cash allocations would move on the basis of annual real terms growth of 0·5 per cent.

This growth assumption was exceeded in the cash allocations for health authorities for 1994-95, which I announced on 16 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *698*, South Glamorgan's allocation provides a cash increase of 2·05 per cent., over its allocation for 1993-94. Provided that the authority secures the minimum efficiency savings specified for all health authorities for 1994-95 and uses these savings to fund the cost of pay awards in 1994-95, there should be no abatement of its purchasing power. It will, in fact, have received a real terms cash growth of over 1 per cent. For these reasons, I have no plans to meet the chairman of the health authority.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 29 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates were in post in 1993; and how many resigned for reasons other than age.

Mr. John Taylor: At 31 December 1993 there were 30,054 magistrates in post in England and Wales; during 1993, 1,043 magistrates resigned for reasons other than age.

Divorce Law Reform

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* people and *(b)* organisations have responded to the Green Paper on divorce law reform "Looking to the Future"; and what were their names.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As at 22 March, 533 responses had been received from private individuals and 103 from organisations, institutions or professional bodies.

Of these, 52 individuals and 78 others sent a written response only; 434 individuals and 15 others sent a completed questionnaire only; and 47 individuals and 10 others sent both a written response and a completed questionnaire.

Responses are still being received. Once they have all been received, I will write to the hon. Member listing those who have responded. A copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of both Houses.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many staff have been in the employment of his Department for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of staff who have been in the employment of the Lord Chancellor's Department for each of the last 10 years is set out in the table.

Total numbers of staff in the Lord Chancellor's Department

Year	*Total Number of Staff*
1985-86	10,190
1986-87	10,206
1987-88	10,489
1988-89	10,880
1989-90	10,753
1990-91	10,954
1991-92	11,460
1992-93	11,774
[2]1993-94	[1]11,809

[1] Forecast.
[2] Estimated outturn.
These figures include part time staff who have been shown as whole numbers.

Redundancies

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to *(a)* make redundant and *(b)* seek voluntary redundancies from the staff of his Department in the next financial year; and how many and what grade of (i) civil servants and (ii) qualified lawyers he estimates will be affected.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department has no plans to make members of staff redundant or to seek voluntary redundancies from the staff during the next financial year.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *73*, what percentage of the total number of staff employed, and how many qualified lawyers, are affected by the requests for voluntary redundancies by the Legal Aid Board.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Voluntary redundancy has been sought from approximately 9 per cent. of the staff employed by the Legal Aid Board. The board is seeking the voluntary redundancy of 11 qualified lawyers.

Matrimonial Cases

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answers of 9 February, *Official Report*, columns *249-50*, about matrimonial cases, what plans he has to undertake an investigation into the arrangement between his Department and the Home Office immigration and nationality department; when it will be completed; and if he will place a copy of the report of the investigation in the Library.

Mr. John M. Taylor: An internal investigation conducted in February revealed that the facts of the matter were straightforward. The arrangement was made by officials of my Department, as described in my earlier answer, and was terminated as soon as it came to my attention. Measures have been put in place to ensure that no similar action can be taken without proper consideration. I do not propose to publish a report.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Government Information

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what changes have been made to the code of practice on Government information proposed in draft in the White Paper, "Open Government", Cm. 2290; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: In my statement of 15 July 1993, *Official Report*, columns 1115-17, I described the Government's plans for increasing openness in government. We received more than 100 consultation responses to the White Paper, many of which gave the proposals a broad welcome. I am placing a summary of the consultation responses and copies of the responses themselves in the Library of the House.

The White Paper proposed a new code of practice on Government information. This will come into effect on

Monday 4 April. The draft code has been revised and improved since last summer. Copies of the new code have been placed in the Library of the House. Further copies of the code and of a leaflet describing the new system may be obtained by telephoning 0345 223242.

Ministers will be responsible for the performance of their Departments under the code of practice. Complaints that information has not been provided should be addressed in the first instance to the Department concerned. Where applicants are still dissatisfied, they can complain—through a Member of Parliament—to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

The code of practice means that, in future, anyone seeking information from Government Departments and public bodies can be assured that their request will be received positively. When there is a case for confidentiality it must be based on specific tests in part II of the code. I am confident that the advantages of the code, which puts into practice key principles of the citizens charter, will rapidly become apparent.

PRIME MINISTER

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has had from the Government of Malta about luggage alleged to have left Luqa airport for the Rhein-Main airport in December 1988, destined to destroy Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie.

The Prime Minister: As my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate made clear in issuing warrants for the arrest of the two Libyans suspected of the Lockerbie bombing, the investigation concluded that the bomb which caused Pan Am 103 to explode over Lockerbie on 21 December 1988 was placed on board a flight from Luqa airport to Frankfurt, where it was transferred to flight PA 103. I have received no representations from the Maltese Government on this matter.

Engagement

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 29 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Bosnia

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Bosnia.

The Prime Minister: I visited central Bosnia and Sarajevo on 18 March. In central Bosnia I met British and other United Nations soldiers and civilian aid experts. I was impressed, as always, by their courage and professional dedication. UNPROFOR's achievements on the ground have helped to transform the situation in Bosnia and the prospects for a settlement.

In Sarajevo I met Bosnian Vice-President Ganic and General Rose. I announced a further £12 million of United Kingdom aid for Bosnia: £5 million to help rebuild Sarajevo, and £7 million to support the work of UN agencies throughout Bosnia. With the £2 million announced by my right hon. and noble Friend, Baroness Chalker, to support the Tuzla airlift, this brings total United Kingdom humanitarian aid to former Yugoslavia to £171·5 million.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Political Refugees

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many political refugees are settled in the United Kingdom at the present time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information on those given leave to remain in the United Kingdom as a recognised refugee is that in the period 1979 to end 1993 around 43,200 persons, including associated dependants, were given such leave. These comprise some 19,700 asylum applicants who were recognised as refugees and granted asylum in the United Kingdom, and 23,500 south-east Asian refugees accepted for settlement, mainly on arrival. Information on the number of these persons who have since died, left the country, obtained British citizenship or otherwise ceased to hold refugee status here, and information prior to 1979, is not available.

Persons granted asylum here apply for permanent settlement after four years. Information on persons accepted for settlement in the years 1979-92 on this basis, along with south-east Asian refugees, is published in table 8 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 22/90 "Refugee Statistics United Kingdom 1989" and Table 10.1 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 19/93 "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1992". Copies of both these publications are in the Library. Corresponding information for 1993 will be published in the summer.

Charity Commission

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the charities involved in the complaints of improper political activity investigated by the Charity Commission since 1990; and what are the dates of the investigation, the nature of the complaint and the conclusion in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 1990 the Charity Commission has investigated 76 complaints concerning possible political or campaigning activity of which 24 have been upheld.

Formal reports have been published on two of these investigations: (i) "War on Want: Report of an Inquiry to the Charity Commissioners 15 February 1991" (ISBN 0-117-016128); and (ii) "Oxfam: Report of an Inquiry submitted to the Charity Commissioners 8 April 1991" (ISBN 0-117-016217). Both are available from HMSO. Full details on all 76 cases would be available only at disproportionate cost, but I will write to the hon. Member shortly with a summary based on those cases most recently concluded.

Metropolitan Police Area Crime Rate

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were recorded by the Metropolitan police within each division, for each category of crime during the 12 months ended 31 December 1993.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not yet available.

Criminal Justice Act 1993

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to implement the remaining provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1993.

Mr. Howard: The following new provisions to combat money laundering are being brought into force on 1 April by means of Commencement Order No. 6: sections 18-19, 26, 32, 48, 50-51, 77 and 79. Section 77 implements schedule 4 of the Act and section 79 relevant consequential amendments in schedule 5.

Youth Detention

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his future policy will be on the detention of youths convicted of crimes.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's policy is to ensure that the courts have available to them a wide range of penalties, including custodial sentences. Custodial sentences in respect of young offenders aged 10 to 17 will be considerably extended by provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill now before Parliament.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what forms of detention are available to deal with convicted youths; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The following sentences of detention are currently available to the courts after the conviction of young offenders between the ages of 10 and 17:

Detention during Her Majesty's pleasure for murder from age 10.

From age 14 (and from age 10 for manslaughter), terms of detention under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 up to the adult maximum are available for crimes which are punishable in the case of an adult with 14 years imprisonment or more. In addition 14 to 17-year-olds who are convicted of the offences of causing death by dangerous driving or causing death by careless driving while under the influence of drink or drugs may be sentenced to terms of detention under section 53 for a period up to the adult maximum penalty, which is 10 years. In the case of 16 and 17-year-olds, a term of detention under section 53 is also available for the offence of indecent assault on a woman up to the adult maximum, which is 10 years.

For juveniles aged 15 to 17, detention in a young offender institution for a maximum of 12 months is available for any offence for which an adult may be sentenced to imprisonment.

"Black Book of Captain Ramsey"

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the present whereabouts of the "Black Book of Captain Ramsey"; and if he will make it available for public inspection and publication.

Mr. Howard: A check of departmental records has revealed reference only to a ledger known as the "Red Book", which lists membership of the Right Club. The ledger is currently in private hands.

Visitors (Pakistan)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from Pakistan have overstayed for each year since 1987.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Comprehensive information on the number of visitors who remain in the United Kingdom after the expiry of their leave is not available.

Sex Shops

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sex shops there are in each English district council and London borough.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not recorded centrally.

Deputy Lords Lieutenant

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what clothing, travel or other allowances are available from public funds to deputy lords lieutenant.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no provision for the payment of allowances or expenses to deputy lieutenants from central funds.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Howard: The information is set out in the table:

Area	*Project*	*Total cost* £ *million*	*Cost to the Home Office* £ *million*
Doncaster	Works complex HM young offenders institution, Hatfield (commenced 1988)	1·0	1·0
Doncaster	Construction of HM prison Moorland (commenced 1990)	47·2	47·2
Doncaster	Construction of HM prison Doncaster (commenced 1990)	82·0	82·0
Doncaster	Conversion of dormitories into cubicles, HM prison Lindholme (commenced 1993)	3·7	3·7
Wakefield	Works Unit HM prison, Wakefield (commenced 1988)	1·1	1·1

Area	Project	Total cost £ million	Cost to the Home Office £ million
Wakefield	Cell block, HM prison New Hall (commenced 1989)	4·5	4·5
Wakefield	Chapel and Sportshall HM prison, Wakefield (commenced 1990)	1·9	1·9
Wakefield	Kitchen and other facilities, HM prison New Hall (commenced 1991)	3·1	3·1
Wakefield	Dispersed gas boilers HM prison, Wakefield (commenced 1992)	1·8	1·8
Wakefield	Ossett divisional police headquarters (commenced February 1992)	1·4	0·714
Wakefield	Hospital and mother and baby unit, HM prison New Hall (commenced 1993)	1·9	1·9

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Howard: When making appointments I seek information from a variety of sources, including professional bodies, other Government Departments, the public appointments unit at Cabinet Office and any others that I consider relevant.

Chief of Defence Staff

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he was first informed that the position of Sir Peter Harding as Chief of the Defence Staff might be compromised.

Mr. Howard: I first became aware of the circumstances leading up to the resignation of Sir Peter Harding on Sunday 13 March.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Plymouth Council (Prosecutions)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Attorney-General what estimate has been made of the cost to the Crown Prosecution Service of prosecuting a number of Plymouth councillors under section 106 of the Local Government Act 1992.

The Attorney-General: The estimated costs to the Crown Prosecution Service of the prosecution of 14 past or present Plymouth city councillors under section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 are £10,900. This figure is inclusive of all case preparation, disbursements, and court attendances before and during the trial.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Goodlad: The percentage of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people appointed to public bodies by my Department in 1993 was:

(a) 13·33 per cent.
(b) 0 per cent.

It is not our policy to provide details of the ethnic origins of appointees.

Occupied Territories

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the desirability of releasing more prisoners to aid the peace process in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and European Union partners regularly make representations to the Israelis to urge them to release Palestinian detainees.

Asil Nadir

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to secure the return to the United Kingdom of Asil Nadir.

Mr. Goodlad: We have an extradition treaty with the Republic of Cyprus, but the writ of the lawful Government does not run in the north of the island. Officials of the Serious Fraud Office have pursued their investigations in both Turkey and northern Cyprus.

North Korea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the mandate of the International Atomic Energy Agency team in North Korea; and to what extent it has been allowed to carry out that mandate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 15 February, North Korea agreed to open its seven declared nuclear facilities to IAEA inspections, and to the agency's requirements for inspection at each facility. On 21 March, the IAEA director

general stated that the inspections, carried out between 3 and 14 March, had not permitted the agency to conclude that nuclear material had not been diverted for military use in North Korea since February 1993. Agency inspectors were not allowed to proceed with a full inspection at one of the declared nuclear facilities as previously agreed.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *292*, if he will list the number of contracts and their costs with management consultants in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Goodlad: The number of management consultancy contracts and their costs for the latest year for which figures are available ie 1992-93 is:

	Number	*£*
Diplomatic wing	4	129,000
Aid wing	8	451,907

(this excludes management consultancies awarded under the aid programme)

Human Rights (China)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the systematic killing of handicapped babies in China; what representations he has made to the Chinese Government concerning this abuse of human rights; and if he will raise this issue with the United Nations Secretariat dealing with human rights.

Mr. Goodlad: We have not received any representations about this issue. We regularly raise human rights, including population policy issues, with the Chinese authorities, urging them to adhere to internationally approved standards of behaviour. We co-sponsored a resolution on China, with our European partners, at this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, which specifically drew attention to reports of forced abortion. But it was stopped by a no-action motion introduced by the Chinese.

Palestine

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about progress to increase protection for the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Details of the international presence and other measures to protect the Palestinians in the occupied territories called for in United Nations Security Council resolution 904 are the subject of on-going negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

The latest available figures are:

	Grades[1]							
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*[2]	*5*	*6*	*7*	*below 7*
Women								
Number	—	1	4	—	25	19	129	2,953
Percentage of all staff	—	3 per cent.	4 per cent.	—	7 per cent.	11 per cent.	17 per cent.	38 per cent.
Ethnic minority respondents[3]								
Number	—	—	—	—	2	1	4	291
Percentage of all staff	—	—	—	—	0·6 per cent.	0·6 per cent.	0·5 per cent.	4 per cent.
Registered disabled staff[4]								
Number	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	57
Percentage of all staff	—	—	—	—	0·3 per cent.	—	—	0·7 per cent.

[1] Grades which are not part of the Open Structure have been aggregated with the equivalent Open Structure grades.
[2] There is only one individual employed at this grade.
[3] Includes only those members of staff who have responded to questionnaires; there is no compulsion on staff to record their ethnic origin, although well over 90 per cent. have done so.
[4] Includes only staff who are registered disabled.

Security Contracts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contracts his Department has put out to tender for the supply of security services at its buildings; how many of them cover the protection of classified information held on the premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office puts out to tender contracts for security services at its premises overseas, but these do not directly concern the protection of classified material. Information on the number of such contracts is not readily available. As regards the FCO's buildings in central London, the guarding of the entrances and the patrolling of buildings where classified information is stored will shortly be put out to tender under the market testing programme. Six companies will be invited to bid, and the present in-house team will also be tendering. The FCO will award the contract to the contractor which offers the best overall value for money.

East Timor

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what position the United Kingdom has taken at the United Nations since 1974 on the legality of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: We do not recognise the Indonesian annexation of East Timor.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the British Government will support an economic embargo being imposed against Indonesia until that country ends its occupation of East Timor; and what other sanctions against Indonesia the British Government will support to assist bringing this occupation to an end.

Mr. Goodlad: No. Sanctions would be neither appropriate nor effective.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many meetings have been held between representatives of Her Majesty's Government and the Indonesian Government to discuss human rights issues in East Timor since January 1993.

Mr. Goodlad: Our regular discussions with the Indonesians cover a wide range of issues, including human rights.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the human rights situation in East Timor since March 1993.

Mr. Goodlad: We believe that the human rights situation in East Timor continues steadily to improve.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: We are encouraging Indonesia and Portugal to continue to co-operate with the United Nations Secretary-General to find a solution to East Timor. We therefore welcome the return to consensus language at this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and hope that it will help provide an atmosphere conducive to progress at the next round of talks on the territory's future between Portugal and Indonesia under the Secretary-General's auspices in May.

Mr. Raja

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons Her Majesty's consulate in Düsseldorf refused to see Mr. Raja, case number MP A363834/6, PO 24915/93, husband of Mrs. Carol Raja, of 145 High street, Linlithgow, when he applied for an interview.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The consulate-general in Düsseldorf has never refused to see Mr. Raja. He and his wife were interviewed in June and August 1993 respectively, after which his application was referred to the Home Office. The Home Office refused it in December 1993, but the relevant papers never reached the post, for reasons that we have been unable to establish. A further copy was sent to Düsseldorf by fax on 15 March. The consulate-general wrote to Mr. Raja so to inform him, and enclosing an appeal form, the following day.

European Parliament, Strasbourg

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the cost of building the new European Parliament in Strasbourg; and whether the United Kingdom supported the expenditure.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* A decision was taken at the Edinburgh European Council in December 1992 on the seat of the European Parliament and of other Community institutions. It is for the European Parliament itself to decide policy on buildings in the light of that decision.

UNITA

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he intends to take to enforce the measures imposed under paragraph 19 of resolution 864 (1993) against UNITA.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations Security Council resolution 864, imposing sanctions against UNITA, was implemented in the United Kingdom under the United Nations Act 1946 by the Angola (United Nations Sanctions) Order 1993, SI 2355, which came into force on 1 October 1993. A copy is available in the Library of the House of Commons.

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to expel UNITA's official representative in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The long tradition of free political expression in the United Kingdom means that anyone can set up a representative office here. So long as staff of the office comply with our laws—and I am not aware of any evidence that they have failed to do so—there is no basis in United Kingdom law for closing the office. This position is well understood by the Angolan Government.

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consult with his counterparts on the United Nations Security Council to enforce the sanctions against UNITA in Angola, Zaire, South Africa and in the various locations where UNITA enjoys the benefits of its material and financial assets.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Operative paragraph 22 of the United Nations Security Council resolution 864, imposing sanctions against UNITA, established a Committee of the Security Council consisting of all the members of the council to oversee and advise on the implementation of those sanctions. The United Kingdom is a member of this committee and has participated fully in its work.

Turkey

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people have been killed by Turkish security services during the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no reliable statistics. Our embassy in Ankara estimates, on the basis of press reports and other information, that some 1,370 alleged terrorists, 720 civilians, and 650 members of the security forces have been killed during the past year.

Iran

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to Iran regarding the number of dissidents abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: We and our European partners frequently discuss this issue with the Iranian authorities.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Letterheaded Paper

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *292*, what payment his Department has received from the Conservative and Unionist party for the mistaken use of letterheaded paper.

Mr. Hurd: The cost of the three sheets of headed notepaper used was less than a penny. No further costs were incurred since all photocopying and distribution was done by Conservative central office. It would be disproportionate to seek any reimbursement to the FCO from Central Office.

Norway (Whaling)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what concessions were made to Norway in respect of whaling activities within the context of that country's terms of accession to the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: As part of its terms of accession to the European Union, Norway agreed that its policy on whales will fully respect the European Community's existing legislation.

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions are taking place between Government Departments on funding for the Commonwealth Institute after 1996.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: By long-standing convention, discussions of this nature between Departments are confidential.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what view the Government have formed about the quality of the work of *(a)* the Scottish Commonwealth Institute and *(b)* the regional centre of the Commonwealth Institute in Bradford.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The educational work of the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland and the institute's office in Bradford has been positive and useful.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the management committee of the Scottish Commonwealth Institute is determined; and what is its current membership.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland, is determined by the board of the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland. Its membership is:

Sir Mark Russell KCMG—*Chairman*
T. J. Barron, MA PhD
J. C. Horobin, BSc PhD
G. Paton, MA MEd FEIS FITD
Miss A. J. B. Sloan, MA

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the membership of the board of the Scottish Commonwealth Institute; and what representation it has made to the Government about the future of the Commonwealth Institute in Scotland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Membership of the board of the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland is as follows:

Chairman—Sir Mark Russell, KCMG

Members nominated by educational and local government bodies:

E. T. Laing, BSc MSc
Association of Directors of Education
R. Paul, MA
Headteachers' Association of Scotland
J. W. Anderson, MA MEd
Headteachers' Association of Scotland
Miss M-R Caden, MA FEIS
Educational Institute of Scotland
G. M. Wilson, MA PhD
Joint Committee for Colleges of Education
Vacancy
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Councillor W. Speirs
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
N. E. Paine, BE(hons) MA FITD
Scottish Council for Educational Technology

Members co-opted by the Committee:

T. J. Barron, MA PhD
K. W. Borthwick, CBE DL JP
J. R. Carson, MA
J. C. Horobin, BSc PhD
M. E. Jogee, JP
G. Paton, MA MEd FEIS FITD
Sarah J. Sieley, BA MEd PhD
Miss A. J. B. Sloan, MA

Assessors

D. Broad
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
D. Campbell
Scottish Office Education Department
I. K. Gamble, HMI
Scottish Office Education Department

Representations have been made to the Government through the committee of the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland, and through the executive committee of the board of governors.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Lord Armstrong took in reviewing the work of the Commonwealth Institute for his Department to visit *(a)* the Scottish Commonwealth Institute and *(b)* the Commonwealth Institute in Bradford and assess the work of staff.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As an independent reviewer of the Commonwealth Institute, Lord Armstrong chose his own

modus operandi. His views on the operation of the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland and of the Bradford office were formed from papers and interviews in London.

South Africa

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what approach he has made to Chief Buthelezi to urge Inkatha to take part in the South African elections.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary last met Chief Buthelezi on 6 September 1993. My right hon. Friend made it clear that we attach the utmost importance to the constructive participation of all major political figures in the peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa. My noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey spoke with Chief Buthelezi again in similar terms on 9 December 1993. Through our embassy in Pretoria we continue to keep in close touch with all South Africa's major leaders.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

D-day

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much Lowe Bell Communications is being paid for its work for the D-day anniversary.

Mr. Sproat: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) on 2 February at column *716*.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1992 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has not financed any major building projects in Doncaster, Barnsley, Rotherham or Wakefield.

Slave Trade (Museum)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will consider the establishment of a national museum in Liverpool dedicated to the history of the slave trade.

Mr. Sproat: My Department does provide grant in aid to National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, which is opening a new permanent gallery in October called "Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity" with the help of funding from the Peter Moores Foundation. This gallery will address the history of the transatlantic slave trade.

Sport (Museum)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what further consideration he has given to the creation of a national museum for sport to be situated on Merseyside.

Mr. Sproat: I understand that Liverpool city council is carrying out a feasibility study on a possible museum of sport based on Merseyside. The backers of such a project would be responsible for taking it forward and for ensuring the necessary funds.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Sproat: The information requested is contained in the annual disability report in the magazine "Independent" which was published on 18 March 1994. The publication of this magazine was announced in a written reply on 18 March at column *874* and copies are available in the Libraries of the House.

Museums and Galleries (Attendance)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the attendance figures covering the financial year ended 31 March reported by the national museums and galleries in England for which he is responsible, broken down into individual institutions but including their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Sproat: I refer to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member on 14 February at column *578*.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the objects and property accepted in satisfaction of inheritance tax during the financial year ended 31 March; and if, in listing these, he will specify *(a)* the amount of tax satisfied in each case, *(b)* whether any offers of objects carried conditions as to destination, *(c)* the dates in each case of the recommendations received by him from the Museums and Galleries Commission for the acceptance of objects, *(d)* the total for the financial year of the tax this satisfied and *(e)* how much of this total was covered in the public accounts by means of resort to the reserve in accordance with Government policy as announced on 26 July 1985, *Official Report,* column *779*.

Mr. Sproat: The Department will, before the end of this financial year, be announcing the acceptance of a further four items in lieu of tax. In the interest of completeness I will reply to the hon. Member on the day of that announcement.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The total number of full-time and part-time male and female staff in each grade within the Department of National Heritage, excluding its two executive agencies, the Historic Royal Palaces and the Royal Parks, are listed in the table:

DNH staff as at 28 February 1994

Grades	Males			Females		
	Full time	Part time	Totals	Full time	Part time	Totals
1A	1	—	1	—	—	—
G3	3	—	3	1	—	1
G4	1	—	1	—	—	—
G5	12	—	12	4	—	4
G6	1	—	1	4	—	4
G7	33	—	33	7	4	11
SEO	8	—	8	7	—	7
HEOD	2	—	2	2	—	2
HSOD	1	—	1	—	—	—
AT	—	—	—	3	—	3
HEO	29	—	29	16	1	17
EO	36	—	36	21	—	21
AO	30	—	30	25	—	25
AA	12	2	14	15	—	15
SPS	—	—	—	4	—	4
PS	—	—	—	18	—	18
Typist	—	—	—	6	—	6
SGB1	—	—	—	1	—	1
SGB2	3	—	3	7	—	7
SIO	4	—	4	—	—	—
IO	3	—	3	1	—	1
CUR E	—	—	—	2	—	2
CUR G	3	—	3	—	—	—
Librarian	—	—	—	1	—	1
Assistant Librarian	—	—	—	1	—	1
Assistant Statistician	1	—	1	—	—	—
Totals	183	2	185	146	5	151

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The information required is as follows:

Name	1991-92 running cost £ million	1992-93 running cost £ million	1993-94 running cost £ million	Staff employed in 1991	Staff employed in 1993
Broadcasting complaints commission	0·465	0·457	0·537	8	8
Independent television commission	21·43	20·42	[1]—	254	239
The radio authority	2·28	2·75	[1]—	25	27
Office of the national lottery	n/a	n/a	0·28	n/a	12

[1]Not yet available.

WALES

Head Teachers, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he has given to Clwyd county council in respect of head teacher pay awards and consequential efficiency savings.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has consulted interested parties on his proposals for implementing the recommendations of the third report of the School Teachers' Review Body and on the first of two pay and conditions orders which would give effect to its recommendations. The review body's recommendations took account of evidence from the Government, the teacher unions, the employers, and Government provision for local authority spending in 1994-95. The review body also took the view that "there is significant scope for . . . efficiency savings". Decisions on the scope for such savings and the implementation of the pay award are matters for the employers.

National Curriculum

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had concerning the national curriculum as it affects primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In response to concerns by teachers and parents about the manageability of the national curriculum in both primary and secondary schools, my right hon. Friend announced last year a review of the national curriculum and its assessment arrangements in Wales by the Curriculum Council for Wales and Sir Ron Dearing. I refer the hon. Member to the statements issued in response to the interim and final reports on the review on 2 August 1993 and 5 January 1994, copies of which are in the Library of the House and which were sent to all hon. Members in Wales.

Rehabilitation Therapy

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients with severe head injuries in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* each health authority area are currently receiving rehabilitation therapy within the NHS.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on the number of psychotherapists employed by the NHS in Wales in *(a)* the rehabilitation of all patients and *(b)* the rehabilitation of children with severe head injuries.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Psychotherapy is a form of treatment and can be carried out by medical and other professional staff. The following table gives the whole-time equivalent numbers of staff in post in Wales who are specifically designated as working in the field of psychotherapy. Other staff groups, whose work may include psychotherapy but not as a major part of their duties, are excluded.

	Number
Child psychotherapists[1]	4·3
Clinical psychologists[1]	182·9
Consultant psychotherapist[2]	0·6

[1] In post as at 31 December 1993.
[2] In post as at 30 September 1993.

Information relating to the number of psychotherapy staff involved in the rehabilitation of children with severe head injuries is not available centrally.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research studies his Department has commissioned in each of the last 10 years on the effects of rehabilitation programmes in Wales for patients who have suffered severe head injuries.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Research costing £1,118,000 into the rehabilitation of brain-injured adults is currently being funded jointly by the Welsh Office and the Department of Health. The project started in May 1992 and will take three years to complete. In addition the Welsh Office has funded two projects on rehabilitation following brain damage. These received some £60,000 between 1989 and 1992.

Insulin-dependent Diabetics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the guidance he has issued to insulin-dependent diabetics in Wales regarding the methods they should use to dispose of *(a)* blood-glucose testing strips, *(b)* lancets and *(c)* hypodermic syringes and needles.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance for insulin-dependent diabetics on the disposal of hypodermic syringes and needles has been provided under Welsh health circular WHC (FP)(87)24 dated 6 August 1987. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. No guidance has been issued in respect of the disposal of blood-glucose testing strips or lancets.

Redundant NHS Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many redundant NHS hospitals have been disposed of since 1987 without the benefit of planning permission.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

National Continence Week

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what projects his Department instigated in respect of national continence week.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Health Promotion Wales, on behalf of the Welsh Office, arranged for a continence awareness campaign during the period 13 to 19 March 1994. This ran in parallel with a Department of Health campaign in England.

Leaflets and posters, for the attention of the general public, were distributed to health authorities, family health services authorities, community health councils, NHS premises, general practitioners' surgeries, pharmacies, social services departments, health promotion units and voluntary organisations.

Continence advisers in Wales ran local campaigns, the details of which are not held centrally.

A bilingual helpline, charging local call rates, will operate in Wales until the end of March.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dairy farmers there were in Wales in each year since 1985.

Mr. Redwood: The number of holdings on which the dominant activity is dairy farming is shown in the table. The information for 1993 is not yet available.

Dairy holdings in Wales[1]

Year	*Number*
1985	6,554
1986	6,384
1987	6,024
1988	5,647
1989	5,433
1990	5,224
1991	5,076
1992	4,891

Source: June agricultural and horticultural census.
[1]Excluding minor holdings.

Ysgol Maes Garman Mold

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has made to the delegation of pupils from Ysgol Maes Garman Mold he met on Monday 21 March regarding teacher losses at the school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for Clwyd county council to decide from within its available resources the level of funding to be devoted to primary and secondary education in the county. Individual schools are funded according to the authority's local management of schools scheme, and it is the responsibility of the governing body of schools with delegated budgets to decide how many staff they should employ.

Farm Workers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total number of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers in Wales in each year since 1980.

Mr. Redwood: Information on the number of holdings and workers on those holdings is available from the annual June agricultural census and is shown in the following table.

Farms and farm workers in Wales[1]

Year	*Holdings*	*Workers*[2]
1980	29,508	21,144
1981	29,567	20,703
1982	29,822	20,794
1983	29,957	20,323
1984	29,752	19,784
1985	29,811	20,504
1986	29,924	20,179
1987	29,985	19,797
1988	30,231	18,948
1989	30,508	18,148
1990	29,646	18,167
1991	29,710	18,234
1992	29,903	17,812
1993	29,916	17,495

Source: June agricultural and horticultural census.
[1] Excludes data for minor holdings.
[2] All workers on holdings who are not farmers, partners or directors and who are not spouses of farmers, partners or directors.

Council Meetings (Transport)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the availability of methods of transport for local councillors to attend meetings on his proposals for the reorganisation of local government in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has made of the suitability of the present bus timetable linking Llandridod Wells and Llanelly Hill for the use of councillors wishing to attend council meetings;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact of his local government reorganisation in Wales on the ability of councillors to travel to and from council meetings by existing public transport routes within one day.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Redwood: Information on ethnic minority appointments as at 1 September 1993 is shown in "Public Bodies 1993", available in the Library of the House.

Education Authorities (Standard Spending Assessment)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the standard spending assessment for each education authority in Wales in 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 25 March 1994 at column *453*.

Mostyn Docks, Clwyd (Planning Application)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to answer the letter from Mr. P. McGreevy, chief executive of Delyn borough council, of 21 February, regarding the proposed planning application at Mostyn docks, Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Secretary of State worte to Mr. McGreevy on 28 March.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Redwood: The position at 1 January 1994 is given in the following table:

	Number	*Percentage*
Women		
Grade 1 and equivalents	0	0
Grade 2 and equivalents	0	0
Grade 3 and equivalents	1	8
Grade 4 and equivalents	2	33
Grade 5 and equivalents	9	15
Grade 6 and equivalents	14	18
Grade 7 and equivalents	53	27
Total number	1,304	53
Ethnic minorities		
Grade 1-5 and equivalents	0	0
Grade 6 and equivalents	1	1·3
Grade 7 and equivalents	1	0·5
Total number	34	1·4
Disabled		
Grade 1-5 and equivalents	0	0
Grade 6 and equivalents	1	1·3
Grade 7 and equivalents	1	0·5
Total number	41	1·7

Notes:
1. Part-time staff are counted as one.
2. Figures exclude casual staff.
3. Figures show registered disabled staff only.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Consultation Documents

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the documents issued for consultation in the last year, indicating the time provided for consultation and the recipients of each consultation document.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not available centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

School Visits

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will visit Sealand CP School to meet the governors and staff to discuss the pupil-teacher ratio for the next school year;

(2) if he proposes to visit Golftyn High School, Deeside, in order to discuss the concerns of parents, governors and staff; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I will bear these schools in mind when considering our programme of visits to schools.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policies on special needs for the next school year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Children with special educational needs will benefit from the range of measures introduced in the Education Act 1993 to improve the present statutory framework, including a code of practice containing guidance and criteria for the identification, assessment and other arrangements for such pupils. We hope to lay the code before Parliament shortly.

We remain committed to the principle that children with special educational needs should be educated in mainstream schools wherever possible and sensible.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his aims to create new style apprenticeships; in what industries he expects the new apprenticeships to be created; and what estimate he has of the number of new apprenticeships he expects to be created.

Mr. Redwood: Modern apprenticeships will be introduced in manufacturing engineering in Wales in 1994-95, and I have made £3·6 million available to support them; 550 additional opportunities will be offered to young people to begin training for national vocational qualifications at levels 3 and 4. Details about the extension of modern apprenticeships to other sectors from 1995-96 onwards will be announced in due course.

Public Transport (Disabled Access)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to encourage the provision of accessibility to public transport for disabled people in urban and rural areas of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are already committed to the development of accessible transport systems which meet the travel needs of all users. Since the early 1980s significant progress has been made in improving access to public transport for people with disabilities.

Farm Colleges

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual amount of public funding allocated to farm colleges in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Great Britain as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh funding councils allocated £4·7 million to agriculture colleges in Wales for the academic year 1993-94. The agriculture colleges in England and Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Scotland. However, I understand that the allocations for agriculture colleges in England and Scotland were £67·3 million and £11·2 million respectively. The figure for England relates to the academic year 1993-94 and the figure for Scotland to the financial year 1993-94.

Courses in agriculture are provided by many institutions which do not have "agriculture college" in their names. Expenditure on courses in these institutions has not been included in the figures given here.

Hospital Waiting Times

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued to the chairman of the Welsh health authorities in respect of the application of total waiting times guarantees for hospital treatment, inclusive of the first out-patient appointment waiting time; and if he will place a copy of such guidelines in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: A copy of the letter sent to all health authorities outlining the new approach to waiting times in Wales will be placed in the Library of the House. Detailed work on operational aspects of the approach will take place this year in preparation for its implementation from April 1995.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued to Welsh health authorities and to provider units in Wales in respect of dates being given for first out-patient appointment within a short period after receipt of the referral letter from the general practitioner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: All patients referred to a hospital out-patient clinic by their GP are included in waiting list statistics whether or not they have been provided with a fixed appointment date.

Comprehensive guidance on the management of waiting lists has been issued to all health authorities, NHS trusts and other healthcare providers, identifying the provision of booked dates for first out-patient appointments as best practice.

Rural Areas (Assistance)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of state for Wales (1) what policies the Development Board for Rural Wales has for the voluntary sector to be a vehicle for assisting rural communities;

(2) how much funding in each of the last five years and for the next financial year has been allocated by the Development Board for Rural Wales to the voluntary sector for assisting rural communities; and if he will list those organisations and how much each received.

Mr. Redwood: I have asked the chief executive of the Development Board for Rural Wales to write to the hon. Member, and for a copy of the reply to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what procedures are used by the board members and officials of *(a)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(b)* the

Development Board for Rural Wales to inform themselves of the needs of individual rural areas within their areas of responsibility.

Mr. Redwood: I have asked the chief executives of the agency and the board to write to the hon. Member and for copies of their responses to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much funding in each of the last five years and for the next financial year has been allocated by the Welsh Development Agency to the voluntary sector for assisting rural communities; and if he will list those organisations and how much each received;

(2) what policies the Welsh Development Agency has for the voluntary sector to be a vehicle for assisting rural communities.

Mr. Redwood: I have asked the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member and for a copy of his response to be placed in the Library of the House.

Cancer Treatment

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *196*, if he will list all the appraisals commissioned by his Department of the options for improving cancer services for north Wales; and if he will place a copy of each appraisal in the Library.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I will write to the hon. Lady.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what directions he has given to the Development Board for Rural Wales to sell its industrial estates on the open market; how many estates are involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* None. However, the development board seeks to identify opportunities for property disposal and under its guidelines is expected to encourage private ownership and secure the disposal of its completed premises and estates to the private sector.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Tigris and Euphrates Valleys

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United States and Egypt about the provision of pharmaceuticals, water pumps and water-filtering equipment to the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. Our substantial aid to Iraq is organised through the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the dates on which aid and trade provision offers in principle were made to the Governments of countries overseas in each year since 1986.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The dates of all ATP offers are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. A list of successful ATP projects on which offers have been accepted by developing country Governments has been placed in the Libraries of the House. This list is based on the dates when the formal Government-to-Government agreements or exchanges were signed; this is the operative date for project commencement.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Rwanda for British-based aid organisations; what progress is being made in Rwanda by the United Nations mission; and what estimate has been made of the number of refugees and displaced people in Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Although some difficulties remain, most aid organisations can now operate with relative freedom. The United Nations assistance mission for Rwanda continues to encourage full implementation of peace agreements signed last August in Arusha. A copy of the United Nations Secretary-General's report of 30 December 1993 on UNAMIR's progress has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The number of refugees and displaced persons in Rwanda at present is estimated at 650,000.

UK Assistance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much United Kingdom Government assistance was given for: the covered reservoir scheme 1985 at Irbid, Jordan; sewage works at Rustamiyah, Iraq and the Suez Canal Authority, Egypt 1985; water works at Tangerang, Indonesia 1985; water development department, Cyprus 1985; canal project at Rahimyakham, Pakistan 1986; canal project in Cameroon 1986; canal project in Kwasa State, Nigeria 1986; Kwasa project in Nigeria 1987; water projects in Niger, Uganda and Panama 1987; Hill Country water scheme, Sri Lanka 1988; water schemes in Greece and Turkey 1988; Akashat scheme in Iraq 1989; El Nasr Co. in Egypt 1991; water valve equipment in Singapore 1991; Larnaca scheme, Cyprus 1992; the Great Cairo wastewater scheme 1992; and water project in Ghana 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Of the projects listed, the following have been supported from the United Kingdom aid programme:

Project	*Overall commitment £ million*
Canal project, Rahimyakham, Pakistan	10·77
Hill country water scheme, Sri Lanka	2·13
Water schemes, Turkey	1·13
Greater Cairo waste water scheme, Egypt	69·14
Two regions water rehabilitation project, Ghana	11·39
Uganda water projects (three)	0·07

Child Mortality Rates

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on *(a)* the child mortality rates and *(b)* the average life expectancy of inhabitants of (i) El Salvador, (ii) Nepal, (iii) Paraguay, (iv) Benin, (v) Togo, (vi) Sierra Leone, (vii) Mauritius, (viii) Burundi, (ix) Rwanda, (x) Haiti, (xi) Chad, (xii) Albania, (xiii) Barbados, (xiv) Malta, (xv) Botswana, (xvi) Ukraine, (xvii) The Gambia and (xviii) Mongolia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The latest information we have on child mortality and average life expectancy rates in the countries listed, based on data contained in the World Bank Atlas 1994, is as follows:

Country	*Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) as at 1992*	*Average life expectancy at birth (years) as at 1992*
El Salvador	46	66
Nepal	99	54
Paraguay	47	67
Benin	110	51
Togo	85	54
Sierra Leone	143	43
Mauritius	18	70
Burundi	106	48
Rwanda	110	46
Haiti	93	55
Chad	122	47
Albania	28	73
Barbados	10	75
Malta	10	76
Botswana	35	68
Ukraine	18	70
The Gambia	142	45
Mongolia	60	64

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy regarding the proposal to build an airstrip on St. Helena.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am aware of a proposal for the construction of an airfield on St. Helena and the subsequent introduction of an air service to the islands. While this could bring benefits to the island's economy, it would also be costly.

The Government of St. Helena has not so far approached Her Majesty's Government about this matter. Should we receive such an approach, we will consider it very carefully.

TREASURY

Value Added Tax Charges

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the average annual VAT charges incurred by *(a)* people with a disability and *(b)* people with no disability for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Estimates are not readily available on VAT incurred by people with a disability.

Tiger Products

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what seizures of tiger products or material containing tiger products have been made by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in the last three years.

Sir John Cope: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise made seizures apparently of such a kind over the period as follows:

Tiger skin—1 whole, 1 piece, 1 handbag and 1 pair of shoes.
Tincture of tiger bone—2 bottles.
Tiger bone plaster—43 packets and 30 strips.
Tiger bone pills—51 boxes and 420 tablets.
Tiger bone medicine—1 package and 3 sachets.
Tiger claws—2.

Liquor Duty

Mr. Gill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on the balance of payments and Treasury receipts resulting from lower liquor duties in mainland Europe.

Sir John Cope: The effect of cross-border shopping on the balance of payments is difficult to assess. It takes place for a variety of reasons. Duty differentials encourage personal imports, but are only one factor. Duty free shopping arrangements are another. The overall effect on the balance of payments will depend on where cross-border shopping is taking place and the country of origin of the product purchased as well as the amounts purchased. Receipts of duty on alcoholic drink held up well in 1993.

Taxation

Sir David Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures for each of a single person, a single-wage married couple and a single-wage couple with two children, showing the percentages of earnings taken in *(a)* income tax, *(b)* national insurance contribution, *(c)* VAT, *(d)* local authority rates/community charge and *(e)* other indirect taxation, at 75 per cent., 100 per cent. and 150 per cent. of average male manual earnings, in 1979-80, 1989-90 and the latest year for which such figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The information available is given in the tables.

Percentage of gross earnings paid in direct taxes in 1979-80

	Multiples of average male manual earnings		
	¾	*1*	*1½*
Single			
Income tax	20·2	22·6	25·1
NICs	6·5	6·5	5·8
Married, no children			
income tax	15·2	18·9	22·6
NICs	6·5	6·5	5·8
Married, two children			
Income tax	4·7	11·0	17·3
NICs	6·5	6·5	5·8

Percentage of gross earnings paid in direct taxes in 1989-90

	Multiples of average male manual earnings		
	¾	*1*	*1½*
Single			
Income tax	17·1	19·1	21·0
NICs	8·1	8·3	8·2

	Multiples of average male manual earnings		
	¾	*1*	*1½*
Married, no children			
Income tax	12·6	15·7	18·8
NICs	8·1	8·3	8·2
Married, two children			
Income tax	4·0	9·2	14·5
NICs	8·1	8·3	8·2

Percentage of gross earnings paid in direct taxes in 1993-94

	Multiples of average male manual earnings		
	¾	*1*	*1½*
Single			
Income tax	16·0	18·3	20·5
NICs	7·1	7·6	8·0
Married, no children			
Income tax	12·1	15·3	18·6
NICs	7·1	7·6	8·0
Married, two children			
Income tax	3·5	8·9	14·3
NICs	7·1	7·6	8·0

Notes to tables:

[1] Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in-rate.

[2] In order to provide comparability with 178-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowance, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children.

[3] Average male manual earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time manual males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Average male manual earnings stood at £101·10 in 1979-80 and £225·60 in 1989-90. They are assumed, on the basis of an illustrative assumption of 3·5 per cent growth in 1993-94, to be £281·50 in 1993-94.

Ms Corston: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cost to the Treasury in *(a)* 1994-95, *(b)* 1995-96 and *(c)* 1996-97 of tax expenditures and structural reliefs; and what specific changes in this cost will be brought about by the changes announced in his last Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimate of the cost of tax expenditures and structural reliefs, which are for 1993-94, were published in a Treasury booklet "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" in July 1993. A copy of this was placed in the Library. Preliminary estimates for 1994-95 will be published later this year.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the Government's tax policies on the economic well-being of people on low incomes and below the pension age.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 3 March at column *880*.

Arms Sales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) of 21 March, *Official Report*, column 22, if he will set out the reasons for the unavailability of the information on arms exports requested.

Mr. Nelson: The question to which the hon. Member refers asked for the proportion of gross domestic product derived from the sale of armaments. This information cannot be supplied as the term "armaments" is not defined in the classifications used for national accounts purposes. The value of exports of defence equipment can be estimated from overseas trade statistics and is published in table 1.11 of "UK Defence Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the Exchequer of the loss in value immediately after the withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism of the sterling purchased by the Bank of England two weeks prior to United Kingdom withdrawal.

Mr. Nelson: For good reasons of market management, it has been the practice of successive Governments not to publish intervention figures. Whether or not intervention results in a profit or loss depends on a number of factors, including the cost at which foreign currency assets are bought and sold, and the rate at which reserves are rebuilt and foreign currency borrowing is repaid. No unambiguous estimate can therefore be made of any profit or loss arising from intervention.

Royal Yacht

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to Customs and Excise of hiring the royal yacht for a reception; who was invited; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: According to records going back to 1980, Customs and Excise have made no use or application for use of the royal yacht.

Brian Charrington

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assistance will be given by his Department to the investigation by Thames Valley police into the conduct of the Brian Charrington case by Cleveland police force.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise will co-operate fully with the Thames Valley police inquiry team.

Inland Revenue Adjudicator

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases the Inland Revenue adjudicator has dealt with since being established; and how many cases have been adjudicated in favour of the complainant.

Mr. Dorrell: Since the adjudicator took up appointment on 1 July 1993, she has completed 98 investigations. She has found wholly or partly in favour of the complainant in 63 cases.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer in *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and *(c)* 1994-95 of raising the threshold for capital gains tax to £5,800.

Mr. Dorrell: The capital gains tax annual exempt amount was increased in 1992-93 to £5,800 in line with the statutory indexation formula. Therefore there was no cost to the Exchequer measured against an indexed base.

Taxation

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has further to reduce tax evasion; if he will make it his policy to abolish the road fund licence and recoup the lost revenue from additional petrol duty; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The Government devote substantial resources to tackling tax evasion.

We have no plans to abolish vehicle excise duty and recoup the lost revenue from additional petrol duty. I also refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 9 February 1994 at col. *248.*

Mr. Christopher Thompson

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to review the case of Mr. Christopher Thompson of 18 Bootham terrace, York, in relation to the treatment by Customs and Excise of his VAT liabilities and those of his competitors;

(2) what account he has taken in considering the case of Mr. Christopher Thompson of 18 Bootham terrace, York, in the past of Mr. Thompson's affidavit about competitors' tax affairs and the reported inaccuracy of advertisements for their services.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* None. His complaints, which relate to events before and during 1979, have been reviewed carefully over the last 15 years by Customs and Excise, by Ministers and by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, and full account has been taken of all the many thousands of documents that Mr. Thompson has sent, both direct to customs and via Members of Parliament and others.

VAT on Fuel

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report,* column *567,* if value added tax would be applied to standing charges for electricity and gas if billed separately.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Separate billing of standing charges for electricity or gas would not affect the VAT liability of these charges. They remain part of the consideration for a single supply of fuel and power. Were they to be viewed otherwise, they would now be liable to VAT at the standard rate.

Nurse Training Courses (VAT)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance he is giving health trusts about value added tax exemption for essential training courses for nursing staff who are converting from state enrolled nurse to state registered nurse.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* None. There is no VAT on in-house training. Nursing training provided by external suppliers is exempt.

Lower Earnings Limit

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what level the national insurance lower earnings limit has been set in each year since 1989 *(a)* in money terms and *(b)* at 1994 prices.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply.

Because the lower earnings limit has moved broadly in line with the increase in prices, the value of the limits applying since 1989 at 1994 prices will be approximately £57, that is the limit for 1994-95. The cash value of the limits requested is in the table.

Year	*Cash LEL £ per week*
1989-90	43
1990-91	46
1991-92	52
1992-93	54
1993-94	56

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Civil Aircraft Trade Agreement

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the time scale for completion of negotiations on the aerospace part of the GATT negotiations postponed from December 1993.

Mr. Sainsbury: Members of the GATT civil aircraft committee reached an agreement on 14 December 1993 that negotiations on a new GATT agreement on trade in civil aircraft would continue for a further year, ending in December 1994.

Post Offices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish tables showing the number of sub-agency and Crown status post offices in each English region, Wales and Northern Ireland in each year since 1989; how many of each category of post office in each case opened or closed in each year since 1989; and how many changed status.

Mr. Heseltine: The number of directly operated main post offices, other main post offices and sub post offices in operation in each of the years from March 1989 to February 1994 are shown in tables 1 to 6 by current Post Office Counters English regions, and with Northern Ireland and Wales shown separately. Because of administrative boundary changes during the period, the historic apportionment between regions is a best estimate. Figures of sub office closures and openings are available from March 1993 only and are shown in table 7; for 1992-93 they are available only at disproportionate cost, and are not available for earlier years. The number of Crown post office conversions is shown on a cumulative basis in the column "other main post offices", with openings and closures not linked to Crown office conversions shown separately for each year.

Table 1
Regional breakdown of offices—March 1989

Post Office Counters Regions	Directly Operated Main Post Offices	Other Main Post Offices	Sub Offices	Total
Northern Ireland	28	0	663	691
Wales	109	0	1,995	2,104
North East	131	0	2,836	2,967
North West	147	0	1,863	2,010
Midlands	137	0	2,247	2,384
South West	139	0	2,449	2,588
North Thames/East Anglia	346	0	3,072	3,418
South East	263	0	2,219	2,482
TOTAL	1,300	0	17,344	18,644

Table 2
Regional breakdown of offices—March 1990

Post Office Counters Regions	Directly Operated Main Post Offices	Other Main Post Offices	Sub Offices	Total
Northern Ireland	[1] 24	3	657	684
Wales	94	15	1,978	2,087
North East	113	18	2,801	2,932
North West	128	19	1,856	2,003
Midlands	[1] 120	17	2,220	2,357
South West	127	12	2,397	2,536
North Thames/East Anglia	323	22	3,043	3,388
South East	248	15	2,184	2,447
TOTAL	1,177	121	17,136	18,434

[1] Two main offices closed.

Table 3
Regional breakdown of offices—March 1991

Post Office Counters Regions	Directly operated main post offices	Other main post offices	Sub-offices	Total
Northern Ireland	24	3	647	674
Wales	[1] 78	30	1,949	2,057
North East	[1] 92	38	2,766	2,896
North West	[1] 111	35	1,834	1,980
Midlands	[1] 107	[2] 29	2,192	2,328
South West	[1] 111	27	2,335	2,473
North Thames/East Anglia	[1] 293	50	2,987	3,330
South East	218	45	2,150	2,413
TOTAL	1,034	257	16,860	18,151

[1] Nine main offices closed.
[2] Two new main offices opened.

Table 4
Regional breakdown of offices—March 1992

Post Office Counters Regions	Directly operated main post offices	Other main post offices	Sub-offices	Total
Northern Ireland	22	5	648	675
Wales	67	40	1,897	2,004
North East	[1] 83	[3] 48	2,742	2,873
North West	103	43	1,824	1,970
Midlands	[1] 93	42	2,187	2,322
South West	[1] 98	40	2,309	2,447
North Thames/East Anglia	262	[1] 83	2,987	3,332
South East	192	70	2,130	2,392
TOTAL	920	371	16,724	18,015

[1] Four main offices closed.
[3] Four new main offices opened.

Table 5
Regional breakdown of offices—March 1993

Post Office counters regions	*Directly operated main post offices*	*Other main post offices*	*Sub offices*	*Total*
Northern Ireland	21	6	652	679
Wales	59	49	1,878	1,986
North East	73 [2]	61	2,701	2,835
North West	[1][2][1] 96	49	1,816	1,961
Midlands	78	56	2,156	2,290
South West	87 [2]	51	2,259	2,397
North Thames/East Anglia	[1][3][1] 233	[2]1 102	2,961	3,296
South East	187 [2]	87	2,105	2,379
TOTAL	834	461	16,528	17,823

[1] Five main offices closed.
[2] Nine new main offices opened.

Table 6
Regional breakdown of offices—February 1994

Post office counters regions	*Directly operated main post offices*	*Other main post offices*	*Sub offices*	*Total*
Northern Ireland	19	8	650	677
Wales	54	54	1,865	1,973
North East	70	65	2,668	2,803
North West	89	56	1,805	1,950
Midlands	65	65	2,073	2,203
South West	80	58	2,253	2,391
North Thames/East Anglia	224 [1]2	117	2,974	3,315
South East	172 [1]1	103	2,105	2,380
TOTAL	773	526	16,393	17,692

[1] Three new main offices opened.

Table 7
Regional breakdown of changes to sub-offices—March 1993—February 1994

Post office counters regions	*Net closures of sub-offices*	*Conversions to main offices*	*New sub-offices*	*Net reduction*
Northern Ireland	2	—	—	2
Wales	13	—	—	13
North East	32	1	—	33
North West	10	1	—	11
Midlands	83	—	—	83
South West	10	—	4	6
North Thames/East Anglia	[1]–10	—	3	—13
South East	0	—	—	0
TOTAL	140	2	7	135

[1] This figure relates to re-opening of sub-offices which have previously been temporarily closed.

Regional Challenge

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) of 8 March, *Official Report*, columns *204-5*, how regional challenge and the envisaged competition between local deprived communities in a locality will help to achieve sustainable regeneration; what is meant by the term "Community support framework areas"; and if he will place in the Library, information regarding the rules of this competition and how bids will be judged.

Mr. Sainsbury: Regional challenge, an alternative method of selecting projects for European regional development fund grant, will improve the use of this fund for sustainable regeneration because the competition will stimulate better applications, which should involve the co-operative participation of appropriate authorities and bodies and the private sector.

Detailed rules will be published in due course.

The community support framework areas in England will be:

Objective 1
Merseyside
Objective 2
North East
Yorkshire and Humberside
East Midlands
West Midlands
Greater Manchester/Lancashire/Cheshire
Greater London
West Cumbria
Thanet
Plymouth
Objective 5(b)
South West

Shropshire/Herefordshire/Worcestershire (the Marches)
Staffordshire/Derbyshire (Midlands Uplands)
Northern Uplands
Lincolnshire
East Anglia

I do not intend to include west Cumbria, Thanet and Plymouth in the first regional challenge competitions.

Regional Enterprise Grants

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the total money spent, *(b)* the percentage of that money allocated according to decisions made by Ministers on competitive bids and *(c)* the percentage of that money allocated according to some statistical measure of need in the last available operational year of the regional enterprise grants.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the 1992-93 financial year payments of regional enterprise grants in England totalled £5·7 million. The other questions are not applicable to this scheme.

Rover Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much public money was invested in the Rover Group from 1977 to privatisation; and what is his estimate of the replacement cost of the assets sold by British Aerospace to BMW.

Mr. Sainsbury: Between 1975, when the Government took a majority shareholding in the company that became British Leyland, and of which Rover was part, until privatisation, some £3·5 billion was invested in BL in the form of grants, loans and equity.

The group last made profits, after tax, on ordinary activities in the 1975-76 financial year. By 1988, Rover's accumulated losses amounted to £1,600 million.

We are not in a position to estimate the replacement cost of the assets sold by British Aerospace to BMW.

Manufacturing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will ensure that the forthcoming White Paper on competitiveness will include an analysis of United Kingdom and world exports of manufactures since 1979 similar to that in the article published in the 18 November 1966 issue of the Board of Trade journal.

Mr. Sainsbury: The White Paper on competitiveness will be presented to the House later in the year.

Charter Markets

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many charter markets he had visited in his official capacity prior to publication of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have not visited a charter market in an official capacity.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of United Kingdom overseas investment in 1979; what it was in 1993; and what was the percentage increase.

Mr. Heseltine: The level of United Kingdom overseas investment was £5·9 billion in 1979 and £16·9 billion in 1993. This represents a percentage increase of 186 per cent.

Tobacco Companies (Grants)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many regional selective assistance grants were given to tobacco companies in the United Kingdom in each year since 1989-90; and if he will list the companies.

Mr. Sainsbury: No regional selective assistance grants have been given to tobacco companies in the United Kingdom since 1989-90. Reference to "regional selective assistance grants" in answer to an earlier question from the hon. Lady on 1 February 1994, *Official Report,* column *613,* should have read "selective financial assistance to industry". This assistance is available to companies in Northern Ireland only under the Industrial Development (Northern Ireland) Order 1982 and the Employment and Training (Northern Ireland) Act 1950.

Arms Exports (Indonesia)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what type, quantity and value of arms have been exported to south-east Asia by Britain for each year since 1985; and what proportion of sales in that region have gone to Indonesia.

Mr. Heseltine: For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it has been the consistent policy of successive Governments not to disclose particulars of defence trade with other countries.

Trade and the Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the draft work programme on trade and the environment, recently agreed in Geneva, for the general agreement on tariffs and trade and World Trade Organisation meeting in Marrakesh.

Mr. Heseltine: I have today placed a copy of the draft ministerial decision on trade and environment in the Library of the House.

Concorde

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the life expectancy of Concorde.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department of Trade and Industry has made no such assessment.

Legislation

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish compliance cost assessments of the burden on businesses of legislation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Government publish compliance cost assessments with all proposals for United Kingdom and EC legislation that have an impact on business. The arrangements for publishing CCAs for proposed domestic legislation were set out in my written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 19 October, *Official Report,* column

202. The arrangements for publishing the assessments for proposed EC legislation were set out in the written answer by my right hon. Friend the Lord President to the Council to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on 19 July, *Official Report*, column 24.

Local Business Partnerships

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the 18 pilot local business partnerships set up by his Department's deregulation unit.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The 18 pilot local business partnerships, established by local authorities and the business community with the help of my Department, are located at:

Kent county council, Tunbridge Wells borough council, Suffolk county council, Ipswich borough council, Nottinghamshire county council, Gedling district council, Barnsley metropolitan borough council, London borough of Hounslow, South Ribble borough council, West Sussex county council, East Sussex county council, Cardiff city council, Warwickshire county council, Hertfordshire county council, Oxfordshire county council, Hereford and Worcester county council, Berkshire county council and Lewes district council.

In addition to these 18 pilot partnerships, a new partnership has been established at Hastings borough council and I understand that launches for new partnerships are already planned this year by Gloucestershire county council, Essex county council and Rother and Wealden district councils.

I am keen to encourage the creation of other partnerships and to this end hosted a series of regional seminars in late-1993 to help promote them. The response to these seminars was encouraging and officials in my Department's deregulation unit are planning a number of initiatives to follow up on the many expressions of interest.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Eggar: In 1993 the Department of Trade and Industry made 887 public appointments. Of these, 0·34 per cent. were Asian appointments, 0·34 per cent. black appointments and 0·12 per cent. other ethnic origin appointments.

Names cannot be provided as ethnic origin information was obtained in confidence from those concerned.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Eggar: The required information is not held centrally in the form requested and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Eggar: Such consultations are made in accordance with the "Guide to Public Appointments Procedures".

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons;

(2) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Eggar: The Department does not hold information on the political affiliations of public appointees or potential public appointees. Appointments are made on the basis of the person judged best for the job; political affiliation is not a factor.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Heseltine: Between 1 March 1993 and 28 February 1994, Department of Trade and Industry Ministers referred 31 parliamentary questions to chief executives of my Department's agencies for reply. They represent 1·1 per cent. of the total of 2,812 written questions answered by my Department during that period.

RECHAR Programme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the projects and their costs covered by the RECHAR programme to date in *(a)* the Doncaster area and *(b)* the rest of south Yorkshire.

Mr. Sainsbury: To date, in Doncaster, 25 infrastructure projects have attracted RECHAR funding of £6,872,236 out of a total South Yorkshire programme of £18,575,176. In addition £8,621,016 has been allocated to 73 business support projects. Although not specific to Doncaster, the projects cover a wide area of South Yorkshire and are all available to companies in Doncaster. I have today placed copies of the list of projects in the Library of the House.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: Regional selective assistance grants can be offered in support of investment projects which

create or maintain jobs. While the details concerned are commercially confidential, five projects involving building costs of over £1 million have received RSA offers since 1 April 1989, as shown in the table.

In addition, English Estates has been undertaking building and development activities in these areas supported in part by grant aid from the Department.

Number of projects	*Total project costs £ million*	*Building costs £ million*	*Grant £ million*
5	81·6	15·7	8·55

European Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of European imports to the Yorkshire and Humberside region are transported directly by *(a)* sea and *(b)* air (i) currently, (ii) five years ago and (iii) 10 years ago.

Mr. Needham: There are no data on the level of European imports into the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

BS 5750

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will issue guidelines on the issuing of quality management systems equivalent to BS 5750 by both certifying bodies and consultants who themselves have not been approved in particular industrial sectors in which they are offering their services by the National Accreditation Council for Certifications Bodies.

Mr. Heseltine: Certification to BS 5750 and the accreditation of certification bodies are commercial decisions for the parties concerned. I recognise that accreditation provides confidence in certification services. My Department does, therefore, encourage certification bodies to seek accreditation and individual companies to use the services of accredited certification bodies. This is reflected in the current edition of the DTI QA register which now lists only accredited certification bodies.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes have been made under the statutory security provisions for sites occupied by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority or which require permits under section 2 of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965.

Mr. Eggar: Sites belonging to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and those where enrichment or reprocessing operations take place are subject to special statutory security provisions. These are designed principally:

(a) to protect information about and restrict access to enrichment technology, which could be misused for the purposes of nuclear weapons proliferation. The House recognised the importance of this last year in passing the Official Secrets Act 1989 (Prescription) (Amendment) Order 1993; and

(b) to protect information about and restrict access to facilities, where this is desirable for the safekeeping of plutonium and other fissile materials.

Under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 as amended, sites, other than those of the UKAEA, require a permit for reprocessing or enrichment. Sites to which permits apply and those of the UKAEA can be made prohibited places for the purposes of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

Work undertaken last year identified that the current list of nuclear prohibited places ought to be updated generally, including to align with current site boundaries. New permits have been issued for Sellafield and Capenhurst and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary yesterday made a new prohibited places order.

This order significantly reduces the number of places that are prohibited. Current or past UKAEA sites at Risley and Culcheth, and in London at Rex house and 19 Charles II street have been dropped. The small part of the Sellafield site managed by the UKAEA, which had been omitted from the previous order, has been added to the Sellafield prohibited place. Land has also been added as a result of aligning the permit with the current Sellafield site boundary. The UKAEA sites at Harwell and Dounreay remain prohibited places in the latter case under a separate order.

The new arrangements will ensure that at Sellafield and Capenhurst, the entire site within the security fence is a prohibited place and that this will remain the case following any transfers of land between British Nuclear Fuels plc and UKAEA at Sellafield or BNFL and Urenco (Capenhurst) Ltd. at Capenhurst. The areas of land affected are defined by the permits; copies of these, together with proof copies of the prohibited places order, have been placed in the Library of the House.

Diamonds (Angola)

Dr. Howells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has to consult his counterparts in the European Union on the question of formulating cross-frontier measures to prevent the importation of diamonds traded by, and on behalf of, the UNITA organisation in Angola;

(2) what plans he has to take measures to prevent Angolan diamonds, stolen and traded by UNITA, being imported and marketed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heseltine: I have no such plans. There is no reliable way of identifying the geographical origin of diamonds imported into the United Kingdom. Technically, it is seldom possible to do so and the channels of distribution are also varied and complex. It would be impractical to track the origin and provenance, legal or otherwise, of individual stones. Nor, for the same reasons, would it be practicable to seek a Community-wide restriction.

Coal Industry Privatisation

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements are in place to ensure that potential purchasers of British Coal's mining assets are given equal access to relevant information about the five mining businesses being offered for sale by the Government.

Mr. Eggar: The Government attach importance to ensuring that no potential purchasers are given preferential access to the relevant information. I expect in the coming weeks to clarify the basis on which the Government will be making information available.

British Coal has issued instructions which govern the conduct of all corporation employees during the privatisation period. These instructions set out, among other things, the consents which managers are required to obtain before they can participate in any buy-out bid, and the undertakings which they are obliged to give as a condition of such consents. British Coal has equally introduced detailed arrangements which seek to prevent the unauthorised disclosure by corporation employees of information which might impede the privatisation process. These measures are designed to provide effective safeguards against the possibility of conflicts of interest on the part of British Coal staff who may be authorised to participate in management and employee buy-outs. British Coal will also put in place specific additional measures in the case of individual MEBO participants where necessary.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what budget provision is planned for the financial year 1994-95 to commission consultants to provide advice on the restructuring and privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Provision of £11·7 million for consultants costs has been included in the 1994-95 Main Supply Estimates, HC 3.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the value of capital allowances to be transferred to licensed operators under schedule 4 to the Coal Industry Bill.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The Coal Industry Bill provides a mechanism for the transfer of capital allowances from British Coal Corporation to successor companies. No firm estimate of the value of such allowances has yet been made.

Telecommunications

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has received a report by the Director General of Telecommunications for the year 1993 as required under section 55 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Mr. McLoughlin: Yes. The tenth report by the Director General of Telecommunications is being published today. It covers the period 1 January to 31 December 1993. Copies of the report have been laid before each House of Parliament.

Post Office (Damaged Letters)

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many incidents have been reported by the Post Office of letters and small packages being *(a)* irrecoverably damaged and *(b)* damaged but recoverably so by the new mark 1, 2 and 3 GT 4000 machines in use in some sorting offices.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* I understand from the Post Office that it does not use any sorting machines designated as GT 4000 but that Royal Mail currently operates 185 NP 4000 sorting machines. Incidents of damage to mail during sorting processes are not recorded centrally by Royal Mail.

Consorzio Ital Offshore

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the proposed visit by Offshore Supplies Office officials to the Sicilian fabrication site, Consorzio Ital Offshore.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* In the course of discussions between British consulate officials and the Consorzio Ital Offshore, an invitation was extended to OSO to visit CIO's fabrication site in Sicily.

Apparently following adverse comment in the United Kingdom press the invitation to visit the site was withdrawn.

Tobacco Companies

Ms Primarolo: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the tobacco companies that have received regional selective assistance grants in each year since 1990; and for what purpose each grant was given.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* Payment of selective assistance to individual companies is confidential to those companies.

British Coal (Assets)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what has been the total investment by British Coal over the most recent five-year period at those collieries and opencast sites currently in operation;

(2) what is the total value of capital allowances outstanding against corporation tax on British Coal in respect of assets of collieries and opencast sites currently in operation.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answers 28 March 1994]*: These are matters for British Coal.

ENVIRONMENT

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in the last five years he has knowingly provided incomplete information in answers to parliamentary questions other than on grounds of disproportionate cost; and on what subjects.

Mr. Gummer: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". I also seek to comply with the Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers to oral questions.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the dates Ministers, or officials from his Department, including his Department's agencies, have used the Malaysian airline MAS for each year since 1985 including this year to date on official business; and what was the cost of each flight to his Department.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is not available.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed

since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Baldry: The following major building projects valued at over £1 million have been or are being funded wholly or partly by my Department since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield. This excludes major reclamation schemes funded through derelict land grant.

	Cost to the department £'000
Doncaster	
Estate Action	
Stainforth Estate, Phases 1-3	9,120
City Challenge (Dearne Valley)	
Mexborough Business Centre	1,197
Dearne Valley Business School	799
Denaby Crags	2,038
Earth Centre	444
	4,478
Urban Programme	
Mexborough Business Centre	463
Barnsley	
City Grant	
Hoyle Mill/Pontefract Road	492
Rockingham Business Park, Birdwell Ph I and II	738
Wombwell Industrial Estate	2,149
Wath Road, Wombwell	2,533
Redbrook Business Park	559
Station Road, Wombwell	163
	6,634
Estate Action	
Cloughfields Estate, Phase 2	1,320
Kendray Estate, Phases 1 and 2	2,385
Lundwood Estate	3,550
Athersley North Estate, Phases 1-3	8,225
	15,480
City Challenge (Dearne Valley)	
Elsecar Heritage Centre	1,545
St. Hilda's	680
Thurnscoe East	687
	2,912
City Challenge (Barnsley NE Corridor)	
Priory Campus	2,610
Barnsley Business and Innovation Centre	750
Cundy Cross	2,416
	5,776
Urban Programme	
Elsecar Heritage Centre	657
Grimethorpe Workshops	540
Thurnscoe Factory/Workshops	2,354
	3,551
Rotherham	
City Grant	
Cortonwood	10,230
Rodger Street	170
Phoenix Business Park	436
Kilnhurst Business Park	385
	11,221
Estate Action	
Canklow Community Refurbishment Scheme	1,964
City Challenge (Dearne Valley)	
Technology Transfer Centre	1,789
Swinton Patio	3,000
	4,789
Urban Partnership Fund	
Rotherham Engineering and Computing Technology Centre	685
Wakefield	
Estate Action	
Smirthwaite Estate	838
Kershaw Avenue, Airedale Estate	2,057
Dacre Avenue, Lupset	1,574
	4,469

Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* hospitals in use, *(b)* redundant hospitals and *(c)* converted or redeveloped hospitals there are on green-belt land.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available centrally. Planning guidelines on redundant hospital sites in the green belt are contained in DOE circular 12/91.

Pollution Control

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the proposals under consideration by the European Parliament and European Commission to halve the pollution emissions from cars.

Mr. Atkins: The European Parliament at its March plenary meeting rejected proposed amendments to the latest directive on vehicle emissions which called specifically for the halving of pollution emissions from cars. The Council of Environment Ministers therefore adopted this directive, further amending directive 70/220/EEC, on 24 March, taking account of the European Parliament's views. In addition to specifying new tighter standards, the latest directive also calls for the European Commission to bring forward by the end of this year further proposals to reduce emissions from cars.

Homelessness

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what rights those who are waiting assessment as to whether they are unintentionally homeless will have under the citizens charter in respect of *(a)* the time such an assessment should take and *(b)* temporary assistance pending assessment under his proposed legislation.

Sir George Young: When reaching the final decisions following our consideration of the responses to the consultation paper "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies", we will take full account of the principles of the citizens charter.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library *(a)* the original advice memo given to James Gray advising Ministers on how to use the political network to rebut criticisms of the Government's homelessness consultation paper and *(b)* the revised guidelines reissued by Richard Wilson to his staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. I am also placing in the Library a copy of the press release issued by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction, on 24 February commenting on Shelter's misleading and inaccurate statements on the Government's "Consultation Paper on Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies".

Sefton Park Palm House

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funding will be available to enable the completion of the renovation of the Sefton Park palm house, Liverpool; and what timetable has been established for the completion of the work.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Member will recall that urban programme funding of £0·254 million, was secured for a short-term rescue package to arrest further deterioration and make the structure safe and secure.

These works were completed last summer. Their purpose, to secure the palm house for a maximum of seven years while proposals for its long-term use were developed, has been achieved. The consideration, by Liverpool city council, of the palm house's future, together with the wider issue of maximising the use of Sefton Park and its facilities, will need to be carried out as part of an overall tourism strategy.

There will be opportunities, under both the single regeneration budget and objective 1, for projects developed in partnership with the private sector and the Community to be successful in a bid for funding. Obviously, I cannot judge whether such a partnership approach would be forthcoming in the case of Sefton Park palm house, nor can I say that if it did, such a bid would be successful.

Housing

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funds have been made available to the Liverpool city council during the past financial year for the modernisation of homes under the provisions of the mandatory house improvement grant system; whether all available funds were claimed; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The level of resources dedicated to house renovation grants is a matter for Liverpool city council to decide within the framework of its capital programme and available resources. A guideline figure of £9·9 million was included in the housing investment programme allocation for 1993-94. Liverpool claimed a total grant expenditure of £13·846 million and a supplementary credit approval for £3·558 million was issued last December.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how management and maintenance cost assumptions are calculated for the purpose of allocating housing revenue account subsidies.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Each housing authority is allocated an allowance for housing revenue account subsidy which reflects its relative need to spend on the management and maintenance of its dwellings. This allowance is based on the particular characteristics of the authority's stock, including the type, age and size of the dwellings, the proportion of flats to houses, the sparsity of the stock and its geographical location. Local authorities are consulted in advance about the details.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list local authority housing departments which have submitted successful housing investment programmes in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Sir George Young: Under the housing investment programme process, all local housing authorities in England are invited each year to submit bids for capital resources for their housing programmes. Allocations are then announced in December. Lists showing the allocations for each authority in 1991-92 and 1992-93 are available from the Library of the House.

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the allocation of resources to local authorities under his Department's housing partnership fund for 1994-95.

Sir George Young: A list of the resources being allocated to local authorities under the housing partnership fund for 1994-95 has been placed in the Library of the House.

Housing Association Rents

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the effects of changes in housing association grant on housing association rent levels.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The relationship between the Government's decisions on changes in housing association grant rates and the rent levels determined by housing associations for their new properties is not direct. The implications for rents of a change in the grant rate will depend on the costs of construction and borrowing, as well as on an association's management and other costs.

Reductions in average grant rates from 80 per cent in 1990-91 to a ceiling of 62 per cent. for 1994-95 have reflected a considerable reduction in procurement costs across the period. Housing associations have also been able to reduce the rents they would otherwise need to charge on new properties by their ability to pool rents across their stock and to make efficiency savings.

Fire Safety

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on fire safety in large open-plan single-storey buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* I have received representations about the safety of both firefighters and the occupants of large single-storey buildings, and about the effect of fires in such buildings on fire service resources, contamination of the environment,

loss of property and disruption to the life of local communities. I have also met representatives of the fire service, the Loss Prevention Council and the Institute of Building Control. A scrutiny team is currently looking at fire safety issues, as announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 17 January, *Official Report*, column *381*. In the light of their findings, and of the representations made to me, I shall consider whether any changes should be made to the relevant part of the building regulations.

Countryside Organisations

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the costs of reorganising the Countryside Commission for England and Wales, the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Nature Conservancy Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The estimated total cost of the reorganisation of the conservation agencies in 1991-92 was £9·18 million, excluding administrative costs within Government disbursed across three Departments. The latter could only be supplied at disproportionate cost. In addition £1·4 million was provided in 1990-91 to cover the agencies initial costs. The direct implementation costs of merging the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland to form Scottish Natural Heritage incurred in 1991-92 were £118,000. This figure is exclusive of the administrative costs incurred by the Scottish Office Environment Department and the two existing agencies which could, again, be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The following information covers non-industrial staff in my Department—excluding PSA services—as at 1 March 1994:

	Part time			*Full time*			*Total*		
	F	*M*	*Total*	*F*	*M*	*Total*	*F*	*M*	*Total*
Grade 1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
Grade 2	0	0	0	3	4	7	3	4	7
Grade 3	1	0	1	3	30	33	4	30	34
Grade 4	0	0	0	0	7	7	0	7	7
Grade 5	5	2	7	16	117	133	21	119	140
Grade 6	4	6	10	25	287	312	29	293	322
Grade 7	31	3	34	103	651	754	134	654	788
SEO and equivalent	18	5	23	125	611	736	143	616	759
HEO and equivalent	49	6	55	263	661	924	312	667	979
EO and equivalent	53	5	58	493	693	1,186	546	698	1,244
AO and equivalent	140	5	145	851	573	1,424	991	578	1,569
AA and equivalent	99	2	101	391	240	631	490	242	732
Total	400	34	434	2,273	3,875	6,148	2,673	3,909	6,582

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *280*, if he will list the number of contracts and their cost with management consultants in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The information requested is not held centrally by my Department and is obtainable only at disproportionate cost.

County Hall, London

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total capital receipt from the sale of county hall in London; and if he will publish the amounts that have been paid to each London borough.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* I refer to my answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *17*, in which I explained that the total capital receipt from the sale of county hall was a matter of commercial confidentiality. Under the terms of the London Government Reorganisation (Capital Money) (Greater London) (Amendment) Order 1993, the London residuary body distributed the following amounts, totalling £60 million, to the London boroughs and to the City of London:

	£
City of London	45,373·34
Camden	1,681,516·01
Greenwich	1,808,561·84
Hackney	1,569,474·18
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,375,421·52
Islington	1,499,766·02
Kensington and Chelsea	1,354,877·70
Lambeth	2,174,754·19
Lewisham	2,035,628·31
Southwark	1,904,780·74
Tower Hamlets	1,410,859·15
Wandsworth	2,279,922·50
Westminster	1,696,516·88
Barking and Dagenham	1,245,366·67
Barnet	2,654,118·04
Bexley	1,913,948·53
Brent	2,165,808·27
Bromley	2,637,789·90
Croydon	2,804,029·41
Ealing	2,522,823·09
Enfield	2,289,346·21
Haringey	1,815,070·93
Harrow	1,788,598·36
Havering	2,012,152·23
Hillingdon	2,073,971·23
Hounslow	1,817,964·77
Kingston upon Thames	1,237,042·62
Merton	1,512,659·01
Newham	1,833,105·05
Redbridge	2,002,535·88
Richmond upon Thames	1,473,820·06
Sutton	1,506,433·98

	£
Waltham Forest	1,855,863·28
Total	60,000,000·00

Valpak Scheme

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects that consultation on the Valpak scheme proposed by the packaging industry producer responsibility group will be completed; and if he will list those organisations which have been consulted.

Mr. Atkins: The producer responsibility industry group which represents 28 of the largest companies with interests in packaging has asked for comments on its proposals by 15 April. PRG has invited comments from all interested parties and I have asked them to send the hon. Member a list of those consulted.

Single Regeneration Budgets

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) of 18 March, *Official Report,* column *863,* by what means and when the recommendation of any senior regional director of single regeneration budgets will be publicised.

Mr. Baldry: The advice and recommendations from regional offices to Ministers about bids for the single regeneration budget will not be published. Ministers will reach final views on the bids in the light of these recommendations. Decisions will subsequently be published around the end of the year.

Race Bank (Dredging)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if an environmental impact assessment complying with current European directives was carried out in relation to proposals to dredge sand from Race bank; and if he will place a copy of that assessment in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: An environmental statement was produced on behalf of the applicant by Posford Duvivier, and a copy will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the progress made during 1993 to extend CCT to white collar services and on the operation of CCT during the year.

Mr. Baldry: Last year, I was very pleased to witness the close co-operation of the local authority associations with the Department in developing the detailed proposals for the extension of CCT to local government professional services. During the year, I had to look into 122 cases where local authorities were alleged to have acted anti-competitively in tendering services, or where their direct services organisations failed to meet the required financial rate of return; and I had to take statutory follow-up action in 23 of these cases. But these figures indicated that the great majority of local authorities approach CCT positively and properly, to the benefit of their local taxpayers.

These are the themes which run through the "CCT in Local Government in England Annual Report" which my Department has published today. The report is the first of its kind. It describes the achievements of 1993, both on the work of extending CCT and in promoting fair competition amongst the current blue-collar services. The report also describes the research projects completed and initiated during the year.

Copies of the report will be sent to all local authorities in England, and to the main trade associations and others involved with CCT. Copies have also been placed in the Library of the House.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has never purchased a Proton car.

Derelict Sites

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers local authorities have to compel owners of derelict and unsightly sites in urban areas to improve their appearance.

Mr. Baldry: Local planning authorities may serve a notice on the owners and occupiers of land under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 if it appears to them that its condition is adversely affecting the amenity of their area.

Local authorities may also use their powers under part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to improve land if they judge it to constitute a statutory nuisance.

Children's Play Facilities

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest available annual figures for grants for children's play facilities; and if he will list in each case the size and location of the grant.

Mr. Baldry: The latest forecast of expenditure under the urban programme in 1993-94 includes £3,042,000 for children's play facilities. Figures for individual grants are not available centrally. In addition, my Department provides local authorities with revenue support grant which they may use to fund such facilities. The total amount of revenue support grant for England and its distribution among local authorities are set out in the "Local Government Finance Report (England) 1994-95" and the accompanying exemplifications, which were placed in the Library of the House on 27 January 1994.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of the CAP *(a)* to the United Kingdom and *(b)* to the EC in each year since 1990; and what are her estimates for 1994.

Mr. Jack: This information is contained in chapter 4 of the 1994 departmental report by the Ministry of

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Intervention Board, a copy of which was deposited in the Library of the House of Commons.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the CAP budget was spent on *(a)* set-aside and *(b)* environmental protection measures other than set-aside in each year since 1990; and what is her estimate for each of the next three years.

Mr. Jack: Information on expenditure on set-aside and on the CAP as a whole from 1990 to 1992 is available from the annual financial reports of the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, copies of which were lodged in the Library of the House of Commons. Until the end of 1992, agri-environment measures were not financed from the CAP budget—that is, the EAGGF guarantee section—but rather from the guidance section. It is not possible to identify expenditure on these measures under the guidance section. For 1993, expenditure on set-aside and on agri-environment measures accounted for 1·2 per cent. and 0·5 per cent., respectively, of total CAP expenditure. The latest official estimates suggest that the corresponding figures for 1994 will be 4·5 per cent. and 1·5 per cent. We have no estimates of the future proportions as EC budgets are set only one year in advance. The 1995 budget has not yet been set. EC agri-environment schemes, and set-aside outwith the arable area payments scheme, are co-financed by member states. The above figures do not include any nationally funded expenditure. EU-wide information on this is not available.

Tobacco

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the tonnage of tobacco production in the EC in each year since 1990; what are her estimates of tobacco production for the next three years showing, in each case, the amount *(a)* consumed in the EC and *(b)* exported, and indicating the main export markets.

Mr. Jack: European Commission figures show Community annual tobacco production since 1990 as follows:

1990—419,953 tonnes
1991—429,739 tonnes
1992—408,451 tonnes
1993—364,219 tonnes (latest estimate)

As the revised regime, which came into force from the 1993 harvest, limits tobacco support to a maximum guaranteed quantity of 350,000 tonnes, production may fall in the next three years. Producers are also being encouraged to switch to more marketable varieties.

EC consumption was estimated at around 670,000 tonnes in 1992, the latest year for which we have information. Consumption, over two thirds of which is met by imported supplies, in the next few years may depend more upon consumer demand than production.

Exports to third countries were some 200,319 tonnes in 1992 of which half went to the United States of America, Egypt, Algeria, Japan and Switzerland and a fifth to eastern European countries. As part of the regime reform, export refunds have been abolished in all but exceptional circumstances. In the future exports may decline.

Cereal Prices

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the harvest cereal prices for each year since 1990; and what is her estimate for these prices for each of the next three years.

Mr. Jack: During the crop years 1989-90 to 1992-93 and the first six months of 1993-94, average ex-farm prices for the principal cereal crops grown in the United Kingdom were as follows:

£/tonne

Crop	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*[1]1993-94*
Wheat	105·33	114·54	115·82	128·88	106·07
Barley	107·20	109·85	107·29	118·22	106·38
Oats	102·81	107·65	105·82	127·37	118·39

[1] July to December only.
Source: MAFF.

Ex-farm cereal prices are influenced by a number of factors, including annual variations in the size and quality of the harvest both at home and abroad. It is therefore not possible to make a meaningful estimate of likely future prices.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of public appointments made by her Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if she will list their names.

Mr. Jack: So far as I am aware there were no Asian or black people appointed in 1993 to the public bodies sponsored by the Ministry and listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Farm Workers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the total number of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers in England in each year since 1980.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is given in the table. The figures are from the June agricultural census for each year and include estimates for minor holdings not covered by the census.

Number of farmers and farm workers on agricultural holdings as at June each year (thousands)

	Farmers'[1] partners and directors	*Spouses[2]*	*All other farm workers[3]*
1980	196·4	50·2	277·2
1981	193·9	50·4	269·7
1982	192·1	50·1	267·9
1983	189·8	50·7	264·7

	Farmers[1] partners and directors	Spouses[2]	All other farm workers[3]
1984	190·1	50·5	257·1
1985	187·8	51·6	256·0
1986	187·4	51·5	249·5
1987	185·5	51·2	241·2
1988	183·5	51·2	235·2
1989	182·4	50·7	224·3
1990	181·9	50·5	223·5
1991	180·3	49·6	215·1
1992	181·5	49·8	208·8
1993	184·3	49·8	206·4

[1] Farmers are defined here as farmers, partners and directors working on farms and who describe themselves in the agricultural census returns. There can be more than one farmer, partner or director per farm.
[2] Spouses of farmers, partners or directors.
[3] Excluding school children but including trainees under an official scheme at agricultural wages board rates or above.

Export and Slaughter Levy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans she has to withdraw the export levy on meat; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what plans she has to increase the slaughter levy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Meat and Livestock Commission is financed by levy which is collected on each animal at the time of slaughter or on export. There is no levy on exported meat. One of the recommendations of the recent review of the Meat and Livestock Commission was that the levy should be collected only at slaughter and not on export. Publication of the findings of the review was announced on 1 March and views have been invited by 1 June 1994.

Dog Exports

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what provisions apply to the export of greyhounds;

(2) what steps the Government are taking to enforce the Balai directive in so far as it relates to banning the export of dogs other than from registered centres.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The transport of greyhounds both within this country and for export is subject to the provisions of the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992.

Commercially traded greyhounds intended for export to EC member states are required to be accompanied by official health certification confirming that the animals comply with the animal health conditions laid down in the so-called "Balai" directive—92/65/EEC. In accordance with the directive, the Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) Regulations 1993 (SI 3247) make it an offence to export commercially traded dogs to another member state unless the animals originate from a holding registered with the Agriculture Departments and the owner or person in charge of the holding has given the undertakings laid down in the directive. Enforcement of the regulations is the responsibility of local authorities.

The health certification requirements for pet dogs, including pet greyhounds, exported to other EC member states and to third countries vary according to the import conditions laid down by the country of destination.

Sand Dredging

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if any other aggregate company has offered to supply for coastal protection work from existing licensed dredging areas;

(2) if any other licensed dredging area is to be closed down as a condition of the Race bank licence.

Mr. Jack: The National Rivers Authority has invited tenders for supply of 1·2 million cu m of sand for nourishment of the beaches between Mablethorpe and Skegness. In this Ministry's contribution to the Government response to their licence application, I have specified that maximum possible use must be made of supplies from existing licensed areas before any material is removed from Race bank.

The NRA currently has no licensed areas and could not therefore relinquish any in lieu of the Race bank.

Whaling

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to the Russian authorities on the killing by former Soviet whalers of blue whales; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom is well aware of recent reports of under-reporting by the former Soviet Union of catches of a number of species of whale, including the blue whale. At a recent intersessional meeting of the International Whaling Commission, the Russian delegation undertook, in response to a request from a number of delegations, to submit to the IWC comprehensive updated statistical data on the USSR's whale catches.

The United Kingdom commissioner to the IWC has since written to the Russian authorities welcoming the contribution Russia made at this meeting and reaffirming the importance we attach to obtaining accurate information on past whale catches.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the last date on which the milk marketing board may submit a reorganisation scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have made a further order under section 2(7) of the Agriculture Act 1993. This defers the last date on which the England and Wales milk marketing board may apply under the Act for approval of a reorganisation scheme from 31 March 1994 to 30 June 1994.

Animal Health

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the amount spent by her Department on research programmes on animal health and welfare in each year since 1985-86; and what is the intended expenditure for each of the next three years.

Mr. Soames: Details of MAFF expenditure on animal health and welfare research since 1991-92 are given in the table. Prior to 1991-92 the data were not recorded in the required format and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Financial year	£ million
1991-92 actual	19·9
1992-93 actual	20·4
1993-94 estimate	22·0
1994-95 plans	21·1
1995-96 plans	21·9
1996-97 plans	21·8

NORTHERN IRELAND

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Departments who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Sir John Wheeler: District councils, professional organisations, employers' and employees' organisations, the Irish Government under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985, and other individuals and organisations as considered appropriate are consulted or informed about forthcoming appointments to public bodies.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested on racial origins of public appointments made is not held by the Northern Ireland Office, nor by the Northern Ireland Departments. However, details of ethnic minority appointments are contained in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is held in the Library.

Nursery Schools

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of children attending nursery school in *(a)* the controlled sector, *(b)* the maintained sector and *(c)* the integrated sector in each of the five education and library boards; and what proportion of under-five-year-olds attend the above schools.

Mr. Ancram: The number of children attending nursery schools in the controlled and maintained sector in each of the five education and library boards is as follows:

Education and library board	Controlled	Maintained	Total
Belfast	783	693	1,476
Western	670	—	670
North-Eastern	1,006	120	1,126
South-Eastern	756	419	1,175
Southern	663	100	763
Total	3,878	1,332	5,210

There are no nursery schools in the integrated sector.

The proportion of under-five-year-olds in nursery schools is 10·3 per cent.

Slopping Out

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list each prison in the Province where slopping out is still in practice; and if he will set out his plans, and the estimated date, for ending slopping out for each prison.

Sir John Wheeler: Slopping out takes place in three Northern Ireland prisons—Her Majesty's prison Belfast, Her Majesty's prison Maze and Her Majesty's prison Magilligan.

The provision of en suite and in-cell sanitation facilities is a major element of an extensive refurbishment programme currently under way at Belfast prison. As the prison will have to remain operational, the programme of work will continue until 2000.

While there are currently no firm plans for ending slopping out at Maze and Magilligan prisons, where periods of unlock are extensive, the Northern Ireland Prison Service is continuing to explore a range of options for providing prisoners with 24-hour access to sanitation facilities.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. David Davis: In the departments and agencies for which my right hon. Friend is responsible, and other areas which fall to the Cabinet Office vote, the appointments are set out in the table.

The table does not refer to appointments to the research councils, which will be restructured on 1 April 1994. I shall write to the hon. Member with the details.

My right hon. Friend is also responsible for the appointment of justices of the peace in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside and appoints several individuals to posts which have historical connections with the Duchy of Lancaster. These receive no remuneration.

Appointment	Minister	Salary	Term of appointment	Post holder
Adviser on Minister's Agencies to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	[1]—	Three years or usual terms	Mr. Clayton Brendish
Special Adviser to the Prime Minister (No. 10 Policy Unit)	Prime Minister	[1]—	Usual terms	Mr. Damian Green

Appointment	Minister	Salary	Term of appointment	Post holder
Special Adviser to the Prime Minister (Head of No. 10 Policy Unit)	Prime Minister	[1]—	Usual terms	Mrs. Sarah Hogg
Special Adviser to the Chief Whip	Chief Whip	[1]—	Usual terms	Miss Shana Hole
Special Adviser to the Chief Whip	Chief Whip	[1]—	Usual terms	Miss Sophie McEwen
Special (Expert) Adviser to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	[1]—	Two years or usual terms	Dr. John Nicholson
Special Adviser to the Prime Minister (No. 10 Policy Unit)	Prime Minister	[1]—	Until 31 July 1994 or usual terms	Lord Poole
Special Adviser to the Prime Minister (No. 10 Policy Unit)	Prime Minister	[1]—	Usual terms	Mrs. Katharine Ramsay
Special Adviser to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	[1]—	One year or usual terms	Mr. David Rutley
Special Adviser to the Prime Minister (Deputy Head of No. 10 Policy Unit)	Prime Minister	[1]—	Usual terms	Mr. Nick True
Special Adviser to the Prime Minister	Prime Minister	[1]—	Usual terms	Miss Arabella Warburton
Chairman of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	Prime Minister	Unpaid	Three years to 31 December 1994	The Rt. Hon. the Lord Carlisle of Bucklow, QC
Member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	Prime Minister	Unpaid	Three years to 31 October 1996	The Lord Bridges, GCMG
Member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	Prime Minister	Unpaid	Three years to 13 March 1997	Sir John Blelloch, KCB
Member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	Prime Minister	Unpaid	Three years to 8 March 1997	The Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP
Member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	Prime Minister	Unpaid	Three years to 31 October 1995	The Rt. Hon. the Lord Thomson of Monifieth, KT
Member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	Prime Minister	Unpaid	Three years to 31 July 1994	Sir Trevor Holdsworth
Member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	Prime Minister	Unpaid	Three years to 31 July 1994	Sir Charles Huxtable, KCB, CBE
Member of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	Prime Minister	Unpaid	Three years to 31 October 1994	Sir Robin Ibbs, KBE
Chairman of Security Commission	Prime Minister	[2]—	Three years to 31 May 1995	Lord Lloyd of Berwick
Alternative Chairman of the Security Commission	Prime Minister	[2]—	Three years to 31 January 1996	Lord Justice Butler-Sloss, DBE
Member of the Security Commission	Prime Minister	£198 per day	Three years to 31 August 1994	Sir John Blelloch, KCB
Member of the Security Commission	Prime Minister	£198 per day	Three years to 31 August 1994	Lt-General Sir Derek Boorman, KCB
Member of the Security Commission	Prime Minister	£198 per day	Three years to 31 August 1994	Sir Christopher Curwen, KCMG
Member of the Security Commission	Prime Minister	£198 per day	Three years to 31 January 1996	Lord Tombs of Brailes
Member of the Security Commission	Prime Minister	£198 per day	Three years to 31 October 1995	Lord Wright of Richmond
Chairman of Political Honours Scrutiny Committee	Prime Minister[3]	Unpaid	The current Administration	Lord Pym, MC
Member of Political Honours Scrutiny Committee	Prime Minister[3]	Unpaid	The current Administration	Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos, CH
Member of Political Honours Scrutiny Committee	Prime Minister[3]	Unpaid	The current Administration	Lord Thomson of Monifieth KT

Appointment	Minister	Salary	Term of appointment	Post holder
Administrative Trustee to the Chequers Trust	Prime Minister	Unpaid	First appointed in summer of 1970	Sir Ralph Verney, KBE
Chairman of the Prime Minister's Panel of Advisers on the Citizen's Charter	Prime Minister	£13,125 pa	Two years	Sir James Blyth, KT
Member of the Prime Minister's Panel of Advisers on the Citizen's Charter	Prime Minister	£10,500 pa	One year	Sir Christopher Bland
Member of the Prime Minister's Panel of Advisers on the Citizen's Charter	Prime Minister	£10,500 pa	Two years	Angela Heylin
Member of the Prime Minister's Panel of Advisers on the Citizen's Charter	Prime Minister	£10,500 pa	Two years	Baroness Perry
Member of the Prime Minister's Panel of Advisers on the Citizen's Charter	Prime Minister	£10,500 pa	One year	Dr. Madsen Pirie
Member of the Prime Minister's Panel of Advisers on the Citizen's Charter	Prime Minister	£10,500 pa	Two years	Nick Rawlings
Member of the Prime Minister's Panel of Advisers on the Citizen's Charter	Prime Minister	£10,500 pa	One year	Christopher Swan
Member of the Prime Minister's Panel of Advisers on the Citizen's Charter	Prime Minister	£10,500 pa	One year	Lady Judith Wilcox
Chairman of the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	£5,000 pa	Two years (w.e.f. June 1993)	Lady Wilcox
Member of the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Two years (w.e.f. June 1993)	Professor Judith Allsop
Member of the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Two years (w.e.f. June 1993)	Mrs. Rosemary Edwards
Member of the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Two years (w.e.f. June 1993)	Mrs. Ros Gardner
Member of the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Two years (w.e.f. June 1993)	Mrs. Elizabeth Hodder
Member of the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Two years (w.e.f. June 1993)	Mr. Colin Skeen
Member of the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Two years (w.e.f. June 1993)	Mr. David Way
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mr. Brian Nicholson
Member of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mrs. Anne Ferguson, OBE
Member of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mr. John Mellon
Member of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mr. Charles Auld
Member of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mr. Richard Spelman
Member of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mr. Nick Phillips
Member of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mr. Eric Nicoli
Member of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mr. Howard Mann
Member of the Advisory Committee on Advertising	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Unpaid	Three years	Mrs. Caroline Marland
Chairman of the LINK Steering Group	CDL and PBT[43]	Unpaid	Two years	Dr. John Parnaby

Appointment	Minister	Salary	Term of appointment	Post holder
Member of the LINK Steering Group	CDL and PBT[4,5]	Unpaid	Unspecified	Dr. Ashok Ganguly
Member of the LINK Steering Group	CDL and PBT[4,5]	Unpaid	Unspecified	Dr. Robert Whelan
Member of the LINK Steering Group	CDL and PBT[4,5]	Unpaid	Unspecified	Dr. Brian Richards
Member of the LINK Steering Group	CDL and PBT[4,5]	Unpaid	Unspecified	Professor Stanley Mason
HMSO—Non-executive Director	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	£8,000	Unlimited	Simon Master

Notes to the table:
Usual terms for Special Advisers
There are standard terms governing Special Adviser appointments concerning the length of their appointment. Unless a termination date is stated the appointment will terminate either:
(i) at the end of the present Administration;
(ii) in the event of the appointing minister leaving Government or moving to another appointment; or
(iii) in the event of a General Election
whichever is soonest. If a length of appointment is stated then the appointment will terminate when this period is up in the event that one of the above does not pre-empt this.
[1] Special Advisers are normally paid according to a salary spine which ranges from £19,121 to £59,957.
[2] Members of the Security Commission do not receive a salary, but are fee-paid. As members of the judiciary, the Chairman and Alternative Chairman do not receive a fee as they are already paid from public funds. All members (including Chairman and Alternative Chairman) are entitled to claim expenses.
[3] All appointments to the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee are made by the Prime Minister by Order of Council.
[4] CDL—PBT—Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, President of the Board of Trade.
[5] Appointments to the LINK Steering Group are made jointly by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Departments who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend follows the procedures for the selection of candidates set out in the "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures" copies of which are available in the Library. The public appointments unit and the chairmen of the respective bodies are consulted in all cases. Other organisations that have been consulted about appointments are as follows:
The Accounts Commission (Scotland)
The Advisory Board for the Research Councils
The Agricultural and Food Research Council
The Association of County Councils
The Association of District Councils
The Association of Metropolitan Authorities
The Audit Commission
Chartered Institute of Arbitrators
The Citizen's Charter Advisory Panel
The Commissioner for Local Administration in England
The Commissioner for Local Administration in Scotland
The Commissioner for Local Administration in Wales
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Council on Tribunals
Department of Trade and Industry
The Economic and Social Research Council
Federation of Independent Advice Centres
The Health Service Commissioner for England
The Health Service Commissioner for Scotland
The Health Service Commissioner for Wales
The Local Government Management Board
Mediation UK
The Medical Research Council
The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
The National Audit Office
The National Consumer Council
The Natural Environment Research Council
The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints
The Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner
OFFER
OFGAS
OFTEL
The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration
The Police Complaints Authority
The Post Office
The Post Office User's National Committee
Reading Centre for Ombudsman Studies
The Royal Society
The Royal Academy of Engineering
The Science and Engineering Research Council
The Social Fund Commissioner
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what major building projects, valued at over £1 million, are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1992 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. David Davis: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 28 March at column *505*.

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what procedures his Departments have to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations,

(b) extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend follows the procedures for the selection of candidates set out in the "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures" copies of which are available in the Library. Details of candidates' political views are not usually held but the appropriate security clearance is obtained where necessary.

Epilepsy

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much has been spent by the Medical Research Council on research into the causes of epilepsy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the last financial year, 1992-93, the Medical Research Council spent £336,000 on research concerning epilepsy, the majority of which provided for clinical trials and studies of the physiological basis of epilepsy. The council recognises that epilepsy is an under-researched area, and has advertised that it wishes to encourage high-quality innovative research that may lead to understanding of causation or to clinical advances in the medium term, under its neuroscience approach to human health initiative.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the latest studies funded by the Medical Research Council of possible cures for Alzheimer's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: In 1992-93 the Medical Research Council spent £1·5 million on research directly related to Alzheimer's disease, plus £3·4 million on research of relevance to Alzheimer's disease. A list of currently funded projects is attached. The Medical Research Council is always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications for research funding.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

PROJECTS DIRECTLY RELATED TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

MRC Biostatistics Unit
Cambridge
Statistical methods in chronic disease epidemiology.

MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology
Cambridge
The molecular biology of Alzheimer's Disease.

MRC Brain Metabolism Unit
Edinburgh
Neuroendocrine, Neuropharmacological and Neuroimaging studies of dementia.

MRC Cyclotron Unit
London
Use of positron emission tomographic camera to study regional tissue function in neurological disease.

MRC Neurochemical Pathology Unit
Newcastle on Tyne
Neurochemical and neuropathological correlates of dementia.
Neurotransmitter interactions and cognition in animals.
Trace element accumulation in neurodegenerative disorders.
Mechanisms of brain mineral homeostasis.
Peptidases and protein catabolism in neurodegenerative disorders.
Gene expression in neurodegenerative disorders.
Transgenic cell and animal models of cerebral amyloid deposition.

MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit
Southampton
Alzheimer's disease in relation to drinking water (occupational and environmental hazards).

GRANTS

Dr. D. Allsop
Biochemistry, Queen's University, Belfast
The metabolism of amyloid precursor protein.

Dr. D. Dawbarn
Medicine, Bristol University
Human neurotrophic factors: characterisation in neurodegenerative diseases and expression of recombinant proteins.
Expression and mutagenesis studies with human B-nerve growth factor gene.

Dr. Carol Brayne
Community Medicine, Cambridge University
Monitoring molecular, genetic and biochemical changes in psychiatrically assessed Alzheimer's disease patients.

Dr. C. G. Fairburn
Psychiatry, Cambridge University
A prospective study of behaviour in dementia.

Dr. J. R. Hodges
Neurology, Cambridge University
A longitudinal study of the patterns and consequences of semantic memory impairment in Alzheimer's disease.

Professor E. S. Paykel
Psychiatry, Cambridge University
MRC Multicentre study of cognitive function and ageing.

Dr. J. H. Xuereb
Psychiatry, Cambridge University
Cambridge Brain Bank's contribution to clinical/epidemiological studies of dementia and Alzheimer's disease research.
Multicentre neuropathological study of cognitive function and ageing.

Professor D. J. H. Brock
Medicine, Edinburgh University
Mutation analysis in Alzheimer's disease.

Professor L. J. Whalley
Psychiatry, Edinburgh University
The epidemiology of presenile dementia of the Alzheimer type. (PSDAT) in Scotland (1974-1988).

Professor J. R. M. Copeland
Psychiatry, Liverpool University
MRC Multicentre study of cognitive function and ageing.
Multicentre neuropathological study of congitive function and ageing.
MRC alpha study: the natural history of the dementias, cognitive change and other mental disorders and ageing.

Professor B. H. Anderton
Neuroscience, Institute of Psychiatry, London.
The mictrotubule-associated protein, tau: subcellular localisation, control of its metabolism and neurodegeneration.
The abnormal metabolism of Alzheimer amyloid precursor protein and its relationship to neurofibillary pathology.
Modelling of Alzheimer's disease in transgenic mice.

Dr. D. M. Bowen
Neurochemistry, Institute of Neurology, London.
Neuropathological and neurochemical correlates of behavioural change in Alzheimer's disease.

Professor P. L. Lantos
Neuropathology, Institute of Psychiatry, London.
A London Brain Bank for research on Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.
London Brain Bank for research on neurodegenerative diseases.

Dr. A. J. Patel
Biochemistry, Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School, London

Involvement of trophic factors produced by glia in plaque biogenesis and neurodegenerative disorders.

Dr. M. Claire Royston
Anatomy, Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School, London
Head injury and ageing; does it lead to an increased risk of Alzheimer-type degeneration?

Dr. J. A. Hardy
Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London
Transgenesis as a mechanism to develop animal models of human disease.

Mr. J. Bond
Health Care Research Unit, Newcastle upon Tyne University
Mental and physical frailty in elderly people: resource implication to families, health and social services.

Dr. P. Ince
MRC Neurochemical Pathology Unit, Newcastle upon Tyne University
Multicentre neuropathological study of cognitive function and ageing.

Professor D. W. K. Kay
Psychiatry, Newcastle upon Tyne University
MRC Multicentre study of cognitive function and ageing.

Professor T. Arie
Health Care of the Elderly, Nottingham University
MRC Multicentre study of cognitive change and ageing.

Dr. J. S. Lowe
Histopathology, Nottingham University
Multicentre neuropathological study of cognitive function and ageing.

Dr. D. M. Bowen
Neuropathology, Oxford University
Neuropathological and neurochemical correlates of behavioural change in Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Margaret M. Esiri
Clinical Neurology, Oxford University
Multicentre neuropathological study of cognitive function and ageing.

Professor J. Grimley Evans
Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine, Oxford University
MRC Multicentre study of cognitive change and ageing.

Dr. C. G. Fairburn
Psychiatry, Oxford University
A prospective study of behaviour in dementia.

Dr. M. Rossor
Neurology, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London
Positron emission tomography in familial and sporadic Alzheimer's disease.

Professor R. Williamson
Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London
Familial dementias and Alzheimer's disease.

PROJECTS RELEVANT TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

MRC Brain Metabolism Unit
Edinburgh
Study of post translational processing and release of neuropeptides.
Neuroendocirne, neuropharmacological and neuroimaging studies of the major functional psychoses.

Clinical Research Centre
Harrow, Middlesex
Studies of the transmissibility of A-4 amyloidosis in primates.

MRC Neurochemical Pathology Unit
Newcastle on Tyne
Transgenic cell and animal models of cerebral amyloide deposition.

MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit
Southampton
Occupation: cancer in pottery workers, slaughtermen, cooks, butchers, and workers exposed to acid mists; solvents and dementia respiratory disease in radiographers.

GRANTS

Dr. K. Breen
Pharmacology, Dundee University
The role of the beta-amyloid precursor protein (beta app) in the mediation of neural cell adhesion.

Professor R. W. Davies
Genetics, Glasgow University
Genes of dopaminergic neurons

Dr. H. Beswick
Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London
Isolation and sequencing of human disease loci.

Dr. D. J. Bryant
NMR Unit, Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London
Development and application of clinical magnetic resonance spectroscopy to disease of liver, brain and muscle.

Dr. B. L. Butterworth
Psychology, University College London, London
Universal and language-specific properties of reading.

Dr. A. J. Lees
Clinical Neurology, Institute of Neurology, London
A United Kingdom Brain Bank for research on Parkinson's Syndrome and other movement disorders.

Dr. E. T. Rolls
Experimental Psychology, Oxford University
Brain mechanisms of perception, memory and learning.

Breast Cancer

Ms Lynne: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what funds are specifically being allocated to gene therapy and to explore the biochemical pathways in breast cancer.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Medical Research Council's current expenditure on research related to gene therapy for melanoma is £50,000 per annum. The council has very recently awarded support for two new multi-disciplinary teams—one at Birmingham for £2 million and another at the Institute for Cancer Research for £1·1 million—to develop gene therapy for common cancers. Both grants will run for five years.

In 1992-93, the MRC spent £486,000 on projects exploring the biochemical pathways in breast cancer.

The council is always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications for research funding.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what funds are being put down for basic laboratory research into breast cancer.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the financial year 1992-93, the Medical Research Council expenditure on breast cancer research was £3·1 million. Included in that figure was £836,000 which was directly related to basic laboratory research into cancer. The council is always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications for research funding.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Phase 2 (New Parliamentary Building)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what is the current situation with regard to the development of the phase 2 new parliamentary building; what is the programme for demolition of the site; when the building is expected to be ready for occupation; and what steps are being taken to keep the House informed about progress on this project.

Mr. Ray Powell: On 2 February, following the Government's agreement that the Jubilee line should proceed, the House handed over to London Underground Ltd. the site on which the phase 2 building is to be constructed. Preliminary work on the site has begun and demolition work in preparation for the construction of the new underground station at Westminster will commence in a few weeks.

A legal agreement has been signed between the House and London Underground under the terms of which the site is due to be handed back to the authorities of the House in February 1997 to allow construction of the new building to proceed. Detailed design work is progressing and contracts for the first of the prefabricated sections will be placed later in the year.

The Accommodation and Works Committee is maintaining a close interest in the project and will receive monthly reports on its progress. At the earliest appropriate moment a further report will be made to the House.

Arrangements are being made for an exhibition to be mounted shortly after Easter to advise Members on the work planned for Westminster station and its consequences for the House. In due course a further exhibition on the new parliamentary building will be arranged.

HEALTH

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each district health authority the number of community psychiatric nurses employed in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

Air Toxics Study

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make an assessment of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's "Motor-Vehicle-Related Air Toxics Study", Ann Arbor, 1993.

Mr. Sackville: We are obtaining a copy of this report and will then consider it.

Abandoned Babies

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new-born babies were abandoned by their mothers in the last year that the figures are available.

Mr. Bowis: Information about new-born babies abandoned by their mothers is available in the register of children found abandoned in England and Wales, maintained by the Registrar General for birth registration purposes. There were five entries on this register in 1992 and two in 1993.

Hartley Hospital, Colne

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to ascertain whether all the proper procedures were followed by the North Western regional health authority in its disposal of Hartley hospital in Colne.

Mr. Sackville: The North Western regional health authority is responsible for the management of the disposal of Hartley hospital, Colne. From the information available there are no grounds to conclude that there is a need to investigate the actions taken by the RHA.

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information her Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons;

(2) what procedures her Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the political affiliation of candidates for appointment is not readily available centrally. Public appointments are made on the basis of aptitude, merit and suitability.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent the procedures adopted for the appointment of the new chief executives and general managers for the eight English health regions, coming into effect on 1 April, conformed with the Government Opportunity 2000 programme and procedures and practices on equal opportunities; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The particular circumstances of these appointments meant that the exercise was not run as open recruitment and the field was therefore restricted. As far as it was possible, we used good practice in line with Opportunity 2000 and equal opportunities policies and practices as they apply within the national health service and the Department of Health.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of public appointments made by her Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if she will list their names.

Mr. Sackville: In 1993, 4,801 people were serving on Health public bodies. Of these, 2·04 per cent.—98 appointees—were of Asian origin and 0·94 per cent.—45 appointees—were of black origin.

Information about ethnic origin was given in confidence, and it would therefore be inappropriate to publish the names of these appointees.

Health Authority Staff, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff were employed by the Doncaster health authority in each half year since March 1990 to the latest date figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the table. These figures exclude staff in trusts in September 1991 and September 1992. By 1992, all direct care staff were employed by the two trusts in Doncaster.

National health service staff in Doncaster DHA area—England—September 1990 to 1992—excluding trusts.

Whole-time equivalents	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
All direct care staff	3,250	1,620	0
All non-direct care staff	1,170	n/a	n/a

Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. "n/a indicates figures not available. Zero indicates figures less than five.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authorities in England have *(a)* appointed project workers to develop services for disabled children, *(b)* established multi-agency planning structures, *(c)* established budgets for services to disabled children and for how much, *(d)* developed home-based short-term care provision and *(e)* developed residential short-term care provision following the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Bowis: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The 1993 report to Parliament on the operation and achievements of the Children Act will be available shortly and will include a commentary on the services provided by local authorities for children with disabilities.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if guidelines issued by her Department are of uniform status; and what action is taken to monitor guidelines with particular reference to those issued under the Children Act 1989 regarding the use of corporal punishment by child minders.

Mr. Bowis: The Department's guidance on behaviour and sanctions by child minders if minded children misbehave is contained in volume 2 of the Children Act Guidance and Regulations series entitled "Family Support, Day Care and Educational Provision for Young Children", copies of which are available in the Library. All these volumes were issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which requires local authorities in the exercise of their social services functions to act under the general guidance of my right hon. Friend the Secretry of State.

The Department keeps the working of the Children Act under review and issues supplementary guidance when this is appropriate. At present we are studying the recent High Court judgment in the case of Mrs. Davis. This was not critical of the content of the Department's guidance. We will consider if any further clarification is appropriate.

Oldchurch Accident and Emergency Unit

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account was taken in the business plans submitted by *(a)* Havering hospitals trust and *(b)* Redbridge healthcare trust of the projected closure of Oldchurch accident and emergency unit; and if she will place copies of those business plans in the Library.

Dr. Mawhinney: Barking and Havering health authority has undertaken its statutory responsibility to consult on the proposed closure of the accident and emergency department at Oldchurch hospital. A decision will be announced shortly. Business plans are national health service trust internal working documents. Summary business plans of all NHS trusts for 1994-95 will be published no later than May 1994 and can be obtained from individual NHS trusts.

Asthma

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to work with her colleagues in the Department for Education to promote good asthma management for children at school.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 10 March at column *346*.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's strategy for research into asthma; where major funding is being allocated; and how the allocation of resources is decided.

Mr. Sackville: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In 1992-93 the MRC spent £759,000 on research into asthma and a further £757,000 on research which may be relevant to the condition. The Medical Research Council takes account of the Department of Health's priorities for research when allocating resources.

The Department of Health is a founder member of the respiratory research liaison committee, which includes the major organisations with a research interest in respiratory diseases, including asthma. In addition, the national health service research and development strategy determines research priorities on a range of difficult problems of direct relevance to the NHS and work is planned to establish detailed priorities in the field of respiratory diseases across all age groups.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she intends to make to the findings of a recent study showing that 13·1 per cent. of children suffer from doctor-diagnosed asthma with 2·2 per cent. experiencing more than 12 asthma attacks in the previous year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is concerned about the incidence of asthma in children. At our request the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants has set up an expert sub-group to review the evidence linking asthma to air pollution.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will accept the finding of the recent Audit Commission

report, "A Prescription for Improvement", on under-prescribing for asthmatic patients; and what steps she is planning to take to ensure asthmatic patients receive the medications they need.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is the responsibility of general practitioners to decide the clinical needs of their patients. Since the introduction of chronic disease management programmes for asthma and diabetes in July of last year about 90 per cent. of general practitioners are running programmes for asthmatic patients. The British Thoracic Society's guidelines for the management of asthma are regularly drawn to the attention of all GPs and prescribing of preventtive medicine for asthma has increased sixfold over the last 10 years. Low levels of asthma prophylaxis are brought to the attention of GPs by family health services authority prescribing advisers.

Schizophrenia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from SANE about *(a)* the difficulty in providing appropriate help for victims of schizophrenia and *(b)* the victims of schizophrenia being obliged to vacate hospital beds prematurely.

Mr. Bowis: Ministers and officials have been in close touch with SANE to exchange views on a range of issues.

Dentistry

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the Association of Denture Prosthesis on the introduction of a Bill on Professions Supplementary to Dentistry; what plans she has for further discussions; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I met the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir Teddy Taylor) and representatives of the Association for Denture Prosthesis on 28 February 1994.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 March, *Official Report,* column *830,* what information her Department has centrally for England and Wales as a whole on the number of dental surgeons (i) providing national health service treatment and (ii) not providing national health service treatment for each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table. Information is not held on dentists in wholly private practice.

Number of general dental practitioners providing national health service treatment[1] at 30 September England and Wales

Year	*Number of dentists under contract to family health services authorities[2]*
1989	16,178
1990	16,317
1991	16,287
1992	16,242
1993	16,616

[1] National health service dental treatment is also provided by the community dental service, the hospital dental service and by salaried dentists.

[2] Includes principals, assistants and vocational trainees.

Acute Psychiatric Beds

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sanctions exist when guidelines in respect of the provision of acute psychiatric beds are broken.

Mr. Bowis: It is for health authorities to assess the need for acute psychiatric beds and to contract with providers of mental health services to ensure that sufficient beds are available to meet the needs of their residents.

Chronic Disease Management Programme

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will indicate what progress is being made on the chronic disease management programme.

Mr. Sackville: New arrangements for chronic disease management in general practice were introduced on 1 July 1993. The latest available data suggests that almost 90 per cent. of general practitioners have already been approved to run chronic disease management programmes for the treatment of asthma and diabetes. This is an excellent response by general practitioners and their practice teams towards improving the treatment of these conditions.

Accident and Emergency Units

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assumptions she makes about the effect on neighbouring units of a closure of an accident and emergency unit; how that effect is assessed; and what degree of co-operation is expected from neighbouring units affected by a proposed closure of such a unit.

Mr. Sackville: Local health authorities plan the provision of accident and emergency services, based on existing patterns of treatment and assessments of future need. Closure of an accident and emergency department is only agreed where it can be demonstrated that there will be a net gain in the effectiveness and efficiency in patient services. It is for the appropriate health authority to undertake an assessment of the impact on surrounding hospitals, and to ensure an appropriate level of service. Only where there is no agreement locally should Ministers become involved in planning for local patient services.

Life Expectancy Statistics

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on *(a)* the child mortality rates and *(b)* the average life expectancy for the inhabitants of (i) Manchester, (ii) Birmingham, (iii) Lambeth, (iv) Southwark, (v) Liverpool, (vi) Hackney, (vii) Leeds, (viii) Sheffield, (ix) Haringey, (x) Newham, (xi) Lewisham, (xii) Newcastle upon Tyne, (xiii) Salford, (xiv) South Tyneside, (xv) Coventry, (xvi) Hammersmith and Fulham, (xvii) Bristol and (xviii) Wakefield.

Mr. Sackville: The information on child mortality rates is shown in the table. The data requested on average life expectancy for the selected areas are not collected.

Child mortality rates[1] in England, 1992

Location	*Sex*	*Age group 0-14*
Manchester	Male	115·1
	Female	88·5
Birmingham	Male	94·5
	Female	95·9

Location	Sex	Age group 0-14
Lambeth	Male	93·1
	Female	100·6
Southwark	Male	112·3
	Female	122·8
Hackney	Male	102·3
	Female	73·1
Haringey	Male	119·4
	Female	82·4
Newham	Male	98·9
	Female	69·4
Lewisham	Male	85·1
	Female	97·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	Male	51·2
	Female	85·0
Liverpool	Male	79·0
	Female	47·3
Leeds	Male	69·2
	Female	68·1
Sheffield	Male	86·9
	Female	60·5
Salford	Male	82·0
	Female	59·7
South Tyneside	Male	44·1
	Female	73·3
Coventry	Male	121·1
	Female	53·0
Bristol	Male	88·8
	Female	48·2
Wakefield	Male	78·2
	Female	52·3
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Male	84·2
	Female	64·6

[1]Rates per 100,000 population.

Hammersmith Hospital

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of the Hammersmith hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 21 March at columns *68-69*.

Tuberculosis

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths from tuberculosis occurred in each of the last five years by region; and how many new cases of tuberculosis were reported in each region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

Care Orders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children between the ages of 16 and 18 years have care orders; and how many of them are *(a)* currently with fostering families and *(b)* in homes.

Mr. Bowis: The latest centrally available information relates to the position at 31 March 1992, when it is estimated that 6,900 children aged 16 or 17 were subject to care orders; of these 3,100 were placed with foster parents and 900 were resident in community homes.

Training Costs (Doctors)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost to the national health service of training a doctor.

Dr. Mawhinney: The clinical training of medical students provided within the national health service is supported by the service increment for teaching and research. The amount of SIFTR paid annually in respect of each medical student is £36,292 at 1993-94 prices, for each of three clinical years. However, doctors also spend varying but significant periods in postgraduate training and subsequently throughout their careers in training activities designed to enable them to keep up to date in a rapidly changing clinical environment. It is not possible to quantify the total cost to the NHS of these forms of training.

Vasectomies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information and guidance is available to men seeking vasectomies; what information is given on the failure rate of such operations; and what are the figures for the failure rate of this procedure.

Mr. Sackville: The handbook of contraceptive practice issued by the Department to all general practitioners and doctors and nurses working in family planning clinics gives advice on counselling for vasectomy, including the need to inform the patient about the possibility of failure. The overall failure rate is less than 0·5 per cent. Copies of the handbook are available in the Library.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost of official entertainment in her Department in each year since 1990-91; if she will list the receptions held in each year at her Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure on hospitality since 1990-91 is shown in the table. A breakdown of past expenditure is not available in the form requested as hospitality expenditure tends to consist of large numbers of small payments—for example, refreshments for meetings of expert advisory committees, working groups etc.—which are summarised, managed and recorded by organisational group; I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) on 24 January at columns *109-10* for a breakdown of 1992-93 expenditure by organisational group within the Department.

Year	£
1990-91	158,000
1991-92	168,151
1992-93	246,374
1993-94	[1]223,000

[1]Estimate.
Note: Figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

Cervical Smear Tests

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue guidance on the time before a repeat cervical smear test is needed after a result which shows no endocervical cells.

Mr. Sackville: An absence of columnar glandular endocervical cells per se does not in itself constitute an indication for a repeat smear as the smear could be adequate in other respects. Where a patient's smear is shown by the laboratory to be unsatisfactory, she is invited to have a smear as soon as possible.

HIV-AIDS

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, (1) pursuant to her answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, columns *680-81*, to what extent the AIDS (Control) Act 1987 reports for the past year revealed gaps in the area of HIV-AIDS-related services for those with a physical disability;

(2) what assessment her Department has made of the physical accessibility of those locations in which HIV-AIDS-related services for the physically disabled are based.

Mr. Sackville: The AIDS (Control) Act 1987 requires regional and district health authorities to report on:

the known number of HIV seropositive people and people with AIDS in the area of the authority;
a report of facilities and services;
the number of staff employed;
expenditure on HIV and AIDS-related services.

Gaps in the area of HIV-related services for those with a physical disability have not been specifically identified. We would, however, expect authorities to provide services which are sensitive to the needs of and accessible by people with a physical disability since many people with AIDS would fall within this category.

Profit Margins

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department has collected data, or issued guidance, regarding the levels of profit margin placed on equipment and goods sold to national health service authorities or bodies.

Mr. Sackville: No, apart from the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Health Promotion Clinics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will assess value for money in regard to health promotion clinics in general practice.

Dr. Mawhinney: Practice-based health promotion programmes are a good use of national health service resources to improve people's health.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many Proton cars were purchased by her Department and its predecessor in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Ritual Abuse

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when Professor Jean La Fontaine's report on ritual abuse will be completed; and if the result will be made public.

Mr. Bowis: Professor La Fontaine's survey into the extent and nature of organised and ritual abuse will be completed later this year. No decision on publication has yet been made.

Suicides (Paracetamol)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to deal with suicides from paracetamol.

Mr. Bowis: We are considering a number of measures designed to reduce the risk of deliberate or accidental paracetamol overdoses.

Cancer Treatment

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much in real terms was spent in each of the last three years in the NHS on *(a)* the treatment of cancer and *(b)* the prevention of cancer.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the amount spent on treatment and prevention of cancer is not identified separately.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of billboard sites currently covered by the voluntary agreement with the tobacco manufacturing companies; and how many she estimates are within *(a)* three miles, *(b)* two miles, *(c)* one mile, *(d)* three quarters of a mile, *(e)* half a mile and *(f)* one quarter of a mile of school premises.

Mr. Sackville: Under the voluntary agreement, billboard advertising of cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco is not allowed which is in close proximity to and clearly visible from schools, places of education for young people and children's playgrounds. Information on the number of billboard sites covered by the voluntary agreement, and on the proportion within different distances of school premises is not held by the Department. However, the voluntary agreement limits expenditure on cigarette brand poster advertising by companies represented by the Tobacco Manufacturers Association to 50 per cent. of the 1980 level, allowing for inflation.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the National Health Service Supplies Authority, either centrally or through its divisions, employs independent consultants to undertake comparisons between the prices it pays or negotiates and the best available market price.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Supplies Authority currently contracts with three independent consultants to obtain regular price comparisons.

Trent RHA

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was allocated to Trent regional health authority purchasers in each year since 1990; and what percentage this represents of all revenue funding for hospital and community health services in each year.

Mr. Sackville: Allocations to district health authorities as purchasers of health care were made for the first time in the 1991-92 financial year. It is the responsibility of regional health authorities to allocate resources to districts and this information is not separately identifiable in the information collected by the Department.

Expenditure by district health authorities in Trent in 1991-92 and 1992-93 is shown in the table; it excludes expenditure by general practitioner fundholders. The figures for individual authorities over the two years are not directly comparable in every case because of boundary changes.

Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Trent district health authorities' expenditure accounted for 8·7 per cent. of the total expenditure by district health authorities in England in 1991-92 and 9·2 per cent. in 1992-93.

Revenue expenditure by district health authorities in England

District health authority	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
North Derbyshire DHA	105,670,742	113,114,609
Southern Derbyshire DHA	167,981,567	185,166,596
Leicestershire DHA	261,702,208	297,169,389
North Lincolnshire DHA	91,668,517	100,708,900
South Lincolnshire DHA	102,072,066	109,472,637
Bassetlaw DHA	31,107,515	n/a
Central Nottinghamshire DHA	87,214,069	n/a
North Nottinghamshire DHA	n/a	131,696,612
Nottingham DHA	201,912,223	224,553,446
Barnsley DHA	70,930,301	79,006,026
Doncaster DHA	88,483,141	99,681,002
Rotherham DHA	75,355,705	84,222,003
Sheffield DHA	212,577,749	241,697,006
Total DHAs, Trent	1,496,675,803	1,666,488,226
Total DHAs, England	17,114,662,189	18,182,143,979

Source: Annual accounts of health authorities (England).

Notes:

1. Figures shown are for total revenue expenditure.
2. Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.
3. Bassetlaw and Central Nottinghamshire DHAs merged to form North Nottinghamshire DHA in 1992-93.

Hospital Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds there were in each year between 1978-79 and 1988-89 in England excluding inner and outer London district health authorities and regional health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: The available information on the average daily number of available beds has been published and copies of the national and regional summaries placed in the Library. The data for the years 1978 to 1986 are contained in the publication "Hospital Statistics-Form SH3". Summary tables for the years from 1982 to 1992-93 are set out in "Bed availability for England: Financial Year 1992-93".

Breast Lump Clinics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of hospitals have specific breast lump clinics.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

It is for local provider units in consultation with their purchasers to decide what provision is required.

Cash Limits

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes will be made to the cash limits of her Department in 1993-94.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The cash limit for class XII vote 1—hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England—will be increased by £5,794,000, from £19,880,171,000 to £19,885,965,000. This increase covers transfers of £5,000,000 for enabling work for phase IV development of Derriford Hospital, from class I, vote 1, Ministry of Defence; £763,000 for payments to the National Health Service Estate Management and Health Building Agency and £123,000 in respect of Public Health Laboratory Service Board, from class XII, vote 3, Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England; £93,000 for the cost of clinical placements in England in respect of Glasgow Caledonian university students, to class XIV, vote 18, student awards, Scotland; and an increase of £1,000 offset by receipts from members of the public towards the cost of medical treatment for Bosnian evacuees.

The non-voted cash limit for supplementary credit approvals for personal social services—DOH/LACAP—in England is to be increased by £1,183,500, from £23,700,000 to £24,883,500 in respect of the take up of entitlement to carry forward of underspends from the 1992-93 financial year under the end-year flexibility arrangements as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 July 1993 at columns *512-17.*

All increases will either be offset by increased receipts, transfers to or from other votes, or from the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Microbiology

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the future of the centre for applied microbiology and research.

Mr. Sackville: I announced on 15 January 1993 that the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research was to become independent of the Public Health Laboratory Service and would be separately accountable to Health Ministers. I can now announce that the centre will, from 1 April, be administered by a new authority called the Microbiological Research Authority under the chairmanship of Mr. J. E. Everitt, outgoing chairman and chief executive of Vickers Medical. I have also agreed to the appointment of Dr. J. Melling as chief executive and director of the centre. The greater independence and more appropriate management expertise provided by these measures should enable the centre to develop its full scientific and commercial potential.

Breast Cancer Treatment

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on the encouragement of randomised controlled trails for the treatment of breast cancer.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are committed to encouraging research into breast cancer. Randomised controlled trials are regarded as the scientific method for determining and evaluating new developments in health care, and are funded by the Department when they represent the most appropriate method of research for answering specific questions relevant to health care policy and practice.

The United Kingdom Health Departments, along with the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the major cancer research charities—the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and the Cancer Research Campaign—are currently funding four studies into breast screening at an estimated cost of £5 million over five years. Three of these trials involve RCTs. The trials are being co-ordinated by the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research.

General Practitioner Fundholders

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was allocated in Greater London to general practitioner fundholders in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what percentage this represented of the total allocation for general practitioner fundholders in England for each year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities manage the general practitioner fundholding scheme in their areas. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the Thames regional health authorities for local information in London.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fundholding practices there were in Greater London for each year since 1991-92; and what percentage of the total figure for fundholders in England those figures represent in each year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about general practitioner fundholder numbers is only available centrally at regional health authority level. I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 7 February at columns *43-44*.

Patient Stays (Average Length)

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average length of in patient stay for patients who receive *(a)* hysterectomy, *(b)* gall bladder removal, *(c)* hernia repair, *(d)* kidney transplant and *(e)* angioplasty in hospitals in (i) Birmingham, (ii) Leeds, (iii) London, (iv) Manchester, (v) Newcastle and (vi) Bristol.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The available information by regional health authority is shown in the table.

In-patients in NHS hospitals in England 1990-91
Average duration of stay (days)

Region of treatment	*Hysterectomy*	*Gall bladder excision*[1]	*Hernia repair*[2]	*Kidney transplant*	*Angioplasty*[3]
Northern	8·4	9·5	4·4	16·6	4·8
Yorkshire	9·0	9·2	4·3	11·0	3·8
Trent	8·4	8·4	3·5	17·2	3·7
East Anglia	8·0	9·3	3·9	14·1	3·6
North West Thames	9·2	9·7	3·7	18·0	4·4
North East Thames	8·4	9·3	3·8	11·4	4·7
South East Thames	8·6	9·3	3·9	25·2	4·7
South West Thames	8·8	8·9	3·8	0·6[4]	3·8
Wessex	8·1	8·5	3·2	15·8	3·5
Oxford	7·9	8·2	3·4	8·1	2·9
South Western	9·0	10·0	3·9	19·7	4·9
West Midlands	8·4	8·8	3·5	15·4	4·6
Mersey	8·7	9·8	4·3	16·3	6·6
North Western	8·2	9·8	4·7	16·2	4·4
ENGLAND	8·5	9·2	3·9	16·0	4·3

[1] May exclude some laparoscopic cholecystectomies, not otherwise identifiable.
[2] Figures represent repairs of groin hernias. They exclude those of other less common hernias in other parts of the body.
[3] Covers coronary artery angioplasty. The term "angioplasty" covers a very large range of operative procedures on blood vessels in different parts of the body.
[4] It is believed that this extremely low figure reflects mis-coding at source.

District Health Authority Mergers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all proposed district health authority mergers and the timetable for each.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 15 March at column *566* concerning district health authority mergers from 1 April 1994. Proposals to merge Wigan DHA with Bolton DHA and Newcastle DHA with North Tyneside DHA have been received by the Department. Decisions on these proposals, which will include a timetable, will be made in due course.

Disability Equipment

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the average weekly cost of powering *(a)* a powered wheelchair, *(b)* a bed/bath hoist, *(c)* an automatic door opener, *(d)* a stair lift, *(e)* a respirator, *(f)* an automatic toilet-bidet unit and *(g)* a self-lift chair; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount of public funding is granted each year to help disabled people not on benefits pay the costs of running disability equipment; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: A wide range of disability equipment is supplied and, where appropriate, maintained by the national health service, social services departments, and other public bodies.

Health Authorities (Ethnic Minority Members)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specific measures her Department plans to take to increase the percentages of ethnic minority members of health authorities, national health service trusts and working parties formed by her Department; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our aim is to appoint the best people we can to the boards of national health service authorities and trusts and to ensure that good candidates from ethnic minorities are given every encouragement to come forward. To this end, regional health authority chairmen are specifically encouraged to seek people from ethnic minorities when identifying candidates for chairman and non-executive positions.

Urgent Cases

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the implications for patients of the letter by Sir Duncan Nichol, chief executive of the national health service, to district health authorities on the treatment of urgent cases within available resources.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Duncan Nichol wrote to all hospitals and health authorities on 24 February reminding those concerned with the purchasing and provision of hospital treatment of the need to ensure that appropriate clinical priority is given to patients on waiting lists. Copies of the letter, EL(94)19, are available in the Library.

Continuing Care Provision

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the NHS Management Executive to complete its inquiry into NHS continuing care provision by those district health authorities identified in the recent Alzheimer's Disease Society report as supplying no NHS continuing care beds; whether the NHS Management Executive's findings will be made public; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: I expect to receive a report from the National Health Service Management Executive shortly. Such advice is normally internal for the Department.

Birth Deformities

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has carried out on the link between sea pollution and deformities of children at birth; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department itself has undertaken no such research. I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on 25 March at columns *462-63*.

"Your Pocket Guide to Sex"

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of *(a)* commissioning, *(b)* printing, *(c)* distributing, *(d)* promoting and *(e)* recalling "Your Pocket Guide to Sex", written by Nick Fisher for the Health Education Authority, which was withdrawn on 23 March.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Waiting Times

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to issue patients charter maximum waiting times inclusive of the wait for the first time out-patient appointment; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: New initiatives to reduce hospital waiting times are constantly being considered. An announcement will be made in due course if it is decided to add to the successful standards contained in the patients charter.

Farmers (Suicide)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will commission a report into the rate of suicide for farmers; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have commissioned Dr. K. Hawton of the University of Oxford to carry out a study of individuals in high-risk groups, including farmers, for whom verdicts of suicide or undetermined death were returned. His report is expected in December 1995.

EMPLOYMENT

Supported Employment

Mr. Merchant: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on provision for supported employment in 1994-95.

Mr. David Hunt: The maximum grant payable in 1994-95 per contracted place in the supported employment programme will be £4,420 for both voluntary body and local authority providers. Under the arrangements I announced on the 10 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *338*, coming into force on 1 April, the number of places in the programme will be for negotiation between the Employment Service and both local authorities and voluntary bodies. Payments to local authorities will continue, as previously, to be limited to at most 75 per cent. of their costs.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cost of new furniture for the Secretary of State's private office was £911·88.

Work Experience Schemes

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of participants in *(a)* North Norfolk Action, *(b)* job clubs, *(c)* workstart and

(d) Government-organised or funded work experience schemes found subsequent employment as a result of joining the scheme, after the first six months of the scheme starting.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows: North Norfolk Action 12·8 per cent. from the work experience element and 2·3 per cent. from attendance at a series of caseload interviews; job clubs 63 per cent.

Figures for workstart are as yet unavailable; the scheme, which began in July 1993, provides subsidies for 12 months to employers who recruit eligible long-term people. Figures are also unavailable for community action, through which work experience is currently provided. This scheme also began in July 1993, and information on the number of leavers who obtain jobs is collected three months after the date of leaving.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the proportion of the United Kingdom work force which is employed under terms and conditions which do not fulfil the terms of the European Community social chapter.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The draft social chapter proposed at Maastricht did not set out any terms and conditions of employment.

Aerospace Apprenticeships

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many engineering apprenticeships in the aerospace industry there were in each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: Data on apprentices have been collected on a consistent basis through the labour force survey since 1984. However, the sample size does not allow reliable estimates at this level of industrial detail.

Labour Flexibility

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assumption the Government make about the cost of their policy of labour flexibility for those affected: if he will list the evidence available to him about the relative costs and benefits; and if he will publish his estimate of the losses and gains and those who have lost and those who have gained.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A more flexible and efficient labour market leads overall to more jobs and less unemployment. It is not possible to disentangle the effect of flexibility on individuals.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the objective of the Government policy of labour flexibility; and what benchmarks the Government used for judging its success;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *433*, concerning rewards for productivity, by what means he assesses the effectiveness of the Government's policy of labour flexibility.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The objective of labour flexibility is to support economic growth, create jobs and reduce unemployment. Increased labour flexibility has contributed to unemployment falling earlier in the cycle than previously—a fall of 220,000 since December 1992, and to a relatively early upturn in the work force in employment—an increase of 136,000 in the nine months to December 1993.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a list of the measures which the Government include under the heading of labour flexibility; and which of these were commended to the Group of Seven.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Flexibility requires measures to improve the efficient working of the labour market, to increase the ability of unemployed people to get jobs and compete effectively, and to encourage investment in skills by individuals and their employers. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State commended each of these to the G7 jobs conference, which agreed that flexible labour markets support economic growth and deliver higher employment and lower unemployment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of the policy of labour flexibility on full-time adult male employment since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such assessment has been made. Labour market flexibility should support economic growth, reduce unemployment and increase all types of jobs.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the minimum rate of unemployed required to sustain the Government's policy of labour flexibility.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no minimum rate required to sustain labour market flexibility. The aim of labour market flexibility is to support economic growth, create jobs and reduce unemployment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of the Government's policy of labour flexibility on the distribution of income; and whether it was intended to have that effect.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The distribution of income is determined by a variety of factors including the extent of unemployment. A flexible labour market should reduce unemployment and therefore help those at the lower end of the income distribution.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what account the Government have taken of the extra cost to the social services in assessing the results of their policy on labour flexibility;

(2) what account the Government have taken in judging, the results of their policy of labour flexibility, of the extra cost, to law and order;

(3) what account the Government have taken of the extra cost to the health service in assessing the results of their policy on labour flexibility.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Labour market flexibility supports economic growth, creates jobs and reduces unemployment. It does not involve extra costs to the social services, law and order or the health service.

Productivity (Rewards)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *433*, concerning rewards for productivity, what effect the increase in part-time working in the service sector has had on output per person employed; and if he will restate the published figures to show the estimated increase.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Statistics on the component of output attributable to part-time workers in the service sector are not compiled. As a result it is not possible to estimate reliably the effect on productivity of an increase in part-time working in the service sector.

Productivity

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *433*, concerning rewards for productivity, if he will give the data per person-hour in the sectors requested.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The data on output per person-hour in the sectors requested are not available.

Working Hours

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *861*, on the number of hours worked, if he will provide comparable information for the whole economy less manufacturing.

Miss Widdecombe: The figures given in my reply to the hon. Member on 3 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *861* were based upon the index of total weekly hours worked by all operatives in manufacturing. There are no comparable figures for the rest of the economy.

However, the labour force survey provides estimates of the total number of hours worked in each industry sector on the basis of information provided by individuals responding to the survey. These estimates are not seasonally adjusted and so comparable figures must relate to the same time period for each year. Thus, most recent comparable estimates from the LFS between spring 1989 and spring 1993, show that the total number of hours worked by employees and self-employed in Great Britain fell by 19 per cent. for those in manufacturing industries, and by 13 per cent. for those in other sectors of the economy.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for those in full-time training and also included in the count of the work force in employment.

Miss Widdecombe: In Great Britain, in December 1993, there were 428,000 participants on Government training programmes who were included in the count of the work force in employment. This figure comprises those people whose training has an element of work experience, including those with a contract of employment.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the correlation between the rate of economic growth since 1964 and the numbers employed in manufacturing in the United Kingdom and other industrial countries.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Industrial employment has fallen in a majority of the G7 countries since 1964. Output, on the other hand, has risen—in most cases substantially.

Ministerial Duties

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish a list of his duties and the amount of his working week allocated to each activity.

Mr. David Hunt: A list of my duties and those of my Ministers is set out in the Departmental Report (Cm 2505), a copy of which is available in the Library. The amount of time spent on any one aspect will vary from week to week.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Allerton Road Jobcentre

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the future of the Allerton Road jobcentre, Liverpool.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. David Alton, dated 29 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question in which you ask about the future of Allerton Road Jobcentre (JC), Liverpool.

Allerton JC will be closed on or about 10 June 1994 as part of the Employment Service (ES) programme to integrate its services and rationalise its estate. The Allerton premises are located in a small three storey shop unit which cannot be converted to provide the full range of ES services; the lease expires in February 1995. We are therefore bringing together all our job seeking and benefit payment services at our nearby newly refurbished office at Wavertree. We hope this will provide an improved standard of service to our clients locally as everything will now be available under one roof.

Wavertree ES JC is approximately two miles from Allerton and there is a regular bus service between them.

I hope this is helpful.

Thorne Jobcentre

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what wards in the Doncaster, North constituency are covered by the Thorne jobcentre.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. Fogden to Mr. Kevin Hughes, dated 29 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question asking which wards in the Doncaster North Constituency are covered by Thorne Jobcentre.

It may be helpful if I explain that Jobcentre boundaries are not defined in ward terms. However, it is possible to match frozen April 1991 Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) wards to Jobcentre areas on a best-fit basis.

There are four wards in the Doncaster North Constituency. On a best-fit basis, two wards, Thorne and Hatfield, are fully within the Thorne Jobcentre catchment area as is the northern half of the Stainforth ward. The fourth ward in the constituency, Askern, falls in the neighbouring Doncaster Jobcentre area.

I hope you find this helpful.

Earnings

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on comparisons between pay increases in the public and private sectors in Britain in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the earnings of employees in the public and private sectors is published, each year, in table 1 of part A of the new earnings survey. The latest available information, published in September 1993, relates to April 1993. Copies of the latest report are available in the Library. The monthly average earnings index, published by the Department, does not distinguish between private sector and public sector earnings.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement concerning his plans to create new-style apprenticeships; in what industries he expects the new apprenticeships to be created; and what estimates he has of the number of new apprenticeships he expects to be created.

Miss Widdecombe: A wide range of modern apprenticeships will be offered to 16 and 17-year-old school leavers from September 1995, with some prototypes starting later this year. Fourteen sectors are involved in prototype arrangements and these are linked to 42 training and enterprise councils. These are:

Agriculture
Somerset, South and East Cheshire, Northumberland, Humberside

Business Administration
Gloucestershire, Norfolk and Waveney, Northamptonshire

Chemicals
Wakefield, CEWTEC/NorMidTEC

Childcare
North West London, Stockport/High Peak

Electrical Installation
Essex, Suffolk, South Derbyshire, MetroTEC

Engineering Manufacturing
Devon and Cornwall, Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire, London East TEC, Walsall, Barnsley and Doncaster, Merseyside, Hertfordshire, Birmingham (in conjunction with Coventry and CENTEC)

Engineering Construction
Bolton/Bury, Durham

Information Technology
Leeds, West London, Teesside

Marine Engineering
Cumbria

Merchant Navy
Tyneside

Polymers
Shropshire

Retail
AZTEC, Lincoln, HAWTEC

Steel
Sandwell, Sheffield (Steel Training)

Travel Services
North London, Dorset, Surrey

Up to 2,000 young people will be catered for this year, with up to 150,000 in training at any one time when the initiative is fully developed.

European Structural Funds

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Government will apply for objective 4 grants under the European structural funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on 25 January 1994, at column *233.*

Part-time Work

Mrs. Clywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what action the Government will take to implement the ruling given by the House of Lords on part-time workers;

(2) to what extent retrospective compensation claims from part-time workers will be possible following the House of Lords ruling.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes to current employment legislation he is considering following the recent House of Lords ruling that part-time employees have the same rights as full-time employees with regard to unfair dismissal and redundancy; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government are carefully considering this judgment to ascertain its full implications and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department spends on child care provision for the under-fives and out-of-school provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if he will make a statement on child care.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* We have committed £45 million to the out-of-school child care grant initiative, with the aim of creating up to 50,000

new after-school and holiday places for the over-fives throughout Great Britain. Training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies also have the flexibility to use their budgets to provide child care assistance for trainees.

In addition, over 90 per cent. of three to four-year-olds attend either education or group day care. It is not, however, possible to say what proportion of these places will have benefited from Government support—for example, through TECs and LECs.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current average cost of administration of an unemployment benefit payment.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply.

The latest expenditure figures are contained in the DSS departmental report, Cm 2513. The total administration cost of unemployment benefit in 1992-93 was £269 million. The total number of payments was 23,847,000 giving an average of £11·28. This includes allowance for the cost of administering national insurance credits for clients who do not receive any social security benefit and part of the cost of Employment Service advisers who check benefit eligibility.

SCOTLAND

Development Corporation

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many tenancies controlled by the *(a)* Cumbernauld, *(b)* East Kilbride, *(c)* Glenrothes, *(d)* Irvine and *(e)* Livingston development corporations occupying (i) less than 10,000 sq ft, (ii) between 10,000 and 20,000 sq ft, (iii) between 20,000 and 30,000 sq ft, (iv) between 30,000 and 40,000 sq ft, (v) between 40,000 and 50,000 sq ft, (vi) between 50,000 and 100,000 sq ft, (vii) between 100,000 and 200,000 sq ft and (viii) over 200,000 sq ft are (1) currently vacant and (2) occupied.

Mr. Stewart: The tables show the numbers of industrial and commercial units currently owned by the development corporations and whether tenanted or vacant:

Scottish New Town development corporations—numbers of industrial units (a) tenanted and (b) vacant as at 23 March 1994

	Cumbernauld	*East Kilbride*	*Glenrothes*	*Irvine*	*Livingston*
Less than 10,000 ft²					
Occupied	54	117	46	78	138
Vacant	41	54	49	24	42
10,001-20,000 ft²					
Occupied	13	17	14	0	35
Vacant	9	8	9	0	0
20,001-30,000 ft²					
Occupied	8	3	6	0	16
Vacant	3	0	1	0	0
30,001-40,000 ft²					
Occupied	2	2	1	0	5
Vacant	0	1	0	0	1
40,001-50,000 ft²					
Occupied	3	0	0	0	3
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0
50,001-100,000 ft²					
Occupied	3	2	0	0	7
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0
100,001-200,000 ft²					
Occupied	0	0	0	0	6
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0
Above 200,001 ft²					
Occupied	0	0	1	0	0
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0

Scottish new town development corporations numbers of commercial properties (a) tenanted and (b) vacant at 23 March 1994

	Cumbernauld	*East Kilbride*	*Glenrothes*	*Irvine*	*Livingston*
Less than 10,000 ft²					
Occupied	51	258	87	135	140
Vacant	5	14	1	34	14
10,001-20,000 ft²					
Occupied	0	2	1	12	5
Vacant	0	1	0	8	0
20,001-30,000 ft²					
Occupied	1	1	0	4	2
Vacant	0	0	1	1	1

	Cumbernauld	East Kilbride	Glenrothes	Irvine	Livingston
30,001-40,000 ft²					
Occupied	0	1	0	3	4
Vacant	0	0	0	2	0
40,001-50,000 ft²					
Occupied	1	0	0	3	3
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0
50,001-100,000 ft²					
Occupied	0	0	0	4	4
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0
100,001-200,000 ft²					
Occupied	0	0	0	0	1
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0
Above 200,001 ft²					
Occupied	0	0	1	0	0
Vacant	0	0	0	0	0

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much each of Scotland's development corporations has spent during each of the last five years on advertising.

Mr. Stewart: Information on advertising costs is not available centrally. Expenditure on publicity and marketing is set out in schedule 2 of the annual accounts of each new town development corporation. The annual reports, including the accounts, are available in the Library of the House.

National Health Service Helpline

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *54*, what action has been taken by each of Scotland's health boards to publicise the operation of the NHS helpline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Since the NHS helpline came into operation in October 1992 expenditure on administration of the service totals £227,566 and expenditure on publicity totals £98,748.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *54*, what assessment he has made of the calls to the NHS helpline; what procedure was adopted by his office in establishing its helpline; how many people are employed to deal with the calls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The NHS in Scotland management executive receives monthly monitoring reports and quarterly customer satisfaction survey reports from Network Scotland which operates the NHS helpline on a contractual basis. These give details of the number and subjects of the calls received and an indication of customer satisfaction with the service.

Tenders were invited for the setting up and running of the service from a number of organisations and the contract was awarded to Network Scotland. A project supervisor and up to four part-time operators are employed by Network Scotland in work relating to the NHS helpline.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *54*, how much his office has spent *(a)* administering and *(b)* publicising the operation of its NHS helpline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: All health boards in Scotland, and their provider units, publicise the NHS helpline telephone number and information about the service provided in a variety of ways. These include the provision of information in health board literature, local health charters, patient information leaflets, notice board information in public areas of health board premises and distribution of the NHS helpline poster.

Redundant Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many redundant NHS hospitals have been disposed of since 1987 without the benefit of planning permission.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not collected centrally. Advice on the planning aspects of disposals is contained in current guidance on the handling of NHS property transactions.

National Continence Week

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what projects his Department instigated in respect of National Continence Week.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office provided funding for the expansion of a telephone helpline facility at the continence resource centre, Southern General Hospital NHS Trust, Glasgow to secure additional staff and equipment, for a four-week period including National Continence Week. Leaflets, posters and stickers advertising the helpline and encouraging sufferers to seek help were distributed widely, advertisements were placed in public transport buses throughout Scotland and in national newspapers, and a briefing note was circulated to all media outlets. In addition a number of events were organised across the country by local health service professionals, including continence advisers.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dairy farmers there were in Scotland in each year since 1985.

Sir Hector Monro: No information on the number of dairy farmers is collected. The Scottish agricultural census identifies specialist dairy and general dairy farm types.

The number of such farms was:

Year	Number
1985	2,949
1986	2,873
1987	2,789
1988	2,690
1989	2,622
1990	2,562
1991	2,515
1992	2,460
1993	1,885[1]

[1] A new system of farm typology was introduced in 1993. On the same basis there were 1,899 dairy farms in 1992.

Agriculture (Incomes)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show the average income of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers in (i) cash and (ii) real terms, using 1985 as a constant, in each year since 1980 showing these incomes as a percentage of the average wage.

Sir Hector Monro: Estimates of the earnings of full-time hired agricultural workers in Scotland are derived from the control test inspection sample survey carried out under the Agricultural Wages (Scotland) Act 1949. Those figures are given in the table.

None of the estimates of average farm income is comparable with the average wage. The table presents estimates of cash income to farm businesses in Scotland for 1986-87 onwards. Estimates for previous years are not available on a consistent basis.

Earnings of Hired Full-time Agricultural Workers in Scotland

Year	Estimated annual cash income[1] all types of Farm (£'000s per farm)	Current terms[2] (£/Week) (£ per week)	Real terms at 1985 prices[2,3] (£ per week)	Percentage of average wage[4]
1980	—	81·63	115·53	78·5
1981	—	89·44	113·15	78·5
1982	—	98·08	114·24	78·8
1983	—	107·41	119·62	80·9
1984	—	114·36	121·32	80·0
1985	—	122·17	122·17	79·8
1986	16·9	129·33	125·07	79·2
1987	21·1	134·56	124·92	77·6
1988	20·5	142·91	126·47	76·3
1989	22·6	154·79	127·11	76·2
1990	27·2	171·51	128·67	77·5
1991	26·3	189·06	133·97	80·0
1992	28·6	195·57	133·58	78·0
[6]1993	[5]—	204·50	137·50	79·7

[1] Accounting years end, on average, in February of the following year. Cash income represents the total receipts less the total expenditure (excluding net investment expenditure) of the farm business. Source: Farm Accounts Survey.

[2] Includes payments for basic, overtime and holiday hours, plus the value of annual bonus, perquisites and other payments. It also includes the value of the employer's contribution to the employees' rates, community charge and council tax where the value is known.

[3] Deflated by the all items RPI (1985 = 100)

[4] Average earnings of full-time manual employees on adult rates (compiled on a basis of men aged 21+ and women aged 18+ prior to 1983) in all industries and services in Great Britain whose pay was not affected by absence for the survey period. Source: New Earnings Survey.

[5] Not available

[6] Provisional

Farm Workers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will list the total number of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers in Scotland in each year since 1980.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is given in the table. The figures are from the June agricultural census of main holdings.

	Occupiers	Spouses	All other farmworkers
1980	23,061	7,872	40,602
1981	22,984	7,724	37,756
1982	23,452	8,045	37,301
1983	23,375	8,352	36,177
1984	23,369	8,265	34,538
1985	23,672	8,536	33,964
1986	23,386	8,633	31,798
1987	23,122	8,678	30,311
1988	23,783	8,740	29,503
1989	24,366	8,861	28,420
1990	23,820	10,238	28,592
1991	23,398	10,393	27,313
1992	22,839	10,485	26,823
1993	22,770	10,717	26,299

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his current plans for city technology colleges in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No proposals for establishing a city technology college in Scotland are currently under consideration. Any firm proposals which come forward will be carefully considered.

Court of Session Fees

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to implement the extension of the principle that the litigant should contribute to the recovery of the full judicial costs applicable to civil business; and when he intends to lay the statutory instrument order on Court of Session fees.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer to the answer I gave the hon. Gentleman on Thursday 24 February, column *442*.

An order will be laid later this year.

Nursery Schools

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the extra nursery school places since 1979 have been provided through the urban programme; and what percentage the urban programme places are of the increase in places since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No central records are maintained of the number of places which have been created through the urban programme and continue to form part of the total provision of nursery school places in Scotland. Such information could be gathered only at disproportionate cost.

Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct Scottish Enterprise that it should be able to provide answers to questions about the specific skills being learnt on Government training schemes.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to instruct Scottish Enterprise on this matter.

Schools (Expenditure)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the annual capital expenditure on schools since 1979 in real and constant price terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested, which is given in the table, has been compiled from local authority financial returns. The fall in expenditure in real terms during the period reflects a substantial and progressive decline in school pupil numbers which has reduced the requirement for new school building.

Capital expenditure by local authorities on schools

	At out-turn prices	*At 1992-93 prices*
		£ million
1979-80	47·598	113·307
1980-81	52·391	105·404
1981-82	60·404	110·807
1982-83	52·378	89·694
1983-84	45·416	74·326
1984-85	45·945	71·594
1985-86	51·194	75·581
1986-87	46·694	66·976
1987-88	47·742	65·015
1988-89	59·392	75·792
1989-90	66·884	79·803
1990-91	67·305	74·314
1991-92	72·572	75·358
1992-93	89·679	89·679

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people, of all ages, are on training schemes in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The numbers of Government training programmes in Scotland at the end of December were as follows:

	Number
Youth training	32,453
Training for work	14,065

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many training establishments he visits each year.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I and other ministerial colleagues have in recent years visited a number of employers, chambers of commerce, training providers and educational establishments which provide vocational and non-vocational training.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Lang: None.

Assisted Places

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the 20 independent schools which currently have the highest proportions of their school rolls made up by pupils covered by the assisted places scheme; and if he will give the percentage of pupils covered by the assisted places scheme and the size of the school rolls.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information, for autumn term 1993-94, is as follows:

School	*School roll*	*Per cent. of pupils supported by assisted place scheme*
Kilquhanity House School, Castle Douglas	40	50
Keil School, Dumbarton	225	28
Morrison's Academy, Crieff	642	24
Rudolf Steiner School, Edinburgh	252	23
The Park School, Glasgow	320	21
Kilgraston School, Bridge of Earn	263	19
Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh	365	18
George Heriot's School, Edinburgh	1,480	17
High School of Dundee	1,132	17
St. Denis and Cranley School, Edinburgh	173	17
Laurel Bank School, Glasgow	374	16
St. Aloysius College, Glasgow	1,078	15
Wellington School, Ayr	363	15
Glenalmond College, Perth	255	15
Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow	585	15
Rannoch School, Perthshire	278	13
Daniel Stewart's and Melville College and The Mary Erskine School, Edinburgh	2,514	12
George Watson's College, Edinburgh	2,025	12
Crawfordton House School, Thornhill, Dumfries	45	11
Lomond School, Helensburgh	514	11

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what follow-up is undertaken to assess the usefulness of training schemes in finding jobs.

Mr. Stewart: Responsibility for the follow-up survey of leavers from the employment training and youth training programmes was transferred from the Training Agency to Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise on 1 April 1991. The Department of Employment delivered the service on their behalf under contract until 1 April 1993 when the enterprise bodies introduced their own follow-up systems.

I have asked the chairmen of the enterprise bodies to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of trainees between the ages of 40 and 50 years find work on completion of a training course.

Mr. Stewart: The information is not collected in the form requested.

Motorists (Culpable Homicide Charges)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what considerations he takes into account when determining whether charges of culpable homicide should be proceeded with in relation to drivers of motor vehicles.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Crown counsel will charge a motorist with culpable homicide where, on the evidence available to them, the driver's conduct showed gross or wicked criminal negligence amounting to a criminal indifference to the consequences of his driving.

DNase

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions his Department has had with health boards relating to the use of the drug DNase; and if he has recommended its use to health boards.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* There has been no discussions between the Scottish Office Home and Health Department and health boards about the drug DNase; and no recommendations have been made as regards its use. The prescribing of DNase is a matter for clinical judgment.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals there have been against council tax valuations since the council tax was introduced in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* By 30 November 1993, 95,966 proposals to change the valuation list were lodged with assessors' departments in Scotland.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average waiting time for appeals against valuation to be heard since the introduction of the council tax in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* For proposals to change the valuation list and consequential appeals settled by 30 November 1993, the average time from lodging the proposal to settlement was four months.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals against council tax valuations are still waiting to be heard in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* At 30 November 1993, the latest date for which information is available centrally, 66,329 proposals to change the valuation list and appeals were still to be dealt with.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals against valuation have resulted in a change in the banding of a property since the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* Information is not collected centrally on the number of proposals to change the valuation list which have resulted in a change in the banding of a property. The table shows the recorded outcomes of the 29,637 proposals settled up to 30 November 1993.

	Number
Settled before citation by the Valuation Appeals Committee:	
Withdrawn by appellant	6,995
List adjusted by assessor	21,699
Settled after citation and prior to Valuation Appeals Committee hearing:	
Withdrawn by appellant	415
List adjusted by assessor	496
Decisions by the Valuation Appeal Committee:	
Number dismissed	29
Number allowed	3

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total cost of the valuation exercise in Scotland, including the appeals process, since the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* No information is held centrally relating to the cost of the appeals process or to costs of valuation work other than the initial preparation of valuation lists. The additional costs incurred by valuation authorities on the initial valuation exercise, which are reimbursed by my Department through the council tax valuation grant, amount to an estimated £9 million. Not all final claims have yet been received in respect of work in 1992-93.

NHS Staff

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospital staff were lost from each health board in 1993; and of these totals how many were nurses.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 March 1994]:* The information requested is not available centrally for all staff groups. The readily available data on qualified nurses joining and leaving each board are shown in the table.

Qualified nurses (excluding those in training): net movement analysis by health board for year beginning 30 September 1992 (Headcount).

	[1]Leavers	[2]Joiners
Scotland	3,631	3,676
Argyll and Clyde	182	180
Ayrshire and Arran	182	179
Borders	61	82
Dumfries and Galloway	97	112
Fife	165	252
Forth Valley	250	223
Grampian	539	347
Greater Glasgow	713	764
Highland	161	131
Lanarkshire	268	223
Lothian	526	744
Orkney	9	17
Shetland	14	15
Tayside	402	324
Western Isles	15	67
State Hospital	47	16

[1]No longer employed as a qualified hospital nurse by 30 September 1993.
[2]Became employed as a qualified hospital nurse by 30 September 1993.

Public Appointments

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those members of bodies to which he makes appointments who can be identified as having estate-owning interests.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Appointments are made on the basis of aptitude, merit and the qualifications of the person for the post to which they are appointed. No central record is kept of the land ownership of those appointed to public bodies.

Football Grounds

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much Greenock Morton football club will benefit in terms of the formula valuation following the changes contained in the Football Grounds (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 March 1994]:* The Football Grounds (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994 falls to be implemented by the local assessor. I cannot, therefore, provide a definitive figure for its effect on any particular club. From the latest figures available to my Department, however, I estimate that the club's rateable value will be reduced from £17,000 to £11,600.

Specialists (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people, not on waiting lists for treatment, were waiting to see a specialist in the national health service for each quarter in the last two years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* Information on waiting times to first out-patient appointment is set out in the "NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin". Copies of the bulletin, which is published quarterly, have been placed in the Library of the House.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The number of staff in post in the Scottish Office, its executive agencies and associated Departments as at 1 April 1993 are shown by grade equivalent, full-time or part-time status and gender in the table.

Number of staff at 1 April 1993, by grade equivalent, full-time/part-time status and gender

(a) Scottish Office core and agencies (excluding SPS) plus associated departments of GRO(S) and SRO

	Scottish Office core			
	Full-time		*Part-time*	
Grade equivalent	*male*	*female*	*male*	*female*
Grade 1	1	0	0	0
Grade 2	9	0	0	0
Grade 3	20	3	0	1
Grade 4	14	3	0	0
Grade 5	108	10	2	7
Grade 6	149	35	1	2
Grade 7	332	57	2	11
Senior Executive Officer	329	35	0	4
Higher Executive Officer	524	209	2	36
Executive Officer	479	375	1	32
Administrative Officer	296	646	1	84
Administrative Assistant	359	659	0	89
Industrial grades	122	5	2	11
Totals	2,742	2,037	11	277

	Agencies (Excl SPS)			
	Full-time		*Part-time*	
Grade equivalent	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Grade 1	0	0	0	0
Grade 2	0	0	0	0
Grade 3	0	0	0	0
Grade 4	0	0	0	0
Grade 5	5	0	0	0
Grade 6	12	0	0	0
Grade 7	44	5	0	3
Senior executive officer	65	7	0	1
Higher executive officer	120	20	0	0
Executive officer	122	59	0	4
Administrative officer	121	113	3	24
Administrative assistant	45	64	3	2
Industrial grades	351	2	0	0
Totals	885	270	6	34

	General register office			
	Full-time		*Part-time*	
Grade equivalent	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Grade 1	0	0	0	0
Grade 2	0	0	0	0
Grade 3	0	0	0	0
Grade 4	1	0	0	0
Grade 5	1	0	0	0
Grade 6	0	0	0	0
Grade 7	7	0	0	0
Senior executive officer	10	1	0	0
Higher executive officer	27	7	0	1
Executive officer	32	21	0	3
Administrative officer	28	44	0	12
Administrative assistant	31	51	0	5
Industrial grades	0	0	0	0
Totals	137	124	0	21

	Scottish Records Office			
	Full time		*Part-time*	
Grade Equivalent	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Grade 1	0	0	0	0
Grade 2	0	0	0	0
Grade 3	0	0	0	0
Grade 4	0	0	0	0
Grade 5	1	0	0	0
Grade 6	1	0	0	0
Grade 7	4	4	0	0
Senior Executive Officer	4	3	0	0
Higher Executive Officer	10	4	0	0
Executive Officer	7	5	0	0
Administrative Officer	17	13	0	0
Administrative Assistant	25	9	0	9
Industrial grades	2	1	0	0
TOTALS	71	39	0	9

	Total Staff			
	Full time		*Part-time*	
Grade Equivalent	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Grade 1	1	0	0	0
Grade 2	9	0	0	0
Grade 3	20	3	0	1
Grade 4	15	3	0	0
Grade 5	115	10	2	7
Grade 6	162	35	1	2
Grade 7	387	66	2	14
Senior Executive Officer	408	46	0	5
Higher Executive Officer	681	240	2	37

Grade Equivalent	Total Staff			
	Full time		Part-time	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Executive Officer	640	460	1	39
Administrative Officer	462	816	4	120
Administrative Assistant	460	783	3	105
Industrial grades	475	8	2	11
TOTALS	3,835	2,470	17	341

(b) Scottish Prison Service

	Scottish Prison Service			
	Full time		Part-time	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
All Staff	4,182	414	30	28

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) at what stage the unit general manager at Glasgow royal infirmary became aware that Greater Glasgow health board had awarded cleaning and portering contracts to Executive Healthcare; and whether his advice was sought on that company's suitability to be invited to tender;

(2) if he will investigate the contract evaluation methods carried out by Greater Glasgow health board, to determine whether they meet ministerial guidelines;

(3) if he will conduct an investigation into the practices of the commercial section of Greater Glasgow health board;

(4) on what criteria firms were chosen to be invited to tender for cleaning and portering services at the Glasgow royal infirmary.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The unit general manager was a member of the evaluation panel for the tenders and was involved in the advice to Greater Glasgow health board in reaching its decision to award the contract.

My noble and learned Friend has been assured by the health board that the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the central guidance issued and the board's standing instructions. It is for the board's auditors to investigate any non-compliance with procedures and standing instructions.

In line with EC procurement regulations, advertisements were placed in the national press and *European Journal.* Technical and financial checks were undertaken on the companies that responded to the advertisements. The checks included the taking up of bank and trade references. Only those companies that satisfied the checks were placed on the tender list.

Scottish New Town Development Corporation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements have been made for the maintenance of pension funds for staff employed by the Scottish New Town development corporation following the wind-up of those bodies.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* New towns staff are in general members of either the new towns pension fund or local government superannuation schemes. Discussions are taking place at present towards safeguarding staff pension rights, following the wind-up of the development corporations.

Mearnskirk Hospital

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much surplus land within the grounds of Mearnskirk hospital is for sale; what price was negotiated with Dickie Ambion Bryant; how many other firms were invited to submit bids for the purchase of this land; and how many bids were received.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Thirty-six hectares of land at Mearnskirk hospital has been declared surplus to requirements and offered for sale by Greater Glasgow health board. Extensive marketing included a mailshot of the top 500 housing developers. By the closing date seven formal offers and one expression of interest were received, and the offer from Dickie Ambion Bryant was recently approved by the board. As missives of sale have not yet been concluded, it would be inappropriate to reveal price details.

East End Leisure Centre, Shettleston

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial contribution the Glasgow Development Agency is making to the proposed East End leisure centre in Shettleston constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* It is for the local enterprise company to decide what, if any, contribution it wishes to make towards a particular project. I understand Glasgow Development Agency has, at present, no plans to make any financial contribution towards the East End leisure centre.

East Kilbride Development Corporation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library documents from 1989 onwards relating to the agreed redundancy arrangements applying to staff employed by East Kilbride development corporation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* It is not normal practice for copies of correspondence between the Secretary of State or his officials and third parties to be made public.

Specialist Medical Examinations

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average length of time which elapses between a general practitioner's recommendation for specialist investigation and the effecting of such consultations in each health board or health trust area in Scotland, in each specialty.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Information on the average waiting time for first out-patient consultations in the main specialties following GP referrals is set out in the "NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin". Copies of the bulletin, which is published quarterly, may be found in the Library of the House.

The following table sets out the average waiting time for each specialty:

Average lengths of wait (days)[1] for first consultant outpatient appointment, by specialty and health board of residence: quarter ending 30 September 1993[2]

Specialty	*Scotland*	*Argyll and Clyde*	*Ayr and Arran*	*Borders*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Forth Valley*	*Grampian*
Adolescent psychiatry	32	60	..	..	..	..	..	21
Anaesthetics	84	86	52	..	..	127	62	32
Cardiology	50	52	52	35	..	48	36	57
Child psychiatry	62	75	26	27	..	..	24	54
Clinical genetic	36	..	42	..	..	..	..	26
Communicable diseases	16	..	13	..	..	..	..	..
Dermatology	55	52	53	48	47	59	73	60
ENT surgery	58	61	51	60	60	73	44	57
Gastroenterology	51	..	..	..	..	34	..	57
General medicine	38	46	52	28	35	49	45	37
General surgery	38	31	40	45	38	54	33	39
Geriatric assessment	15	11	40	..	11	21	27	11
Gynaecology	43	35	50	29	69	46	54	46
Haematology	16	18	14	..	..	23	11	11
Homeopathy	144	162	..	..	..	..	..	..
Medical oncology	11	..	..	—	—	..	..	15
Medical paediatrics	44	28	56	29	41	56	35	52
Mental handicap	20	..	..	—	..	..	..	..
Mental illness	29	27	43	16	8	35	36	21
Metabolic disease	38	35	..	..	—	39	..	44
Nephrology	45	..	..	..	..	..	..	18
Neurology	63	53	62	68	42	78	55	50
Neurosurgery	48	..	..	..	..	43	..	25
Obstetrics—specialist antena	23	20	13	30	33	18	20	27
Obstetrics—specialist postna	..	—	—	—	—	—	—	..
Ophthalmology	57	45	72	84	37	56	52	51
Oral surgery and oral medicine	42	43	80	101	133	65	51	79
Orthodontics and paediatric dent	92	127	91	66	122	108	49	117
Orthopaedic surgery	46	58	36	30	87	50	38	65

Specialty	*Greater Glasgow*	*Highland*	*Lanarkshire*	*Lothian*	*Orkney*	*Shetland*	*Tayside*	*Western Isles*
Adolescent psychiatry	..	—	—	30	—	—	..	—
Anaesthetics	96	..	72	..	—	—	122	..
Cardiology	51	..	62	34	—	—	92	..
Child psychiatry	70	—	134	—	..	..	72	—
Clinical genetic	46	..	34	46	—	..	—	..
Communicable diseases	18	..	18	14	—	—	..	—
Dermatology	55	58	49	59	..	31	46	64
ENT surgery	59	46	67	56	25	28	51	27
Gastroenterology	77	—	72	30	—	—	32	—
General medicine	34	36	39	23	16	40	32	24
General surgery	38	45	35	39	9	22	32	13
Geriatric assessment	14	23	14	11	—	—	7	—
Gynaecology	55	41	45	34	27	40	25	29
Haematology	20	..	20	11	—	..	22	—
Homeopathy	131	..	146	..	—	—	..	—
Medical oncology	..	..	..	..	—	—	..	—
Medical paediatrics	53	51	47	27	..	..	48	..
Mental handicap	—	..	..	..	—	—	25	—

Specialty	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanarkshire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Mental illness	45	18	28	20	..	..	17	..
Metabolic disease	39	58	46	29	—	..	24	—
Nephrology	56	..	..	..	—	—	..	—
Neurology	59	..	79	64	..	..	92	..
Neurosurgery	74	33	81	41	—	—	62	..
Obstetrics—specialist antena	24	20	18	28	..	..	21	39
Obstetrics—specialist postna	..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ophthalmology	73	80	47	70	26	60	31	35
Oral surgery and oral medicine	27	84	29	42	..	..	18	..
Orthodontics and paediatric dent	73	100	107	87	—	—	37	—
Orthopaedic surgery	43	64	44	39	20	52	47	52

Sporting Rates

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he received from Scottish Natural Heritage on the abolition of sporting rates in Scotland; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* None.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the cost, by local authority area, of abolishing sporting rates in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* There will be no cost to local authorities due to the loss of non-domestic rate income following the abolition of sporting rates in Scotland. Through the aggregate external finance mechanism any NDRI forgone will be compensated by an increase in revenue support grant.

TRANSPORT

West London Railway Line

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to ask Railtrack to undertake studies into alternative routes to the west London railway line for freight traffic to and from the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: I am asking Railtrack to carry out a study of the proposal to route international freight trains via the North Downs route when it takes over responsibility for the infrastructure in April 1994.

Cash Limits

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to change his Department's cash limits for 1993-94.

Mr. Macgregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on Thursday 24 February 1994, *Official Report,* column *324.*

London, Tilbury and Southend Line

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the ministerial statement of March concerning closure of Fenchurch Street station for seven weeks in the summer, *Official Report,* column 1220, what alternative services, or what recommended means, will be available to passengers wishing *(a)* to use the London, Tilbury and Southend line to and from Limehouse station and *(b)* to interchange at that station to and from stations on the docklands light railway.

Mr. Freeman: Fenchurch Street and Limehouse stations on the London, Tilbury and Southend line will be closed from 22 July to 12 September. I understand that, during the closure, LT and S passengers wishing to travel from Limehouse into the City of London will be able to do so using the docklands light railway. Passengers wishing to transfer to the docklands light railway will be able to change to the London Underground District line at Barking and then to the docklands light railway at Bow Road—Bow Church. LT and S services terminating at Liverpool Street will call at Stratford where there is also an interchange with the docklands light railway.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the ministerial statement of 17 March concerning the seven week closure of Fenchurch Street station this summer, *Official Report,* column 1220, over what period of time the re-signalling and track re-laying programme, costing £83 million, could be accomplished on the basis of withdrawal of all trains between Barking and Fenchurch Street on weekends only from 21.00 hours on Friday until 06.00 hours on Monday; and what withdrawal of services, other than those already announced, he expects east of Barking in this respect during the remainder of 1994 and in 1995.

Mr. Freeman: It is impossible to undertake the required resignalling work between Fenchurch Street and Barking at weekends and at night in a safe manner. It involves the complete removal of the tracks into Fenchurch Street.

The full scheme will involve a programme of works in 1995 both east and west of Barking. LT and S management cannot predict at present what further changes to the service may be necessary before the resignalling scheme is complete.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the ministerial statement of 17 March concerning closure of Fenchurch Street station for seven weeks this summer, *Official Report,* column 1220, how many passengers travel *(a)* to Fenchurch Street from Barking via West Ham on the London, Tilbury line between 07.00 hours and 10.00 hours on a normal weekday morning and *(b)* westbound on the District line to central London via West Ham on that line between 07.00 hours and 10.00 hours on a weekday morning in August; how many in *(a)* above are expected, during closure of the line

from Barking to Fenchurch Street, to add to those travelling as in *(b)* above; how many are expected to travel by trains direct from Barking to Liverpool Street; what is the planned capacity provided over those times; how many additional passengers are expected on services on the Great Eastern line between Southend and Stratford; and what is his estimate on the reduction in demand in *(a)* above from 22 July to 9 September this year.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Approximately 3,000 passengers join trains at Barking for Fenchurch Street station on the London, Tilbury and Southend line—LT and S—between 07.00 and 10.00 hours on a weekday morning in August. Many of these have changed from the District line.

(b) This information is not available in the form requested. London Underground says that, in spring 1990, the latest period for which figures are available, 30,500 people each weekday travelled westbound on the District and Hammersmith and City lines between Plaistow and West Ham during the morning peak.

During the closure of Fenchurch Street station, several alternative travel options for LT and S passengers will be available: to change at Barking on to the London Underground District line, to travel to Liverpool Street on the London, Tilbury and Southend line or to travel to Liverpool Street on the Great Eastern line. It is not possible to predict precisely which options passengers will choose. However, extensive research is being undertaken to forecast traffic flows and the likely level of passengers who will transfer at Barking. London, Tilbury and Southend management will consult the Southend Rail Travellers Association before publishing a temporary timetable at the end of April.

Planned capacity is as follows:

There will be approximately 960 seats every 12 minutes from the Southend Borough West, Benfleet, Pitsea and Basildon to Liverpool Street. There will be 620 seats every 12 minutes from Southend Borough calling at all stations to Barking. There will be 620 seats every 12 minutes from Pitsea to Barking via Tilbury.

There is usually a 13 per cent. seasonal reduction in passenger numbers in July and August, but owing to the closure it is expected that this will increase to 20 or 30 per cent.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the ministerial statement of 17 March concerning the closure of Fenchurch Street station for seven weeks this summer, *Official Report,* column 1220, how many additional trains will be run by London Underground between Upminster or Barking and central London during weekday mornings and evening peak hours —between 07.00 hours and 10.00 hours and 16.00 hours and 19.00—during those weeks; and what number and proportion of timetabled trains outside those periods on those days, and on Saturdays and Sundays, respectively, will be run direct from Barking into and out of Liverpool Street station.

Mr. Norris: The eastern section of London Underground's District line already operates at full capacity during the peak periods, leaving no possibility of additional services during the seven weeks' closure of Fenchurch Street station. The frequency of peak hour services from Barking on the Hammersmith and City line will double from four to eight trains per hour, when London Underground Ltd. introduces new timetables in May. LUL has no plans to run Hammersmith and City line services to or from Barking outside peak hours.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the additional bus services planned by the management of the London, Tilbury and Southend line and management between stations on that line and Great Eastern stations; and how many additional trains will be run at peak hours during that period from either Southend or Shenfield into Liverpool Street station.

Mr. Freeman: Fenchurch Street station will be closed for seven weeks during the summer. London, Tilbury and Southend line management are working closely with local user groups to determine the best use of bus services between LT and S stations and nearby alternatives on the Great Eastern line. They are examining routes between Laindon and Billericay, Basildon and Wickford and the Leigh area to Rayleigh. LT and S management believe that many passengers will make their way to Southend Victoria, Prittlewell and Rayleigh where they will be able to travel to Liverpool Street on the Great Eastern line.

Two trains an hour from Southend Victoria via Shenfield will be strengthened from eight to 12 cars to provide additional capacity. Colchester trains will call additionally at Romford where a short branch line connects the Great Eastern with the LT and S at Upminster.

Owing to limited track and platform capacity it will not be possible to run additional trains into Liverpool Street.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions relating to *(a)* issuing and inspection of tickets, *(b)* passenger services, *(c)* signalling and safety and *(d)* platform allocation will be taken by (i) private commercial management of mainline London railway stations, (ii) the franchisees or (iii) Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: Station operators will normally be responsible for *(a).* Franchisees and open access operators will be responsible for *(b).* Railtrack will have overall responsibility for *(c)* although all operators will be required to conform with its safety case. Station access agreements will cover *(d).*

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what activities he will open to the London mainline railway stations under private commercial management that could not have been activated by the British Railways Board.

Mr. Freeman: Private sector management of mainline stations in London and elsewhere will ensure that the commercial potential of such stations is more fully developed than under public sector ownership and management. Private sector management will also help to provide a more attractive environment for passengers and greater responsiveness to customer requirements at such stations.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made as to whether passenger transport authorities making payments to Railtrack from 1 April will have sufficient information about the basis of the charges to meet the statutory criteria required by their auditors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Passenger transport authorities, through the passenger transport executives, will not be making payments direct to Railtrack for the access charges attributable to their rail services, but will be paying the subsidy required by BR to run the trains. BR, in turn, will pay access charges to Railtrack.

I understand Railtrack has been discussing with the passenger transport authorities the composition of the access charges for their services. I have no reason to believe that the passenger transport authorities will have insufficient information to meet the statutory criteria required by their auditors.

Donaldson Inquiry

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to make public the findings of the Donaldson inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend expects to publish the report of Lord Donaldson's inquiry during May.

Sleeper Services

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instruct the franchising director to include sleeper services on the Night West Countryman and the Night Riviera in the contract with train operating companies.

Mr. Freeman: The sleeper services on the Night West Countryman and the Night Riviera are included in the existing timetable. The objectives, instructions and guidance issued to the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising on 22 March by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State included an instruction to the effect that, for the initial letting of franchises, the specification of minimum service levels for railway passenger services is to be based on that being provided by British Rail immediately prior to franchising, taking into account the existence of, and justification for, seasonal variations in service schedules.

Road Construction

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of published research into the role of road construction in stimulating economic regeneration in the areas concerned.

Mr. Key: The conclusion to be drawn from published research is that in general there is no clear evidence for specific regeneration effects. The main likely reasons for this are that local or regional economic problems are varied and seldom specifically related to lack of adequate access by road, that road improvements help traffic in both directions, and therefore can help importers to a region as much as exporters from it, and that labour employed on road improvements does not necessarily come from the immediate area. However, road schemes taken forward by the Department of Transport or by local authorities with Department of Transport assistance show healthy economic benefits, principally from time and cost savings to local and through traffic. Their planning takes into account any appropriate regeneration or economic development measures that are proposed for the areas affected.

Second Tamar Bridge

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for a second Tamar bridge which also crosses the Tavy; when he expects to make an announcement about these proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The consultants who undertook a study of the feasibility of a new Tamar crossing advised that a new crossing is likely to be needed by the turn of the century. Their report was published in June 1993 and comments were invited on the four possible routes which had been identified. One of these, the purple route, would cross both the River Tamar and the River Tavy.

I am considering the responses to the consultation before deciding if, when and how the proposal for a new Tamar crossing should be taken forward.

Signposting

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to review legislation on the size and display of public and private signs.

Mr. Key: We will shortly be placing before Parliament updated traffic signs regulations and general directions. These will offer a much wider range of signs than before —and of circumstances in which they can be used—and so reduce the need for traffic authorities to seek special authorisations from my Department, thereby substantially reducing bureaucracy. As a separate exercise we recently invited the views of a wide range of organisations on the procedures currently in place for approving the use of white-on-brown tourist signs. I am now considering how the procedures might be changed in the light of the responses to this consultation.

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and upaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Norris: Names of candidates for appointments are obtained from the public appointments unit and from a wide range of other sources such as those described in section 4 of the Cabinet Office guide on public appointments procedures, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Information on which bodies have been invited to submit names for particular appointments is not held centrally and could be assembled in respect of all appointments made by my right hon. Friend only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons;

(2) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend does not seek information on involvement in political activities when considering candidates for public appointments, and no such information is held centrally within the Department. Where the rules on political activities referred to in paragraph 7.2 and annexe 7A of the Cabinet Office guide on public appointments procedures apply, they are drawn to the candidate's attention when the appointment is offered. It is then for the individual to decide whether to accept the appointment on these terms.

London Buses (Privatisation)

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from London regional Transport, London Buses Ltd or any other organisation on the expected change in bus mileage in the capital following privatisation of London Buses Ltd.

Mr. Norris: After privatisation of London Buses Ltd., London Transport will continue to be responsible for the general level of provision of bus services. It has no plans to make significant changes to its bus network. However, it intends to give bus operators the opportunity to increase service frequencies, if they wish, to make their services more responsive to the needs of their passengers.

Continental Time

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what evidence his Department has as to the extra costs imposed upon United Kingdom *(a)* airlines, *(b)* ferry operators and *(c)* train operators by the one hour time difference between the United Kingdom and continental Europe;

(2) what representations he has received from United Kingdom airlines, ferry operators and train operators regarding the one-hour time difference between the United Kingdom and continental Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We have received representations from British Rail and British Airways on this issue. Both organisations have drawn attention to the reduced costs and other benefits which would result from harmonisation of United Kingdom and continental European time. I believe that the chamber of shipping takes a similar view.

The Council of Ministers has recently adopted a common position on a Commission proposal to harmonise the end-date of summertime throughout the Community from 1996. The case for a move to single-double summertime in the United Kingdom is currently under consideration and I expect a conclusion to be reached shortly.

Vocational Drivers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *102*, if he will list the reasons why certain offences will no longer be categorised as requiring disciplinary hearings after reorganisation.

Mr. Key: There has never been any requirement for drivers who have been convicted of offences by the courts to be called in addition to public inquiry by a traffic commissioner; offences involving more than six penalty points have, however, hitherto been referred routinely to the traffic commissioners, who have had discretion to call drivers to inquiry and, especially in cases involving disqualification, often did so. Under the new guidelines, traffic commissioners are recommended not to call to inquiry drivers who have received first-time disqualifications of 12 months or less, but to deal with such cases by warning letter. In addition, drivers who have received only very short disqualifications or penalty points short of a disqualification will no longer be routinely referred to the traffic commissioners for possible action unless the penalty points result from alcohol or drug-related offences.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *102*, if he will list the categories of offences of the driver disciplinary hearings held in the last 12 months, giving details.

Mr. Key: During the last 12 months there have been approximately 9,000 individual disciplinary hearings for vocational drivers. Information on the category of offences on each of these hearings could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Railway Staff Redundancies

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that the statutory requirements on the railway industry of operating with due regard to economy, efficiency and safety continue to be fulfilled in the light of redundancies and early retirements which have taken place since January 1993.

Mr. Freeman: I am satisfied that the railway industry will continue to fulfil all its statutory requirements in line with the objectives I have set and will continue to set.

Motor Cyclists (Leg Protectors)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has commissioned on leg protectors for motorcyclists.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 March to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) *Official Report*, column *107*.

Barkby and Beeby Bypass

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any route has been approved by his Department for a new eastern bypass near the Leicestershire villages of Barkby and Beeby.

Mr. Key: No. The work done so far has just identified the broad corridor through which the proposed Leicester eastern bypass would be likely to run.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the status of the plans to build a new Leicestershire eastern bypass near the villages of Barkby and Beeby.

Mr. Key: Along with all trunk road schemes in the national roads programme, the future of the Leicester eastern bypass is under review. The outcome of the review should be known shortly but until then it is not possible to comment on the status of any individual scheme.

Accidents (Young People)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish tables covering the last three years showing the number of accidents to 17 and 18-year-olds who had passed their driving test within one and two years before an accident.

Mr. Key: The information requested is not available.

Civil Servants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female, (i) full-time and (ii) part-time employees.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* I am placing copies of the information requested in the Library.

Compensation Payments

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of whether he has discharged his responsibilities under section 52 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 in respect of a Woolwich constituent, Department of Transport, Ref. N/PSO/21676/93; what progress he can report subsequent to his letter to the hon. Member for Woolwich of 24 November 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The Secretary of State has considered his responsibilities under section 52 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 in respect of the hon. Member's constituent and he is satisfied they have been discharged. Agreement has been reached with the hon. Member's constituent for all the outstanding mortgages to be discharged. Officials will shortly seek agreement with the mortgagees of the hon. Member's constituent to complete this process.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the administrative cost of disallowing income support for one day in the case of applicants who absent themselves from the United Kingdom for one day.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It is not possible to give an accurate estimate as such costs are wholly dependent on the circumstances of each individual case.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single people with no dependants who work between 16 and 24 hours a week are now excluded from entitlement to income support.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the maximum number of taught hours an unemployed adult can undertake without affecting his entitlement to family income support;

(2) what assessment he has made of the move of the Further Education Funding Council to mode 3 learning; to what extent the concept of full-time or part-time course or student still applies; and if he will make it his policy that that concept should not be used by his Department in determining eligibility for benefit.

Mr. Hague: People aged 19 or over but under pension age who are attending a full-time course at an educational establishment are not entitled to income support other than in a limited number of circumstances.

People attending a part-time course may under certain circumstances continue to receive IS but only if the course is not more than 21 hours.

The Further Education Funding Council's new funding methodology is concerned solely with the distribution of recurrent funding to colleges in the FE sector. It will not affect entitlement to social security benefits.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Hague: For those executive and advisory bodies listed in "Public Bodies 1993", 4 per cent. of new appointments last year were from an ethnic minority. Ethnic origin details are given in confidence and names cannot be divulged.

The information requested is not readily available for the independent tribunal service and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Industrial Disablement Benefit

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances a medical question in respect of a claim for industrial disablement benefit should be determined by more than one adjudicating medical practitioner; what standing instructions there are to officers acting on his behalf on when and how to apply regulation 29(1)*(d)* of the Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1986; and if he will place a copy of those instructions in the Library.

Mr. Scott: Medical questions must be referred to, and determined by, more than one adjudicating medical practitioner in the case of:

(a) any question arising on an application for the review of a decision on the grounds that:
  (i) the decision was given in ignorance of, or based on a mistake as to, a material fact; or
  (ii) there has been an error of law;
(b) any other case which, in the opinion of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, should be determined by more than one adjudicating medical practitioner.

There are no standing instructions on the application of regulation 29(1)*(d)*, but guidance is issued to adjudicating medical authorities.

Industrial Injuries

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the level of administrative costs for the industrial injuries scheme as a proportion of all benefit paid under the scheme.

Mr. Scott: The cost is estimated as 9·6 per cent.

Disability Working Allowance

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *782*, if he will publish the reasons for the low level of take-up of the disability working allowance before the completion of the research, commissioned by his Department, in October 1996.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Benefit Tourism

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the countries whose Governments have made representations concerning his proposals to tackle benefit tourism.

Mr. Hague: The Republic of Ireland.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each year since 1988 for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Hague: None.

Pensioners (Benefit Loss)

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security from what date the benefit loss to a pensioner was set at £1 per £250 of savings.

Mr. Hague: The formula applied for taking account of capital above £3,000 in the income-related benefits was introduced in April 1988. In housing benefit and council tax benefit, however, the effect of the tapers which apply to those benefits means that housing benefit is reduced by only 65p and council tax benefit by only 20p for each £1 above a set level.

Residence Test

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations he has received expressing concern at the Government's new residence test; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the points raised by the Irish in Britain's representation group concerning the economic effects of the new residence test proposals on immigrant Irish youth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Proposals for the introduction of a habitual residence test into income support, housing benefit and the council tax benefit are before the Social Security Advisory Committee. Representations are currently being considered by the committee, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will receive their report in due course.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to change the way in which assumed amounts of national insurance contributions are calculated in determining the net amount of estimated earnings and bonus and commission payments in the assessment of family credit and disability working allowance entitlement.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State laid before Parliament on 10 March 1994 amendments to the family credit and disability working allowance regulations on the calculation of these assumed amounts. Because of the difficulty of ascertaining the actual rate of contribution for which the person would be liable, it has been the practice to make all the calculations at the rate applicable to a person who is not contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. This was considered to be within the terms of regulations 20, 20A and 26 of the Family Credit (General) Regulations 1987, and regulations 22, 23 and 29 of the Disability Working Allowance (General) Regulations 1991, but recent legal advice is that they do not permit this. In consequence, overpayments have occurred since the introduction of the schemes, in April 1988 and April 1992 respectively, amounting to a total of about £725,000. The cost of the administrative arrangements which would be required to prevent the overpayments would be well in excess of the amounts overpaid. The regulations are therefore being amended urgently to regularise the situation and, in the meantime, the additional payments are continuing to be made on an ex-gratia basis. A note will be included in the relevant appropriation account.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals there were against invalidity benefit being removed in the Doncaster area in the last 12 months; and what was the figure for the previous 12 months.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about appeals against removal of Invalidity Benefit (IVB) in Doncaster.

The information is not available in the exact format requested. This is because Benefit Agency District boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries. Part of the Doncaster postal area falls within that covered by the Mexborough Branch Office of the Agency's Rother and Dearne District.

The Agency's Doncaster District, comprising Doncaster West District Office and Doncaster East Branch Office deals with the remainder of the Doncaster postal area.

Statistics are maintained to show the number of appeals received at each office. Within these figures it is possible to identify the number of appeals against removal of IVB.

The number of appeals received at each office against removal of IVB received for people in the Doncaster area were as follows:

	Number
Doncaster West District Office from 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993	34
Doncaster East Branch Office from 1 August 1992 to 31 March 1993	41
Mexborough Branch Office from 23 March 1992 to 22 March 1993	24

Information is required to be kept for 18 months and is not available for Doncaster East Branch Office between 1 April 1992 and 31 July 1992.

	Number
Doncaster West District Office from 1 April 1993 to 22 March 1994	172
Doncaster East Branch Office from 1 April 1993 to 22 March 1994	167
Mexborough Branch Office from 23 March 1993 to 22 March 1994	68

The information for Mexborough only includes those people resident in the Doncaster postal district.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Prosecutions

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many prosecutions were instigated by his Department in the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 by nature of offence, the number of convictions, the number of custodial sentences and the financial penalties levied.

Mr. Hague *[pursuant to his reply, 22 March 1994, columns 167-68]:* The totals shown in the table should read as follows:

Year	Number
1990-91	8,336
1991-92	4,618
1992-93	5,902

Child Support Agency

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were *(a)* the start-up costs, *(b)* the running costs and *(c)* the moneys recovered from absent parents in the first year of the Child Support Agency; and what was the target sum for *(c)*.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Frank Field, dated 28 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the costs of the Child Support Agency and the money recovered by the Agency.

The total cost of setting up the Agency was around £146 million. This figure includes the 1992-93 cost of liable relative work, transferred in April 1992 from the Benefits Agency to the Child Support Unit, as the shadow Agency was known before its launch in April 1993. The running costs for the Agency in 1993-94 are estimated at £97·8 million.

The Agency was set a target to recover £530 million in benefit savings in the financial year 1993-94. To 31 January 1994, £250 million had been recorded as recovered. This does not represent the total amount of savings during the period as some will be scored restrospectively.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the operation of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Lilley: The Child Support Agency was introduced to ensure that parents meet their responsibility for the financial maintenance of their children where they can afford to do so. It replaced an inconsistent, often unreliable system which resulted in a drastic decline in maintenance payments over the past decade.

There is already the right of appeal to an independent tribunal against a decision of a child support officer on the basis of an incorrect application of the formula.

DEFENCE

RAF Personnel Management Centre

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *394*, what was the cost of refurbishment to the personal residence of the air officer commanding the RAF personnel management centre, Innsworth.

Mr. Hanley: The current air officer commanding the personnel management centre at RAF Innsworth vacated his official residence, Haymes Garth, in May 1992. That was to allow it to be refurbished for the air officer commander in chief of the new RAF personnel and training command. Since May 1992, the existing air officer commanding has been living in his own private residence. The value of the work being carried out at Haymes Garth is estimated at around £260,000 and includes substantial expenditure on repairs to the roof, on rewiring and re-plumbing.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Hanley: No Asians or black people were appointed to MOD non-departmental public bodies during 1993.

David Hart

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role and status David Hart has in his Department; what are his terms and conditions of employment; and when he was appointed.

Mr. Hanley: Mr. Hart is not an employee of the Ministry of Defence. He is one of a number of people who provide unpaid advice to my right hon. and learned Friend from time to time. He has carried out this role since July 1993.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *752*, if he will now give the same information for south Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I did not visit south Yorkshire on that date.

Low Flying

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been carried out on the possible cumulative effect of low flying sorties on the hearing of young infants; and if he will make a statement on their findings.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has not carried out specific research into the cumulative effect of low flying

sorties on the hearing of young infants. In 1990, however, we commissioned a study to review the available information on any possible relationship between aircraft noise and hearing loss. The review included consideration of research reports of possible hearing loss in children due to aircraft noise. A copy of the report was placed in the Library of the House—university of Southampton institute of sound and vibration research, "Risk to Hearing from Overflight Noise of Military Aircraft".

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low flying sorties have been conducted over mainland Britain for every year since 1979 *(a)* above 250 ft, *(b)* between 100 and 250 ft and *(c)* below 100 ft.

Mr. Hanley: The total numbers of sorties booked in the United Kingdom low flying system—UKLFS—for each year since 1979 are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1979	[1]108,860
1980	[1]122,851
1981	[1]131,841
1982	[1]130,313
1983	[1]127,683
1984	133,519
1985	141,762
1986	151,164
1987	147,661
1988	151,291
1989	144,323
1990	141,390
1991	127,400
1992	131,464
1993	119,410

[1] Before 1984 sorties were not recorded, but have been estimated from the number of movements into individual low flying areas.

Central records are not maintained of the heights at which low flying sorties are flown. Information is, however, available on operational low flying—OLF—which is flying by fixed-wing military aircraft below 250 ft and down to 100 ft and which may only take place in three tactical training areas—TTAs—in central Wales, northern Scotland and the borders. Details of OLF sorties are not available, but the total numbers of movements authorised into the TTAs in each year since 1979 are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1979	787
1980	797
1981	660
1982	240
1983	1,922
1984	1,007
1985	476
1986	1,200
1987	1,386
1988	2,115
1989	2,694
1990	6,027
1991	1,814
1992	3,220
1993	3,049

The figures from 1988 onwards reflect the division of the borders TTA into east and west sectors. Movements for the two sectors were counted separately so that sorties which crossed the border between the two sectors generated additional movements; this led to an overstatement of the amount of activity in comparison with earlier years. The division between the two sectors was removed in October 1993. Analysis of the figures which show OLF movements on the basis of treating the borders TTA as a single area give revised figures from 1991 onwards as follows:

Year	*Number*
1991	1,050
1992	2,026
1993	1,874

Note: Revised figures for 1988-90 are not available.

OLF may be authorised down to a minimum level of 100 ft but records do not distinguish between movements flown below 250 ft and at 100 ft.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the total number and type of low flying exercises that have been conducted over Britain since 1979; if he will account for each significant change since 1990; and if he will describe future plans during 1994.

Mr. Hanley: Central records of all low flying exercises in the United Kingdom are not held. There have been no significant changes in the broad pattern of exercise activity in the United Kingdom since 1990, and none are anticipated during 1994.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been paid out in compensation to farmers in Wales for loss of livestock, abortion and loss of production caused by low flying aircraft during each year since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: Since 1990 the Ministry of Defence has paid out the following amounts in compensation to farmers in Wales to cover livestock-related losses caused by low flying military aircraft:

Year	*£*
1990	47,953
1991	59,159
1992	33,152
1993	29,999

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will define the geographical area included in the central Wales tactical training area.

Mr. Hanley: The Welsh tactical training area comprises the south-west portion of Montgomery, the north-west corner of Brecon and Radnor, the north-east corner of Carmarthen and north Pembroke. The area, which is designated low flying area 7T, is shown on the copy of the map of the day low flying system which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the total number of low flying sorties that have crossed the terrain of the Carmarthen constituency (1) on average per year from 1979 to 1991, (2) during 1992 and (3) during 1993.

Mr. Hanley: Although records are maintained of the total number of sorties flown in the United Kingdom low flying system, it is not possible to estimate the number of sorties flown over particular locations.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations have been received by his Department against low flying aircraft during each year since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: The number of inquiries and complaints received by my Department about low flying in each year since 1979 are as allows:

Year	*Number*
1979	4,004
1980	3,365
1981	4,502
1982	3,304
1983	5,164
1984	5,609
1985	4,206
1986	5,304
1987	5,695
1988	5,763
1989	8,057
1990	7,130
1991	4,846
1992	6,295
1993	5,738

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what form of warning is given to farmers and residents of mid and west Wales prior to Royal Air Force test flights scheduled to fly in their area at altitudes below 250 ft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: All low flying below 250 ft and down to 100 ft in Wales by fixed wing military aircraft takes place in the Welsh tactical training area—TTA. Each month my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence notifies hon. Members in the areas affected of the planned usage of the TTA.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum height at which low flying takes place *(a)* in the central Wales tactical training area, *(b)* in the rest of Wales and *(c)* in the rest of Britain.

Mr. Hanley: Fixed-wing military aircraft, except light propeller-driven aircraft, are permitted to fly to a minimum height of 100 ft in the tactical training areas in central Wales, northern Scotland and the borders. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom low flying system the minimum height is 250 ft.

Light propeller-driven aircraft are permitted to fly to a minimum height of 50 ft. There is no minimum height restriction for helicopters.

Arms Sales

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's officials are involved in the selling of British arms to other European NATO countries outside the Western European Union.

Mr. Aitken: Taking into account associate membership of the WEU, there are no European NATO countries outside the WEU.

Pregnant Personnel

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current employment policies when female personnel in the armed forces become pregnant.

Mr. Hanley: Service women who become pregnant can choose either to take a period of up to 48 weeks maternity leave and return to duty, or if they prefer, to leave the armed forces. Those who choose to leave can apply to re-enter subsequently if they wish.

Child Care

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent child care facilities are made available to personnel in the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *940*.

Female Personnel

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the percentage of female personnel in each of the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Service	*Percentage of Female Personnel (as at 1 January 1994)*
Royal Navy	7·6
Army	5·7
Royal Air Force	8·5

Porton Down

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, columns *392-93*, what were the cash outturns at 1992-93 prices for the chemical and biological establishment at Porton Down for each financial year between 1969 and 1979.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the Chief Executive of the CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone, dated 29 March 1994:

Parliamentary Question 3, Order Paper 24 March 1994

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking pursuant to the answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, columns *392-3* what were the cash outturns at 1992-93 prices for this Establishment for each financial year between 1969 and 1979 has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The cash outturns for 1975-76 to 1978-79 at 1992-93 price levels are as follows:

Outturn at 1992-93 Price Levels

Year	*£ million*
1975-76	18·7
1976-77	17·0
1977-78	15·8
1978-79	13·5

I regret that the cash outturns for 1969-70 to 1974-75 are not readily available.

Air Cadets

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the representations he has received about the future of the Air Cadets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 3 March, *Official Report*, column *871*.

EDUCATION

Examination League Tables

16. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has concerning the publication of examination league tables this year.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the responses to consultation on the content and format of the 1994 school and college performance tables. He intends to build on the considerable success of previous years' tables and is minded, as in 1993, to publish in November two sets of booklets, covering secondary schools and institutions catering for students aged 16 to 18. He has also proposed that the secondary school tables should, for the first time, include data on authorised absence as well as on unauthorised absence from school, and information on the length of the taught week.

Local Management of Schools

17. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the funding of teacher salary increases within local management of school budgets.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received comments on the funding of teacher salary increases for 1994-95 from the teacher unions, local authority associations and others who were invited to comment on his proposals for implementing the recommendations of the school teachers' review body. A further 70 letters have been received from individual LEAs, head teachers and governors.

Discretionary Awards

18. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the Gulbenkian Foundation survey of discretionary awards will be published.

Mr. Boswell: Although publication is not in the Government's hands, I understand that, in order to avoid publication at the beginning of the Easter break, the survey's steering committee has now decided to publish the report on 8 April.

Direct Grant Schools

19. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what applications for capital spending he has received from direct grant schools on Merseyside for the year up to 1 April; and what allowance has been made by his Department to those schools during the same period.

Mr. Robin Squire: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to capital bids by self-governing—grant-maintained—schools for 1993-94. One such school on Merseyside received a named project allocation totalling £750,000. Emergency grants totalling £188,000 have also been made to schools on Merseyside in the same period.

Nursery Education

20. **Ms Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to expand nursery provision; and if he will make a statement.

22. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the provision of private sector nursery education and its relationship to state nursery education provisions.

23. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to extend nursery education to all four and five-year-olds whose parents want it.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recommendations he has for nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: Over 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds already receive some form of pre-school provision, whether in maintained nursery and primary schools or in playgroups or elsewhere in the private sector. Our policy is to promote diversity, choice, quality and cost-effectiveness. We are currently reviewing possible ways of extending opportunities still further for the under fives, as resources allow. We will announce our conclusions when we are ready.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate his Department has made of the educational and social benefits of nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 17 February at columns *934-35*.

School Places (Portsmouth)

21. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from Hampshire local education authority concerning school places in Portsmouth.

Mr. Forth: None.

Public Examinations (Course Work)

24. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the role of course work in GCSE.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend is clear that the proportion of course work assessment must be appropriate to the type of qualification and to the knowledge, skills and understanding that are being tested. He recognises that some aspects of achievement are better assessed through course work than through terminal examination.

Medical Students (Financial Support)

25. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to special provision of further financial support for medical students and others on four and five-year degree courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the House on 30 November 1993 that the total support available to students through the mandatory maintenance grant and the student loan would rise by 4 per cent. in 1994-95. The same annual rates of grant and loans apply to all students irrespective of their course length. We have no plans to change that arrangement.

Truancy

27. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the principal findings of the tables on truancy published last year by his Department.

Mr. Forth: The tables published in November 1993 found that significant amounts of valuable learning time are being lost due to unauthorised absence; 12 per cent. of all pupils in primary and in secondary schools had been absent without authority in the period covered by the tables. An average of 12 half-days were lost by every absent primary school pupil and 24 half-days were lost by every absent secondary pupil. Rates of unauthorised absence varied widely between individual LEAs and schools.

Grant-maintained Schools

28. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils are now being educated in self-governing grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: We estimate that over 530,000 pupils are currently being educated in grant-maintained schools. As more schools join the sector next month this total will rise to over 580,000.

Assisted Places Scheme

29. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the future of the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Forth: The Government remain fully committed to this excellent scheme. We expect to achieve our target—namely, 35,000 available places in England and Wales, by 1995.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Boswell: The figures are as follows:

Grade	*Number of women*	*Percentage women*	*Number of ethnics*	*Percentage ethnics*	*Number of disabled*	*Percentage disabled*
Grade 1	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 2	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 3	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 4	1	25·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 5	12	26·1	0	0·0	1	2·2
Grade 6	2	13·3	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 7	44	28·8	4	2·6	1	0·7
TOTAL IN DFE	1,309	58·4	164	7·3	63	2·9

There were other staff in the Department with disabilities who chose not to register and are not therefore included in the figures.

These figures include 376 staff in post in the Teachers' Pensions Agency.

Parental Appeals

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give figures, in total and for each local education authority, on the number and percentage of parental appeals on school admission which are *(a)* rejected, *(b)* withdrawn, *(c)* settled and *(d)* upheld; and if he will give these figures for both the earliest and latest years for which they are available since 1964.

Mr. Robin Squire: Data on the number of parents securing their first choice of secondary school are not collected centrally. However, the most recent evidence—from surveys commissioned by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in 1992 and *The Times* in 1993—shows that some 90 per cent. of parents gain a place at their first choice of school.

Forensic Medicine

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines he has on the training of medical students in forensic medicine.

Mr. Boswell: It is for individual universities to determine the content and organisation of their medical curriculum taking account of guidelines issued by the General Medical Council.

Teachers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *134*, when the information about the number of people who graduated or qualified or failed in teacher training in 1993 will be available.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is expected to become available for statistical use during the summer. The required information will then be placed in the Library.

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the

appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Boswell: The information has been placed in the Library. Ministerial responsibility for approval rests ultimately with my right hon. Friend.

Charing Cross Medical School

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the future of the Charing Cross medical school.

Mr. Boswell: The Government accepted Sir Bernard Tomlinson's recommendation that Charing Cross medical school should merge with St. Mary's medical school within Imperial college. The Higher Education Funding Council for England is taking forward discussions on the merger with the institutions themselves.

Secondary Schools

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 14 March, Official Report, column *532*, which four local authority secondary schools in London he visited in the last 12 months; and how many he plans to visit during 1994.

Mr. Patten: The four local authority schools that I have visited in London during the last 12 months are: Bishop Thomas Grant secondary school, Lambeth; The Hague primary school, Tower Hamlets; Mulberry school for girls, Tower Hamlets; and Hasmonean school, Barnet.

During the same period I have visited Archbishop Tennison school and Bexley and Erith technical high school for boys which are both self-governing, grant-maintained, schools; my plans for further visits this year are under consideration.

Music Teachers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his latest assessment of the shortage of teachers of music.

Mr. Robin Squire: There is currently no significant shortage of teachers of music. In January 1993 only 0·7 per cent. of music posts were vacant—some 30 posts. Recruitment to initial teacher training in music in 1993 rose by 9 per cent. from the previous year. Applications for entry to initial teacher training in autumn 1994 are higher than this time last year.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools and schools operating under local management of schools in *(a)* the primary sector and *(b)* the secondary and tertiary sectors had a budget (i) surplus and (ii) deficit last year; how much money was involved in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested on local education authority schools could be collated only at disproportionate cost. No grant-maintained school was in cash deficit at the end of the financial year 1992-93. In the interests of effective management of public funds, schools operating under local management of schools are able to carry forward balances from one year to another, as are grant-maintained schools within limits set by the Department.

Schools (Capital Projects)

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for what named capital projects the Greenwood Dale GM school, the George Spencer comprehensive school and the Ravensdale middle school bid in 1994-95; what was the total amount of each bid; and how much finance was allocated to each school.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following are details of the named capital project bids made by the schools for funding in 1994-95:

School	*Bid* £	*Description*	*Allocation* £
Greenwood Dale	550,206	Roof/cladding/boiler repairs	Nil
	144,225	Refurbishment of five science laboratories	120,000
George Spencer	119,606	Roof works and asbestos removal	100,000
	715,117	Science/technology provision	250,000
Ravensdale middle	129,250	Refurbishment of science laboratory and administration area	Nil
	22,372	Renewal of defective felt roofing	20,000

Iraqi Students

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Iraqi students were studying in the United Kingdom at the latest available date; and what were the numbers five years ago.

Mr. Boswell: The latest available information relates to the 1991-92 academic year, when there were 174 Iraqi students enrolled as full-time students at universities, polytechnics, Scottish central institutions and other colleges maintained or assisted by local authorities or grant-aided by education departments in the United Kingdom. This compares to 1,300 in the 1987-88 academic year.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the powers of maintained schools to exclude pupils.

Mr. Forth: The Department has received a wide range of responses to the draft circular on exclusions, which was issued for consultation in January as part of the "Pupils with Problems" package. Those responses are currently being analysed. From time to time the Department also receives representations from parents or other interested parties about individual exclusion cases.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 30 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) how many cases received legal aid in the North West region last year; what was the average length of time taken to bring a case to court; and what was the average cost of each case;

(2) how many legal aid certificates have been issued in the last two years for preliminary work only in the North West region; how many of these led to completed court cases; and how many were incomplete and did not come to court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The North-West region is served by four legal aid area offices which are situated in Chester, Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The offices at Chester and Newcastle also serve other areas outside of the region. It is not possible to distinguish assisted persons residing in the North-West region from those residing in the other areas covered. In the geographical areas covered by all four offices 112,029 civil legal aid certificates were issued in the financial year 1992-93. According to statistical returns submitted by the courts 70,215 criminal legal aid orders were granted in the North-West region in the calendar year 1992. A further 2,563 criminal legal aid orders were granted by legal aid committees following appeals against magistrates' refusal of legal aid. The average cost of all legal aid bills paid in 1992-93 in England and Wales was as follows:

Civil legal aid	£906
Criminal Magistrates'	£449
Criminal Higher	£840

Information is not available on the length of time taken to bring legally aided cases to court, but the average length of time taken from the granting of a civil legal aid certificate to the conclusion of the case is approximately three years.

Legal aid certificates are not issued in respect of preliminary work only. A certificate may however be limited to specific steps in the proceedings, pending counsel's opinion on the legal merits of the case. The Legal Aid Board's management information does not distinguish limited certificates from full certificates.

During the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93 a total of 214,655 civil legal aid certificates were issued in the geographical areas covered by the area offices situated at Chester, Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The average duration of a legally aided case is three years and therefore the majority of cases commenced in the last two years will not have reached a conclusion. Out of a total number of 164,038 cases concluded in 1991-92 and 1992-93 in the geographical areas covered 106,962 were settled out of court or otherwise disposed of.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he is taking to ensure that solicitors receive adequate recompense for work carried out under the legal aid system where the value of the claim being pursued is for less than £3,000.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is the Lord Chancellor's aim to ensure that all legal aid remuneration rates give adequate recompense to solicitors who carry out work under the scheme.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will ensure that where solicitors are pursuing claims of less than £3,000 with legal aid that the work is not delegated to an unqualified fee earner.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is the responsibility of each solicitor doing legal aid work to ensure that work is conducted by the appropriate level of fee earner. The Lord Chancellor has no plans to change this.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the amount spent on the new franchising arrangement for legal aid; how many new posts were created; and what are the costs of the new staffing arrangements of the franchising units.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the year 1993-94 including recruitment, training and systems development, the new franchising arrangements costs were £3·4 million. Approximately 80 full-time equivalent posts have been created at an annual total employment cost of £2 million.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades, 1 to 7 and overall, in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number and percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall who are *(a)* women is set out in table 1. Information on the ethnic origin of officers and on numbers of disabled officers is obtained by the use of voluntary staff surveys. The number and percentage of respondents in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall who are *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively, are set out in tables 2 and 3.

Table 1
Number and percentage of officers in grades 1-7 and overall who are women as at 25 March 1994

Grade	*Number*	*Percentage*
1	0	0·0
2	0	0·0
3	1	9·1
4	0	0·0
5	6	17·6
6	19	21·1
7	79	37·2
Overall	7,922	63·2

Note to table: The grades shown are for grade *levels* i.e. they include equivalent grades.

Table 2
Number and respondents of officers in grades 1-7 and overall who are ethnic minorities as at 25 March 1994

Grade	Number	Percentage
1	0	0·0
2	0	0·0
3	0	0·0
4	0	0·0
5	0	0·0
6	*	2·4
7	*	2·2
Overall	916	8·1

Notes to table:
(1) The grades shown are for grade levels ie they include equivalent grades
(2) Information on ethnic origin is collected by the use of a voluntary survey of all staff. To date 10 per cent. of staff have chosen not to respond to the survey. The figures quoted in the table are therefore based on the number of respondents.
(3) The asterisks denote numbers that were so small as to enable identification of individuals, and are used to protect the privacy of those concerned.

Table 3
Number and Respondents of Officers in Grades 1-7 and Overall who have a Disability as at 25 March 1994

Grade	Number	Percentage
1	0	0·0
2	0	0·0
3	0	0·0
4	0	0·0
5	0	0·0
6	*	2·5
7	*	2·8
Overall	446	4·6

Notes to Table:
(1) The grades shown are for grade *levels* i.e. they include equivalent grades.
(2) Information on disability is collected by the use of a voluntary survey of all staff. To date 23 per cent. of staff have chosen not to respond to the survey. The figures quoted in the above table are therefore based on the number of respondents.
(3) The asterisks denote numbers that were so small as to enable identification of individuals, and are used to protect the privacy of those concerned.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The figures for public appointments made by the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Northern Ireland Court Service in 1993 are for *(a)* Asians 1·5 per cent. and for *(b)* black people 1 per cent. This answer does not include judicial appointments. It is not our practice to give names: when asking appointees for information on their ethnic origin it is our practice to make it clear that it will be used only for statistical purposes.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* In Doncaster, the Lord Chancellor's Department comissioned a new Crown court building which became ready for use in the third quarter of 1989. The final total cost of the scheme was £5 million —inclusive of site purchase costs, construction and design costs. An extension to the magistrates court is now currently being designed. It is estimated to cost £2·6 million and construction is likely to begin during 1995-96.

(a) There are no plans at present for a new court building scheme in Barnsley.

(c) In Rotherham the construction of a new ten courtroom magistrates court building commenced in February 1992 and is now in the final stage, and is due to become operational in early May. The full cost is likely to be £5·4 million.

(d) In Wakefield there are proposals to build a new magistrates court to contain six courts. If approved, construction could commence in 1997-98 and the estimated cost would be approximately £7·8 million.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Race Awareness Training

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures the Lord Chancellor has taken to ensure that *(a)* High Court judges and *(b)* circuit judges receive training in race awareness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Training for members of the judiciary is a matter for the Judicial Studies Board. I can tell the hon. Member that the board includes race awareness as a standard topic in all its refresher and induction seminars attended by High Court judges and circuit judges. In addition, the board is developing a programme of seminars on these issues for all circuit judges, recorders and assistant recorders in England and Wales to be carried forward over the next two years.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total cost of official entertainment in the Lord Chancellor's Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Three principal receptions are funded each year by the Department: the Lord Chancellor's breakfast at the commencement of the legal year, a summer reception given by the Lord Chancellor for members of the media and—since 1992-93—a reception in the Inner Temple given by the Lord Chief Justice. The costs of these events, and the total costs of official entertaining each year since 1990-91, are given in the table.

While other individual receptions may have been held, the cost of identifying them and their related expenditure would be disproportionate.

Lord Chancellor's Department official entertaining

	Lord Chancellor's breakfast £	*Lord Chief Justice's reception* £	*Media reception* £	*Total* £
1990-91	7,105·59	—	—	19,022·93
1991-92	8,661·32	—	605·94	20,894·90
1992-93	9,816·84	1,433·89	734·55	20,697·44
1993-94 (to the end of February	8,008·63	1,594·10	653·15	17,463·63

Magistrates

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, columns *271-72*, if he will make it his policy to collect centrally information on the expressed political affiliations of magistrates and applicants for the magistrates bench.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information is collected centrally for each bench on the expressed political affiliations of magistrates. The Lord Chancellor has no plans to collect centrally similar information on applicants.

EMPLOYMENT

Annual Performance Agreement

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Employment Service annual performance agreement for 1994-95 will be published.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today placed copies of the Employment Service annual performance agreement for 1994-95 in the Library. The new targets represent a considerable challenge to the Employment Service. I have set a demanding target of placing 1·7 million unemployed people in jobs next year. And I have asked the chief executive to give a high priority to helping unemployed people who face particular difficulties in getting back to work.

We have agreed an exceptionally demanding target that 29·5 per cent. of total unemployed placings should be long-term claimants. This will mean finding jobs for at least 500,000 people who have been unemployed for six months or more. There will also be two new targets aimed at offering extra help to people who have been unemployed for 12 months and 24 months. I have also agreed the highest ever target for finding jobs for people with disabilities.

Youth Training

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a table showing for each training and enterprise council in England the number of people covered by the youth training guarantee who have been waiting for over eight weeks for a YT place; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: On 10 March the number of young people covered by the youth training guarantee who had been waiting for eight or more weeks for a YT place was 138. This was a fall of 97 per cent. from March 1993 when the total was 5,424. This is excellent progress and a tribute to the efforts of training and enterprise councils, careers services and all others involved in placing young people into training. The following table gives information for each TEC:

YT guarantee monitoring
YT seekers: waiting >8 weeks

	March 1993	*March 1994*
Avon	88	8
AZTEC	156	0
Barnsley/Doncaster	36	0
Bedfordshire	115	0
Birmingham	110	0
Bolton/Bury	41	0
Bradford	15	0
Calderdale/Kirklees	18	0
CAMBSTEC	69	0
Central London	136	5
Central England	14	4
CEWTEC	18	2
CILNTEC	143	1
County Durham	62	3
Coventry/Warwickshire	79	0
Cumbria	33	1
Devon and Cornwall	66	2
Dorset	23	2
Dudley	2	0
ELTEC	19	0
Essex	373	0
Gloucester	28	0
Greater Peterborough	23	0
Greater Nottingham	32	0
Hampshire	207	3
HAWTEC	19	0
Heart of England	15	1
Hertfordshire	107	9
Humberside	47	0
Isle of Wight	37	5
Kent	338	0
LAWTEC	40	4
Leeds	37	0
Leicestershire	27	0
LETEC	439	2
Lincolnshire	19	1
Manchester	106	1
Merseyside	42	1
METROTEC	21	0
Milton Keynes	32	5
Norfolk/Waveney	4	7
NORMIDTEC	13	2
North Yorkshire	79	3
North West London	111	0
North Nottingham	91	2
North Derbyshire	42	1
North London	66	4
Northamptonshire	62	2
Northumberland	47	7
Oldham	36	0
QUALITEC	20	0
Rochdale	18	0

	March 1993	March 1994
Rotherham	4	0
Sandwell	10	0
SECTEC	0	0
Sheffield	156	0
Shropshire	19	0
SOLOTEC	206	1
Somerset	97	0
South Thames	476	0
South Derbyshire	25	1
Staffordshire	4	0
Stockport	16	0
Suffolk	13	1
Surrey	94	4
Sussex	66	24
Teesside	45	3
Thames Valley	185	3
Tyneside	60	2
Wakefield	18	2
Walsall	3	2
Wearside	0	2
West London	36	0
Wiltshire	68	5
Wolverhampton	2	0

DEFENCE

Government Contracts

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the report by the Review Board for Government Contracts on its 1994 annual review of the profit formula for non-competitive Government contracts.

Mr. Aitken: The Government have accepted the overall target rate of return on capital employed as recommended by the review board in its report. The new rate will be 18·2 per cent. compared with the current rate of 19 per cent., both on the basis of historic costs. It will be effective from 1 April this year. There are other points arising from this report and from the board's report on the seventh general review last year which officials will be discussing with the Confederation of British Industry as part of our continuing drive to secure maximum value for money from our defence contracts and ensuring a fair return for our contractors. Copies of the report are being placed in the Library of the House.

Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key performance targets have been set for 1994-95 for the chief executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

Mr. Aitken: The chief executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down is responsible for research to ensure that the United Kingdom armed forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them. He has been set the following challenging key performance targets for 1994-95:

1. To deliver to time 90 per cent. of the programme milestones agreed with the customers and have the work rated by the customer as meeting or exceeding the agreed objectives.
2. To respond to 85 per cent. of requests accepted for unplanned urgent advice within the timescale negotiated at the outset.
3. To deliver the agreed work programme within the aggregate of the programme costs agreed with each customer —including individual package customers within the applied research programme.
4. To increase the overall efficiency of CBDE by reducing net expenditure, as shown in the net expenditure account, by 1 per cent.
5. To develop, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence, an appropriate system of trading to provide greater empowerment of the customer by April 1995.
6. To continue the agreed market testing programme with the objective of placing the service level agreement/contract by 31 March 1995.
7. To survey customers to identify appropriate measures of the quality of service provided by CBDE to the Ministry of Defence, and conduct a full customer satisfaction survey on the basis of these measures by March 1995.
8. To develop a strategy for a formal quality plan for the conduct of all research carried out at CBDE. This will include: standards of planning, management, execution and reporting of the work to the customer; measures of customer satisfaction; and peer review of scientific rigour, novelty and innovation.

Helicopters

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made in the procurement of support helicopters for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to say that we have made considerable progress since my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence, announced our intentions in December.

Invitations to tender are now being issued for my Department's requirements for additional support helicopters. In consequence, my Department will enter into parallel negotiations with Boeing (Chinook) and Westland (EH101 Utility) on the basis of its normal NAPNOC—no acceptable price, no contract—procedures, to determine the specifications, performance details, terms and conditions and prices, against which further support helicopters might be supplied.

Accordingly, separate single invitations to tender are being issued to Boeing Defense and Space Group and to Westland Helicopters Ltd. for return on 30 June 1994, on the clear understanding that respective performance and value for money considerations will be taken into account as part of the Department's normal process of evaluation and will influence the Department's eventual decision on what support helicopters to buy.

Sir Peter Harding

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has investigated the security aspects of the events leading to the resignation of Sir Peter Harding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: These matters have been investigated. The principal conclusion is that no evidence has been found of any compromise of classified or sensitive information. Nor has any evidence been found, in the events which led to Sir Peter's resignation as Chief of Defence Staff, of any intelligence operation or criminal conspiracy against him.

Career and Manpower Review

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to announce the appointment of a chairman for the independent review of

service career and manpower structure and terms and conditions of service; and if he will publish terms of reference for the review.

Mr. Hanley: Further to the answer I gave the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 9 February, *Official Report*, columns *362-63*, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has now invited Mr. Michael Bett to lead the independent team which will be conducting this major independent review of service career and manpower structure and terms and conditions of service. Further appointments to the team will be announced in due course. Terms of reference for the review are as follows:

The review is to examine service career and manpower structures, and terms and conditions of service, and recommend changes required to render them appropriate to the needs of the 21st century.

The review is to take account of changes in military commitments and deployment patterns, including any which may flow from the defence costs studies. It should draw on work already conducted in each service, and may need to subsume the current in-house review of the armed forces pension scheme. It should examine practices within the armed forces of other nations, and within other major organisations in the United Kingdom.

The review should propose future structures which are robust, flexible, efficient and cost-effective, paying particular attention to:

a) Current practice in such areas as length of service, career patterns, deployment patterns, rank structure and trade structures;

b) The relationship between responsibility, rank, trade and pay, and the concept of performance pay; current sources of dissatisfaction; and the scope for a rationalised pay and allowance structure.

The review should seek to contribute to the reduction over the longer term of the overall resource cost of manpower, and should identify clearly the resource implications of its proposals. It should at the same time take full account of the requirement to maintain disciplined, highly trained and well-motivated armed forces, and of the particular requirements of service life.

The Review should consult widely within MOD, the Office of Manpower Economics and the services; and should ensure that the Armed Forces Pay Review Body and the Senior Salaries Review Board are consulted on matters within their remit.

The review team will be led by Mr. Bett and will be supported by a small MOD project team. It is to submit its final report to the Secretary of State for Defence within 12 months of its starting work.

TRANSPORT

Lands End-Isles of Scilly Monitoring Area

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make the sea between Lands End and the Isles of Scilly a mandatory reporting and monitoring area for ships under the international convention for the safety of life at sea.

Mr. Norris: There is already international agreement that laden vessels should report their intention to enter the traffic separation scheme in place between Lands End and Isles of Scilly. The United Kingdom is taking a leading role in international negotiations which should lead to changes in the safety of life at sea—SOLAS—convention and to the establishment of a legal framework for the mandatory reporting of ship movements.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what resources will be made available to local authorities affected by increased levels of rail traffic resulting from the channel tunnel for noise mitigation.

Mr. Freeman: Supplementary credit approvals of £1 million and £0·25 million respectively were previously allocated to Kent and Surrey county councils for jointly-funded schemes agreed with British Rail for the provision of acoustic barriers alonside existing tracks at locations in the areas expected to be most affected at night by noise from international freight trains. Kent county council has decided also to offer double glazing for certain isolated properties which could not be protected by noise barriers.

More recently, I have agreed to provide further credit approvals of £0·375 million to Kent, to cover the balance of its costs, and £0·336 million to the London borough of Bromley, which has also agreed a joint noise mitigation scheme with BR.

As stated in my answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1007*, I and my colleagues will be prepared to consider TPP applications for resources in 1995-96 from other authorities in London which agree schemes with BR. Such applications will be considered on their merits and in the light of the resources available.

Victoria Station

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when rail customers are able to obtain service information at Victoria.

Mr. Freeman: The information point at Victoria is open Monday to Saturday 07.00am to 10.15pm, Sunday 08.00am to 10.00pm. Service information can also be obtained from telephone inquiry bureaux between 07·15am and 9.00pm daily, by ringing 071-928-5100 or 0273-206-755.

Research Laboratory

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has reached a conclusion on the future of the transport research laboratory.

Mr. Macgregor: Following a review I commissioned from consultants, KPMG Peat Marwick, I have decided that the transport research laboratory should transfer to the private sector.

I have considered the consultants' report very carefully. I have also had discussions with the TRL trade unions. The consultants concluded that retention of TRL in the public sector would risk the laboratory being unable to respond adequately to changes in its market and so lead to a cycle of cumulative decline. The likelihood is therefore that TRL would be unable to continue to offer its current breadth of research. The consultants' analysis confirmed that privatisation was both feasible and desirable in allowing the laboratory to compete more effectively across a wider market than is currently available to it.

I am satisfied that privatisation will provide the best opportunity for TRL's future progress. In setting objectives for the sale I shall have regard to a number of requirements, including to the need to secure the

Government's continuing requirement for high quality, independent transport research at good value for money, and the needs of staff working in the laboratory.

I shall announce details of the form of sale in due course. My current aim is to provide for a competitive sale, attracting bids for the whole of the TRL business from a wide range of possible purchasers. I hope privatisation can be achieved during 1995-96.

On-street Parking

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering to the management and provision of services for the new local authority on-street parking enforcement system under the Road Traffic Act 1991.

Mr. Norris: In November 1993 the Department of the Environment consulted local authorities nationally on a draft order to extend compulsory competitive tendering to the provision and management of services for the new local authority on-street parking enforcement system under part II of the Road Traffic Act 1991. This system is being applied initially only in London but is being extended to the rest of England and Wales.

In general the authorities supported the principle of extending CCT to these services but some were concerned about the timing of its introduction. In particular the Parking Committee for London, which includes a representative from each London local authority, felt that the suggested commencement date of April 1995 should be deferred for six months. I have accepted this view and decided that CCT will apply from 1 October 1995 in the metropolitan areas and London, and following the local government review in other areas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be laying an order before the House shortly.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it mandatory for ships with hazardous cargoes to give notice of their intention to sail through the Pentland firth, in accordance with changes in the safety of life at sea convention.

Mr. Norris: There is already international agreement that laden vessels should report their intention to transit the Pentland firth. The United Kingdom is taking a leading role in international negotiations which should lead to changes in the safety of life at sea—SOLAS—convention and to the establishment of a legal framework for the mandatory reporting of ship movements.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *251*, what penalties exist for ships carrying hazardous cargoes that do not use the safe deep water route around the Hebrides.

Mr. Norris: The Department is applying increasing pressure on the owners of ships carrying hazardous cargoes to use the deep water route west of the Hebrides. There is evidence to suggest that this is having a positive effect.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reporting is mandatory for ships carrying hazardous cargoes near environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Norris: Whilst there are no requirements for reports to be made at the moment, the Department is applying increasing pressure on shipowners to comply with internationally agreed recommendations, and the United Kingdom is taking a leading role in international negotiations to set in place a legal framework for the mandatory reporting of ship movements.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many ships carrying hazardous cargoes from the United Kingdom via the Hebrides have *(a)* made use of the safe deep water route via the outer Hebrides and *(b)* passed through the Minches in the last year.

Mr. Norris: This information is not held in the form requested. I can say, however, that in the last 12 months 113 ships carrying hazardous cargoes have reported their intention to use the Minch to HM Coastguard at Stornoway.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *251*, what legal force backs the measures in place to keep ships carrying hazardous cargoes away from environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Norris: Routeing measures around the United Kingdom are in accordance with agreements reached at the International Maritime Organisation. For the most part they are voluntary and are enforced by complaint to the flag state of a transgressing vessel. The United Kingdom is actively engaged in negotiating in the IMO on mandatory routes which can be put in place to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

River Buses

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost to public funds of maintenance and mooring of river buses on the Thames; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: No central Government funding is involved.

Oil Discharges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the annual volume of oil entering *(a)* the North sea, *(b)* the straits of Dover and *(c)* the English channel from shipping for each of the last four years; and, for each year, what proportion of that was intentionally discharged.

Mr. Norris: The information is as set out. There are no records of volumes of oil spilt in the Dover straits. The Bonn agreement estimates that between 1,000 and 2,000 tonnes of oil per annum are intentionally discharged in to the North sea—all sectors—each year but no such estimates exist for the Dover straits or the English channel.

	Tonnes
1990	
North sea (United Kingdom sector)	336
English channel	15
1991	
North sea (United Kingdom sector)	45
English channel	41

	Tonnes
1992	
North sea (United Kingdom sector)	134
English channel	33
1993	
North sea (United Kingdom sector)	[2]170
English channel	[3]311

[1] Excluding the Rosebay spill of 1,100 tonnes.
[2] Excluding the Brner spill of 86,000 tonnes.
[3] Excluding the Apache spill of 256 tonnes.

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Norris: Lists of any such organisations and individuals are not held centrally and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

In general, my right hon. Friend consults the chairmen of the relevant committee or board and such consultation may, in some cases, be a statutory requirement. He will also consult professional and other organisations if necessary in order to find persons with suitable qualifications for an appointment. He has regard to the guidance on consultations with the Prime Minister and other Departments set out in Section 6 of the "Cabinet Office Guide on Public Appointments Procedures", copies of which are available in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercies the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Norris: Information on most of the appointments made by my right hon. Friend are shown in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993". Further information on these and on some other appointments is to be found in "A Handbook for Women's Organisations" published by the Women's National Commission. Copies of both documents are available in the Libraries of the House. Up-to-date lists of persons currently appointed to posts are not held centrally, but information on membership of many public bodies was provided recently in response to questions tabled by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) on 27 January 1994. Further detailed information in response to the points raised by the hon. Member could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The exercise of responsibility on behalf of my right hon. Friend is a matter for him and any delegation will vary according to the nature of the body and the appointments being made.

Railway Stations, Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those British Rail stations within Humberside and the three counties of Yorkshire that are not yet classed as open stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Only four stations within Humberside and Yorkshire have ticket barriers. These are Bradford interchange, Huddersfield, Hull and Leeds.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail stations within Humberside and the three counties of Yorkshire regional passenger committee area are totally unstaffed; and if he will list them.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 138 stations within the Humberside and Yorkshire transport users' consultative committee for the north-east England area are totally unstaffed. I have placed the list in the Library and written to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Business Aviation

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the direction of trend in business aviation use at United Kingdom airfields.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not produce separate forecasts for demand for business aviation. However, the Government believe that such demand is likely to be correlated with economic growth and therefore in the longer term the trend is likely to be upward.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what spare capacity for business aviation exists at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports.

Mr. Norris: At Heathrow and Gatwick airports the runways are essentially full in the peak periods; general aviation services can obtain permission to use these airports no more than ten days in advance. At Stansted airport there is an administrative annual limit of 78,000 passenger air transport movements. Flights with less than 10 passengers and certain others are not included in this limit. Any increase to the annual limit would require the approval of both Houses of Parliament. Some 48,000 air transport movements operated last year.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the Government's policy on ensuring that a suitable airport or airports close to central London will continue to be available for business aviation use;

(2) what are the plans to retain and develop suitable London airports for business aviation use.

Mr. Norris: The Government have acknowledged for some time that access to Heathrow and Gatwick airports will become increasingly difficult for general aviation and that alternative facilities will need to be used. The Government believe that there remains unused airport capacity within reach of central London—including at Stansted and Luton airports.

As far as airport facilities not generally serving commercial passengers are concerned, there are facilities at a number of sites. The Department has been in discussion

with the Ministry of Defence about the scope for establishing a privately operated civil enclave for business aviation users at RAF Northolt.

The recent planning policy guidance on transport—PPG13—published by the Secretary of State for the Environment says that local authorities should take into account the contribution of general aviation when formulating plans. This would be relevant if permission was being sought for any change of use.

The Department will seek to ensure through the planning system that the benefits of business aviation are fully reflected in local plans. Within this framework it is for airport operators to make decisions on the development of facilities, in the light of their commercial judgment.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's estimates of the increase in demand over the next 20 years for business aviation capacity in the London area.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not produce estimates of demand separately for business aviation.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which airports within 30 miles of central London, which are currently being used for business aviation, are due to close during the next 10 years.

Mr. Norris: I understand that Hatfield and Leavesden aerodromes are to close this year.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which airfields, other than Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, near London, are planned for continuing business aviation use.

Mr. Norris: Aerodromes near London available for continuing business aviation use are Biggin Hill, Blackbushe, Elstree, Fairoaks, Farnborough, London Luton, London City, Northolt and Southend. Some of these cannot take all types of aircraft.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department and the Civil Aviation Authority have made of the effect of access difficulties to London airports on the scale of business aviation; and what evidence he has of business aviation being transferred to France.

Mr. Norris: I have encouraged the business aviation community to provide me with information on the industry; my Department is currently undertaking a study with the Department of Trade and Industry into the demand and economic case for business aviation. I have no evidence that business aviation is transferring from the United Kingdom to France.

"Britain's Railways: A New Era"

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many copies were *(a)* printed and *(b)* distributed of his Department's document, "Britain's Railways: A New Era", and if he will list the recipients.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 8,000 copies of the document "Britain's Railways: A New Era" were printed. Distribution has been as follows:

- 1,056 to BR and 2,000 to Railtrack; in turn I understand that BR and Railtrack are distributing the document to senior managers at national and regional level
- 1,000 to the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising for distribution in response to enquiries
- 827 copies to Peers and Members of Parliament
- 50 copies to the media
- 45 copies to attendees at a City seminar about rail privatisation
- 110 copies sent on request to the Railway Industry Association
- 28 copies have also been sent on request to individuals with an interest in the rail industry.

The residue will be distributed on request.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of *(a)* printing, *(b)* distributing and *(c)* writing the document "Britain's Railways: A New Era."

Mr. Freeman: *(a)* Printing costs were £16,000 within an overall total for production costs of £30,000;

(b) The Department's distribution costs were £2,000.

(c) The document was written by the Department, its advisers and others as part of their normal duties.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Jenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades, 1 to 7 and overall, in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Norris: The following table shows numbers and percentages of staff in post in the Department of Transport and its agencies at 1 April 1993. The figures relating to ethnic origin are based on responses to voluntary and confidential surveys of staff and are derived from the Department's computerised personnel records.

Department of Transport—Staff in post 1 April 1993

Grade	*Total number*	*Women*		*Ethnic minority*		*Disabled*	
		Number	*percentage*	*Number*	*percentage*	*Number*	*percentage*
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	25	2	8·0	0	0	0	0
4	16	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	110	8	7·3	1	0·9	0	0
6	146	7	4·8	6	4·1	0	0
7	763	73	9·6	24	3·1	0	0
All	15,246	6,946	45·6	736	4·8	198	1·3

Coastline Protection

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make further protective measures immediately to protect the United Kingdom coastline, human and wild life communities and the lives of seafarers in the light of information about the collision of two ships in the Bosphorus on 14 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 23 March 1994 at column *251*.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what emergency training for air traffic controllers has been implemented at Birmingham and Manchester airports by National Air Traffic Services.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* As the training of air traffic controllers is a matter for the Civil Airports Authority I am asking the chairman of the CAA to write in reply to the hon. Member's question.

Shipping

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the Baltic Exchange's proposal for a British open register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* Since the Baltic Exchange put its proposals for a British open register for shipping to Ministers on 3 December 1993 there have been a number of representations from various sources, some have been in favour, some against.

As I explained to the hon. Member on 11 January, *Official Report* column *124*, and again more recently to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Perry), *Official Report*, 16 March column *692*, the proposal requires careful study before a conclusion can be reached. An announcement will be made shortly.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the past five years.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* In each of the five years from 1989 to 1993 the number and value of contracts let by the Department to consultants for non-highways work was as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Value (£000s)*
1989	74	8,745
1990	126	15,225
1991	186	16,414
1992	254	13,621
1993	378	14,924

For highways work, new consultant contracts awarded in respect of schemes in the trunk road programme, operation of the trunk road network and associated investigations were as follows:

	Number
1989	72
1990	115
1991	113
1992	46
1993	44

Since many of these commissions are continuing, it is impossible to provide final costs. However, on a financial year basis, total expenditure in the last four years on all such contracts—not just those identified—has been:

	£ million
1990-91	159
1991-92	181
1992-93	208
1993-94	[1]173

[1] To date.

The figure for 1989-90 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Norris: Statistics are not kept on the total number of public appointments—including reappointments—made by my right hon. Friend each year. A check was made on the number of appointments held by members of ethnic minorities at 1 September 1993 as part of the Government-wide monitoring exercise for the purposes of the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993". This revealed that a holder of one of the DOT appointments listed in it is a member of an ethnic minority. However, as information on ethnic origin is given in confidene, the policy is not to give details that would identify ethnic origins of individuals.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport—excluding its agencies—has spent the following amounts on official entertainment since 1990-91:

	£
1990-91	203,684
1991-92	169,050
1992-93	231,547
1993-94	[1]218,615

[1] To 28 March 1994 only.

Information regarding individual receptions and the related costs is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport has not purchased any Proton cars in the last 10 years.

Cycling (Code of Conduct)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce a cyclists' code of conduct; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Advice to pedal cyclists on safe cycling practices is contained in the highway code. Rules 36 to 154 apply to cyclists as they do to all vehicle users and rules 187 to 211 give further specific advice to cyclists. We have also issued a leaflet "Tips for Safer Cycling" as part of our Cycle Safe campaign.

Traffic Calming

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice is given by his Department to local authorities on the design of traffic calming measures.

Mr. Key: The Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1993 build on the earlier Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1990 and provide local highway authorities with a wider choice of features to improve road safety and the local environment. The regulations provide for features such as chicanes, narrowings and gateways, as well as road humps, which can be used separately or in combination.

It is for individual authorities to design local schemes but my Department provides technical advice on the regulations and individual design features in circulars and traffic advisory leaflets.

Traffic Congestion (Cost)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the annual cost of traffic congestion.

Mr. Key: The cost of traffic congestion can be measured only against specific alternatives such as road schemes, junction improvements or initiatives to reduce or redirect traffic. It is not possible to provide a national aggregate measure.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the Acts of Parliament and Consolidation Acts that affect local government that have been introduced by his Department since 1992;

(2) if he will list the Acts of Parliament and Consolidation Acts that affect local government that have been introduced by his Department since 1990.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *899-900*, if he knows of any other people known to be Labour party supporters appointed to public bodies.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have nothing to add to my earlier answer.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *899-900*, (1) if he will construct a list of known Liberal Democrat party supporters appointed to public bodies;

(2) if he will construct a list of known Conservative party supporters appointed to public bodies.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those former honourable and right honourable Members defeated in the general election of 1992 who, at any subsequent date, have been appointed to public bodies by the Government; and if he will list those appointments.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information about individual public appointees is not held centrally.

Parliamentary Ombudsman

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals the Government have to strengthen and extend the role of the parliamentary ombudsman.

Mr. Waldegrave: As proposed in the White Paper "Open Government" (Cm 2290), there will be a major extension to the responsibilities of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration as from April 1994, when complaints may be referred to him in connection with the code of practice on access to Government information.

The Government are also giving support to the private Member's Bill of the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone), which had its Second Reading in the House on 11 March, to extend the jurisdiction of the PCA to the administrative actions by the administrative staff in certain tribunals not already within his remit.

Finally, the Government are considering the proposals in the first report of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, Session 1993-94, on the powers, work and jurisdiction of the ombudsman, and will respond in due course.

Research Councils

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancster, what progress he has made in appointing members of the three new research councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences research council, Engineering and Physical Sciences research council, and Particle Physics and Astronomy research council, will come into being on 1 April 1994. I have appointed the following members to serve on the councils:

BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL (BBSRC)

Chairman: Sir Alistair Grant (Argyll Group)
Chief Executive: Professor Tom Blundell FRS
Members:
Professor Jack Baldwin FRS (Oxford University)
Dr. Peter Bunyan (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)
Dr. Ed Dart (Zeneca)
Professor Peter Dunnill FEng (University College London)
Dr. Elliot Finer (Department of Trade and Industry)
Sir Brian Follett FRS (University of Warwick)
Mr. Ben Gill (National Farmers' Union)
Dr. Keith Humphreys (Rhone-Poulenc)

Professor Susan Iversen (Oxford University)
Professor Rachel Leech (University of York)
Dr. Tom Little (Unilever)
Mr. Kenneth Mackenzie (Scottish Office)
Professor Lady Noreen Murray (University of Edinburgh)
Dr. Brian Richards CBE (British Biotechnology Group)

ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL (EPSRC)
Chairman: Dr. Alan Rudge, OBE FEng FRS (BT)
Chief Executive: Professor Richard Brook, OBE

Members:
Professor John Ball, FRS (Heriot Watt University)
Professor Alec Broers, (FRS (Cambridge University)
Professor Sir David Davies, CBE FEng FRS (Ministry of Defence)
Dr. David Evans, (Department of Trade and Industry)
Dr. David Giachardi, (Courtaulds)
Professor Julia Higgins, (Imperial College of Science Technology and Medicine)
Professor B. F. G. Johnson, FRS (University of Edinburgh)
Dr. Tony Ledwith, (Pilkington)
Mr. S. C. Miller, CBE FEng (Rolls-Royce)
Dr. D. J. H. Smith, (Whatman)
Professor Jean Thomas, CBE FRS (Cambridge University)
Professor David Wallace, FRS (Loughborough University of Technology)

PARTICLE PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY RESEARCH COUNCIL (PPARC)
Chairman: Dr. Peter Williams, CBE (Oxford Instruments)
Chief Executive: Professor Ken Pounds, CBE FRS

Members:
Sir David Cooksey, (Advent)
Professor Stan Cowley, (Imperial College of Science Technology and Medicine)
Mr. John de Fonblanque, (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)
Professor John Dowell, FRS (University of Birmingham)
Professor John Enderby, FRS (University of Bristol)
Dr. David Evans, (Department of Trade and Industry)
Professor Ian Halliday, (University College Swansea)
Dr. Carole Jordan, FRS (Oxford University)
Sir Martin Rees, FRS (Cambridge University)
Dr. Geoff Robinson, (IBM)

Citizens Charter

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what external routes of complaint have been established for each part of the Government service covered by the charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: For the purpose of this question I am taking "external routes of complaint" to mean the provision by public services covered by the charter of a route to deal with complaints which is separate from the management hierarchy of the service. Those which are known to my Department are:

Benefits Agency War Pensions Unit: War Pensions Committees;
British Gas: Gas Consumers' Council and OFGAS;
British Rail: Area Transport Users' Consultative Committee (co-ordinated through the Central Transport Consultative Committee);
British Telecom: OFTEL with recourse to a service provided by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators;
British Waterways Board: British Waterways Ombudsman;
14 Electricity Companies: Electricity Consumers Committees and OFFER;
Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department: Complaints Audit Committee;
Housing Corporation: Housing Association Tenants Ombudsman Service;
Inland Revenue: Revenue Adjudicator;
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce: Agency Complaints Adjudicator;
London Buses and London Underground: London Regional Passengers Committee;
Department of National Savings: Adjudicator for National Savings;
Police Service: Police Complaints Authority (England and Wales);
Procurator Fiscal Service (Scotland);
Post Office: Post Office Users' National Council with recourse to a service provided by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators;
Probation Service: Area Probation Committees;
32 Water companies: Regional Customer Services Committees and OFWAT.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department and the Department of Energy in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Eggar: No Proton cars have been purchased by my Department or the Department of Energy in the last 10 years.

Overseas Trade

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) of 22 March, *Official Report,* column *210,* if he will set out the reasons for the separate information on EC trade data not being available.

Mr. Heseltine: Separate information on volumes, unit values and terms of trade for United Kingdom trade with the EC is not available because of the unreliability of the price indices, or deflators, used in their calculation. These deflators are thought to be reliable overall but less so for trade with individual countries.

The quality of those concerning United Kingdom trade with the EC is also adversely affected by problems associated with the introduction of Intrastat, the system for collecting information on EC trade following the completion of the single market.

Construction Industry Deregulation Task Force

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the report of the construction industry deregulation task force will be published; and if the task force took evidence from *(a)* the Home Office and *(b)* fire service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The booklet "Deregulation Task Forces: Proposals for Reform" was published on 19 January 1994 and copies placed in the Library of the House. The working papers of all the task forces will be placed in the Library of the House today.

The construction industry task force held discussions with officials and Ministers in several Government Departments including the Home Office. The fire review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 17 January 1994, *Official Report,* column *381,* is exploring the fire safety issues identified by the task force in consultation with all interested parties including fire service bodies and is assisted by expert advisors including a chief fire officer.

Coal Industry (Geological Data)

Mr. Etherington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he will take to ensure that as part of the denationalisation of the coal industry British Coal or its successor, the Coal Authority, will release all borehole information to the British Geological Survey; and if he will ensure that British Coal or the Coal Authority will remove the present embargo on academic study and research of geological data to develop geological knowledge for non-commercial purposes.

Mr. Eggar: The Coal Industry Bill currently before Parliament places a specific duty on the Coal Authority normally to provide public access to a wide range of information in its possession, including geological data.

Export Assistance

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of the assistance his Department gives to help British companies market and sell their products abroad in the past five years; and what is the planned expenditure in 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Heseltine: The table records gross and net expenditure on export promotion assistance programmes. This does not include the running costs associated with delivering these programmes at home and abroad.

In £ million—1993-94 and 1994-95 are forecasts

	Gross	*Net*
1988-89	46·8	30·4
1989-90	47·1	32·9
1990-91	52·5	36·9
1991-92	46·0	27·8
1992-93	46·3	29·8
1993-94	51·3	36·6
1994-95	55·3	39·4

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Heseltine: During the month of February, I and my ministerial colleagues received 1,751 letters from hon. Members and responded to 1,376. Some letters are transferred to other Government Departments for reply.

Government Enforcement Agencies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each Government enforcement agency covered by his Department's code the dates on which their codes of practice were published and made available to the public.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* The table sets out the dates on which each of the enforcement agencies listed in "Working with Business" published their code of practice. The table also shows the date from which each code was available since many agencies had their codes available to business while preparations for publication were underway.

Following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's seminar on deregulation on 19 January, it was agreed that all remaining enforcement agencies would finalise their codes by April 1994.

Enforcement agency	*Available to business*	*Published*
ADAS Milk and Dairies Inspectorate	15 April 1994[1]	Estimate late May 1994
Agriculture Health and Safety Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Agriculture Wages Inspectorate	1 January 1994	6 April 1994
Agriculture Wages Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Animal Health Act Inspectors and Veterinary Inspectors	1 January 1994	25 March 1994
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
British Waterways Board	—	Expected April 1994
Central Statistical Office	1 January 1994	31 December 1993
Civil Aviation Authority	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Companies House	1 January 1994	19 January 1994
Companies Registry (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Contributions Agency	21 January 1994	17 January 1994
Customs and Excise	[2]—	[2]—
Department of Health: control activities in connection with places approved under the Abortion Act	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Drinking Water Inspectorate	30 December 1993	30 December 1993
Driving and Vehicle Testing Agency (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Driving Standards Agency (register of approved driving instructors)	10 March 1994	10 March 1994
Drugs Inspectorate (NI)	[3]—	[3]—
Egg Marketing Inspectorate	1 January 1994	7 March 1994
Egg Marketing Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Employment Agency Licensing	[4]—	[4]—
Engineering Inspectorate	14 December 1993	14 December 1993
Export Licensing Unit	20 January 1994	9 March 1994
Fatstock Inspectorate	1 January 1994	25 March 1994
Fertilisers and Feed Stuffs Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Fish Diseases Inspectorate	[1]15 April 1994	Estimate late May 1994
Fisheries Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Fisheries and Terrestrial Radiological Inspectorate	1 January 1994	18 February 1994
Football Licensing Authority	31 December 1993	31 December 1993
Gas Examiners, Gas Meter Examiners	27 January 1994	27 January 1994
Health and Safety Executive	[5]—	12 January 1994
Health and Safety Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994

Enforcement agency	Available to business	Published
Health and Social Services Board Inspectorate of Registered Nursing Homes (NI)	[6]—	[6]—
Scottish Home and Health Department. Approval under Section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 and Registration of Pregnancy Advice Bureaux (SO)	14 January 1994	14 January 1994
HM Industrial Pollution Inspectorate (SO)	29 April 1994	29 April 1994
HM Inspectorate of Pollution	22 March 1994	22 March 1994
Home Office Drugs Branch	1 April 1994	1 April 1994
Horticultural Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate	1 January 1994	18 February 1994
Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA)	5 April 1994	5 April 1994
Inland Revenue	[2]—	[2]—
Licensing and Inspection under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986	5 January 1994	5 January 1994
Meat and Livestock (SO)	22 April 1994	22 April 1994
Medical Devices Directorate	28 December 1993	4 January 1994
Medicines Control Agency	31 December 1993	1 January 1994
Medicines Inspectorate	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Milk and Milk Products Quality Assurance Division (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
National Rivers Authority	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	23 December 1993	23 December 1993
Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Occupational Pensions Board	—	by April 1994
Office of Fair Trading	19 January 1994	19 January 1994
Pharmaceutical Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate	1 January 1994	18 January 1994
Plant Health Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Poisons Inspectorate (NI)	[3]—	[3]—
Potato Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Radiocommunications Agency (Radio Investigation Services)	End December 1993	End December 1993
River Purification Boards (SO)	[7]—	[7]—
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency (SO)	10 January 1994	12 January 1994
Sea Fisheries Inspectorate	1 January 1994	6 April 1994
Seeds Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Surveyor Generals Organisation (now—Marine Support Agency)	[8]—	March 1994
The Good Laboratory Practice Monitoring Authority (GLP MA)	11 January 1994	11 January 1994
Trading Standards Inspectorate (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Traffic Area Offices	April 1994	April 1994
Transport Licensing and Enforcement (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Vehicle Certification Agency	April 1994	April 1994
Vehicle Inspectorate	April 1994	April 1994
Veterinary Services (NI)	1 January 1994	1 January 1994
Wine Standards Board	1 January 1994	11 February 1994

[1]— Delay due to changes in governing legislation.
[2]— Intend existing Citizen's Charter documents to form basis of Code.
[3]— Covered in a United Kingdom wide code.
[4]— Committed to complying in full once position has been finalised under the Deregulation and Contracting out Bill.
[5]— Existing publications were updated to bring them into line with Code.
[6]— Withdrawn by Department of Health.
[7]— Two codes published 10 February 1994 and 6 December 1993. Five others in preparation.
[8]— Publication timed to coincide with launch of Agency on 1 April 1994.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades, 1 to 7 and overall, in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Sproat: The information is for staff within the Department of National Heritage, excluding its two executive agencies, the Historic Royal Palaces and the Royal Parks;

The total percentage of women in each grades 1 to 7 and overall within the Department of National Heritage are listed:

DNH staff as at 28 February 1994

Grade	Total number in grade	Per cent. of which are female
1A	1	0
G3	4	25
G4	1	0
G5	16	25
G6	5	80
G7	44	25
SEO and below	265	49

Note:
Information on ethnic minorities is not yet held centrally;
The percentage of registered disabled staff employed within the Department of National Heritage is 0·6 per cent.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many grace and favour apartments there are in the historic royal palaces.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* At historic royal palaces 18 apartments are occupied on a grace-and-favour basis by pensioners, employees and holders of official positions in the royal household.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many rules and regulations her Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* This Department made the following numbers of statutory instruments over the last three calendar years:

Year	*Number*
1991	93
1992	117
1993	143

Not all instruments impose requirements or regulations on business and some amend, replace or revoke existing instruments.

Feline Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give a breakdown of feline spongiform encephalopathy cases for each month since the first case was reported and the areas in which they occurred.

Mr. Soames: This disease is not notifiable to the Ministry and report to the Ministry is usually by private veterinary surgeons. The information requested is therefore listed by date of onset of clinical signs of the disease and is as follows:

Date of onset	*County*
1989	
November	Avon
1990	
January	Leicestershire
February	Gloucestershire
March	Somerset
March	Clwyd
April	Hereford and Worcestershire
May	West Glamorgan
June	Hampshire
June	Leicestershire
July	Avon
September	Cornwall
September	Strathclyde
October	Cornwall
October	Suffolk
October	North Yorkshire
October	West Yorkshire
December	Clwyd
1991	
March	Lancashire
May	Devon
June	Shetland
August	Dorset
August	Berkshire
August	Fife
September	Guernsey
November	Bedfordshire
December	Clwyd
1992	
February	Derbyshire
March	Somerset
April	Dorset
April	Clwyd
April	Gloucestershire
August	Hertfordshire
August	Shropshire
August	Wiltshire
August	Surrey
September	Hereford and Worcestershire
October	Norfolk
October	Bedfordshire
October	Gloucestershire
December	Surrey
1993	
May	Cambridgeshire
May	Cumbria
August	Nottinghamshire
August	Durham
September	Strathclyde
October	Devon
November	Surrey

Food Stockpile

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *606*, if she will list the recipients of the foodstuffs in the national food stockpile.

Mr. Soames: There have been numerous recipients of foodstuffs from the national food stockpile following the decision to run it down. Some foods have been donated for food aid. Other foods have been either sold by competitive tender or returned under contract to the supplier. Stocks no longer suitable for human consumption have been sold for animal feed or destroyed.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Proton cars were purchased by her Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Jack: The policy is for the Ministry to buy cars for official use where they can provide the most cost-effective means of arranging travel on the Ministry's business. Only those models showing the basic features necessary for the business in question are purchased and all purchases are made through central call-off contracts set up for that purpose.

There are no records of any purchase of Proton cars during the period in question.

Fishing Quotas

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes she envisages in regulations concerning "quota hoppers" in respect of the joint declaration on ownership of fishing vessels (final act) of annex 1 Union common position of the Norway EV fisheries agreement; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The text of the joint declaration corresponds to wording included in

the judgment of the European Court of Justice in cases 216/87 and 221/89. As such, the declaration does not appear to necessitate any change in United Kingdom legislation.

Freshwater Fish Stocks

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 24 March, *Official Report*, column *374*, if she will place in the Library copies of the studies commissioned by the National Rivers Authority on the reasons for declines in fish catches.

Mr. Jack: Studies carried out by the National Rivers Authority in response to anglers' concerns about the perceived decline in catches of fish often involve an assessment of the status of stocks at the location in question. Normally further work would be carried out only if this revealed a particular problem. The results of such studies are made available to local fishery interests but are seldom disseminated more widely in the form of formal published reports. I am, however, arranging for reports on two of the more extensive studies carried out recently—those relating to the Warwickshire Avon and to the Test and Itchen—to be deposited in the Library of the House.

Legal Action (Dairy Producers)

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was paid by her Department during 1993-94 as a result of legal action taken by dairy producers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Costs of £75,972 have arisen as a result of legal actions taken by dairy producers. This amount will be brought to account in the 1993-94 appropriation account.

Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance targets she has set for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate in 1994-95; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The chief executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate has submitted his proposals to me and I have agreed that the VMD should be set the following performance targets for 1994-95:

full cost recovery for the three business activities of licensing, policy work and residues monitoring;
75 per cent. of new licence applications to be issued within 120 clock days; 95 per cent. within 200 days;
an overall efficiency gain of 2 per cent.

These are challenging targets which will build on the improvements already made in the efficiency and quality of service provided by the directorate since its establishment as a next steps agency, and for which I commend the chief executive and his staff. In addition, I have agreed the VMD's corporate plan for 1994-95—1996-97, and copies are being placed in the Library of the House and the Public Information Office.

Milk Development Council

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the National Farmers Union's proposal for a milk development council.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In deciding whether to establish a development council, Ministers have to follow the procedures in the Industrial Organisation and Development Act 1947. In particular, they need to be satisfied that its establishment is desired by a substantial number of persons engaged in the industry.

In mid-April the Ministry and the Welsh Office therefore intend to invite all milk producers in England and Wales to vote on a proposal for the establishment and operation of a milk development council covering Great Britain and its funding by means of a statutory levy.

A development council would continue certain activities of the milk marketing boards in Great Britain—such as the funding of research and development and the provision of market information—which would not be assumed by commercially-oriented successor co-operatives but are of benefit to the industry generally.

We intend to ask for completed questionnaires to be returned by 12 May. The Scottish Office intends to conduct a similar poll in Scotland.

Coast Protection

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the progress made with the survey of coast protection works in England.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My Department commissioned a coast protection survey of England in 1993. The survey was to examine the extent, adequacy and state of repair of coast protection defences, which are designed to protect the land from erosion and encroachment by the sea. A lead consultant was appointed to co-ordinate the collection of data by associate consultants. The lead consultants' report has been published today and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

The condition of each defence element—for example, embankment groyne—around the coast of England was assessed by visual inspection and the results can be summarised as follows:

	Per cent.
Class 1 (condition as built)	12
Class 2 (some signs of wear)	47
Class 3 (moderate works needed)	33
Class 4 (significant works needed)	8

It should be emphasised that where a defence element is in need of significant works this does not mean that the integrity of the defences for the relevant stretch of coastline is in immediate jeopardy.

The survey also identified some 135 km of unprotected coast which is at present significantly eroding and where the provision of works may need to be considered within the next ten years.

The survey results have been sent to the local coast protection authorities in England so that they can consider the condition of existing defences in their respective areas and the potential need for defences for unprotected lengths of coastline that are eroding significantly. Councils will also be drawing the survey results to the attention of other owners of defences in their areas. The Ministry will be discussing the survey results with the coast protection authorities in order to prioritise the necessary remedial works.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will be able to announce the composition of the medical panel to investigate health effects claimed to arise from organophosphorus sheep dip exposure; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I am pleased to announce that the following members have been appointed to the medical and scientific panel, which is being established to look into reports of long term health effects claimed to arise from organophosphorus sheep dip exposure.

Dr. D. N. Bateman, BSc, MB BS, MRCS, MD, FRCP *(Chairman)*
Professor P. G. Blain, Phd, BMedSci, MB BS, FIBiol, MFOM, FRCP (London), FRCP (Edinburgh)
Dr. R. W. Brimblecombe, PhD, DSc, FRCPath, FIBiol
Professor S. J. W. Evans, BS Hons, MSc
Dr. G. A. Jamal, MBChB(Hons), MD, PhD, FRCP (Glasgow)
Dr. M. K. Johnson PhD, BSc, ARCS, ARIC
Professor M. Lader, DSc, PhD, MD, FRCPsych
Dr. T. C. Marrs, MB BS, MSc, MD, MIBiol, DipRCPath (Tox), FRCPath, FIBiol
Dr. R. G. Rawbone, MB BS, LRCP, MRCS
Professor P. K. Thomas, CBE, DSc, MD, FRCP, FRCPath

The panel, which will act as a sub-committee to the Veterinary Products Committee, will hold its first meeting on 31 March. I look forward to receiving its advice on the issues it will be addressing.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 28 and 29 March; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This meeting of the Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, held a further lengthy discussion of the Commission's proposals for farm prices and related measures, including milk quotas, for 1994-95. The attitude that I took on these issues was the one that I explained to the House in the recent debate.

The Council reached no conclusions and will return to the subject at its next meeting. Because prices were not fixed, it was necessary formally to extend the 1993-94 marketing years for beef and milk: the Council so decided by unanimity.

I took the opportunity to refer to recent scare stories in the German press alleging a link between bovine spongiform encephalopathy and human health. I stressed that there was no scientific foundation for this claim, that the measures that had long been in place in the United Kingdom and in the Community were more than adequate protection, and that unilateral action to restrict trade in British beef and cattle would be illegal. I received strong support from the Commission and a number of other member states for my point of view.

The Council adopted several relatively minor measures, namely: a regulation permitting member states to buy up milk quota for redistribution, using funds previously set aside to compensate producers for reductions in quotas; a regulation concerning the use of sums previously agreed for assisting farmers in Portugal affected by drought; a regulation strengthening the controls on subsidised exports of certain processed products; a regulation providing for the levy-free import of certain quantities of wheat, beef, poultrymeat, pork and milling residues, previously agreed as part of the settlement of an earlier dispute with third countries concerning oilseeds; and a regulation providing for the import of a supplementary quantity of high quality beef in 1994. Belgium and Ireland voted against the last two measures and Italy against the one on export controls. The others were adopted unanimously.

Beef Exports

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made at the Agriculture Council of 28 and 29 March about British beef exports.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: At the Agriculture Council on 28 March I raised our concerns about the threats from Germany of unilateral action against British beef and confirmed that my colleagues in the Council are standing firm in support of the Commission's position, with which we agree, that trade measures must be based on scientific knowledge of bovine spongiform encephalopathy. This knowledge is already fully reflected in the current trade rules.

I presented Commissioner Steichen with a dossier showing the damage which has already been done to United Kingdom exports by the German position. I made it clear that we cannot tolerate this when there is no justification whatsoever for the safety of our beef exports to be called into question. I pointed out that if member states behaved in this way it created a dangerous precedent and undermined the very foundation of free trade; there was no knowing which product from which country might next be similarly affected. Whilst Governments had to respond to public concerns they should do so in a responsible and measured way which reflected the known facts of the situation.

As the House is aware the Government believe that BSE was caused by the use of contaminated feed, on which action was taken by the ruminant feed ban in 1988. The feed hypothesis, made six years ago on the basis of a thorough epidemiological study, has recently been supported by preliminary findings from collaborative research begun in 1991, and due to run until 1996, which we are conducting with the EC Commission and the European Renderers Association. These early results show that the BSE agent can survive some rendering processes. When a report on this research is available it will be deposited in the Library of the House and I shall consult the Spongiform Encephalopathy advisory committee as the work progresses.

My representations in the Council were fully supported by the Commission and 10 other member states, who shared our view that the position taken by Germany was not sustainable.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Public Accounts Commission

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *797-98*, what is the proposed time scale for the relocation of staff and work from Sheffield to London; which private sector firms are being invited to tender; what is the nature of the tendering process; and under what legislation the process is taking place.

Sir Peter Hordern: Decisions on the administration and organisation of the National Audit Office are a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General to take within his budget, which is considered and approved by the Public Accounts Commission on behalf of the House. I have asked the Comptroller and Auditor General to write to the hon. Member.

Upper Waiting Hall Exhibitions

Mr. Bates: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Crown Prosecution Service to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 18 April to Friday 22 April.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Overseas Visits

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *389*, if he will now set out the cost of accompanying officials on the 21 official visits made; and what was the nature of *(a)* the bilateral discussions, *(b)* the international conferences and *(c)* the EC meeting to which he refers.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The cost of officials accompanying my noble Friend, Baroness Chalker of Wallasey, on her visits overseas during 1993 was approximately £116,000. In some instances the officials concerned have also been undertaking official duties in addition to providing support for the specific purposes of my noble Friend's visits; it is not possible to disaggregate the costings to reflect these occasions.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 14 July 1993, columns 499-504 for details of my noble Friend's visits from January to July 1993. Details of my noble Friend's visits between August and the end of December 1993 are as follows:

Lady Chalker's overseas travel August 1993—end December 1993

When	*Where*	*Reason*
August		
6-12	Barbados, Dominica, Anguilla, USA (New York)	Bilaterals, project visits, visit British Development Division
September		
4-8	Cyprus	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, Limassol
18-24	Ethiopia/Eritrea	East Africa Heads of Mission Conference, bilaterals
October		
30/9-1/10	Washington DC/Japan	US Conference on Middle East, Tokyo Conference on Africa, bilaterals
25-26	Germany	Bilaterals
November		
5-10	Italy/Albania	Albania: bilaterals and project visits Rome: FAO Conference; talks with Vatican, WFP
13-15	Egypt	Bilaterals, project visits
17-19	USA (NY/Washington)	Bilaterals
December		
1-2	Brussels	EC Development Council
4-11	South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana Zimbabwe	Bilaterals Project visits

Pergau Dam

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what losses he estimates he might be liable for, if the overall contract price for the Pergau dam project were shown to be greater than if it had been awarded by open tender.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. Her Majesty's Government are not party to the contract between Tenaga Nasional Berhad—TNB—and the United Kingdom consortium, Kerjaya Balfour Beatty Cementation.

Thailand

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *586*, which

company or companies are seeking support under the aid and trade provision for the project to improve the quality of drinking water supplies in Thailand.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I regret that this information is commercial and confidential.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *586*, when he expects to reach a decision on whether the project to improve the quality of drinking water supplies in Thailand should receive support under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A decision will be taken when ODA's appraisal of the project has been completed and we have complied with OECD consultation requirements.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *586*, what is the total cost of the project to improve the quality of drinking water supplies in Thailand; and what is the likely cost to the aid and trade provision of supporting this project.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The costs of the project cannot be finalised until the appraisal process is complete.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what agreement has been reached, following the Intergovernmental Administration on Drought and Development—IGADD—meeting on Sudan in Nairobi on 17 March, to allow full access to humanitarian agencies to give relief assistance to people in war affected areas; and which new areas are now to be accessible to international aid agencies.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: An agreement was reached on 23 March between the Government of Sudan and both factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Army on a number of principles designed to facilitate the delivery of relief assistance to all needy populations regardless of their locations. A copy of the agreement has been placed in both Libraries of the House. If the agreement holds, all war-affected areas should become accessible.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent humanitarian aid is now flowing in Liberia through the Ivory Coast access route and through Kakata.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Humanitarian aid convoys are presently moving freely along these routes.

Desertification

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on problems encountered, and progress made, in the current negotiations for a global convention to combat desertification.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The main problem encountered has been the completion of both a convention text and a regional instrument for Africa in the timescale set by the United Nations General Assembly. In the current round of negotiations some progress has been made on agreement of a convention text.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people claiming income support in the Doncaster area offices of the Benefit Agency in 1992 and 1993 were refused benefit by an adjudication officer; how many appealed; how many of those who appealed subsequently had their claim for income support allowed; and how many of those concerned had children.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the appeals in the Benefits Agency's Doncaster District.

The full range of information you request is not readily available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. This is because statistics relating to the refusal of Income Support and those which would identify families with children are not routinely collected. To obtain all the relevant information would require a physical examination of all income support cases within the Doncaster District.

I am, however, able to provide records which show the number for income support appeals which are for January to December each year and are shown below.

	1992	*1993*
Appeals received	321	339
Appeals withdrawn	43	48
Appeals superseded	79	96
Appeals allowed	19	20
Appeals partially allowed	4	2

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount of income support payment is deemed to be designated for personal clothing needs.

Mr. Burt: Income support rates are intended to cover all normal day-to-day living expenses and no particular amounts are designated for specific purposes. Claimants are free to manage their benefit according to their own needs and preferences.

Income Support (Deductions)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the Doncaster area are having weekly deductions made from their income support for *(a)* electricity and *(b)* gas of (i) under £2 per week and (ii) in each £1 band above £2 per week up to £40 per week.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking how many households in the Doncaster area are having weekly deductions made from their income support for *(a)* electricity and *(b)* gas of (i) £2 per week and (ii) in each £1 band above £2 per week up to £40 per week.

The full range of information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. This is because figures are not routinely collected on a local basis and to obtain the full range of information requested would require a physical examination of all cases with deductions for electricity and gas in the Doncaster area.

However, the information which is available for the Doncaster area, is as follows:

	Number
Cases with deductions for electricity	374
Cases with deductions for gas	876

This information has been collected by the Doncaster District Office whose area boundary coincides with that of the Doncaster area. No further breakdown is available.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements are made for repaying moneys to absent parents who have been wrongly assessed by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. John Spellar, dated 28 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the Child Support Agency's arrangements for repaying money to absent parents where the maintenance assessment has been revised.

The Agency acts as an intermediary between two parties in the arrangement of child maintenance, and has no powers to recover monies which have been overpaid to the parent with care. However, provisions have been made in the Arrears, Interest and Adjustment of Maintenance Assessment Regulations (regulation 10) to adjust future payments of maintenance in order to correct an under or overpayment, where this can be done.

The parent with care is protected from a period of total loss of income by restricting the amount by which future payments of maintenance may be adjusted in order to correct overpayment. These provisions are normally applied by the Child Support Officer at the maximum rate of 1½ times the difference between the old and new assessment. However, where an absent parent makes representations about the level of adjustment a lesser rate can be considered.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar can expect an answer from the Child Support Agency in reply to her letter to the Minister dated 14 December concerning the case of Mrs. W. A. Rex-Cain.

Mr. Burt: I understand that Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency, replied to the hon. Member on 25 March 1994.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will launch an independent investigation into the handling by the Child Support Agency of Mrs. Terri West's application for child maintenance support.

Mr. Burt: There are no such plans. My hon. Friend will understand that although I am unable to comment on an individual case, I should stress that either party to a child maintenance assessment has the right to seek a review, and following the review to seek leave to appeal to an independent child support appeal tribunal.

State Pension Age

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer of 19 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *74*, in respect of the information contained in the figure from "Options for Equality in State Pension Age".

Mr. Hague: The Government Actuary's Department has revised the information contained in figure 7, page 77, of the "Options for Equality in State Pension Age" document for current pension age, age 60 and age 65. The information is contained in the table. These estimates do not include any national health service allocation. There are obvious difficulties in predicting developments so far into the future, including the need to make hypothetical policy assumptions, for example, concerning the conditions for contracting out. For these reasons figures for age 63 have not been updated and the results given should not be interpreted as precise estimates but as broad indicators of the financial effects.

Year	*Current state pension age Per cent.*	*Age 60 Per cent.*	*Age 65 Per cent.*
1994-95	18·25	—	—
2025	20·0	22·0	18·5
2035	19·8	21·5	18·7

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Hague: A number of organisations or individuals may be consulted about, or asked to submit names of, potential candidates for public appointments. Since June 1992 these have included:

The Association of British Insurers
The British Epilepsy Association
The Confederation of British Industry
Miss C. H. Dawes (Deputy Chairman of the Occupational Pensions Board)
Expert members of the Disability Living Allowance Board
The Forum of Private Businesses
The Government Actuary

The Department of Health
The Department of Health and Social Services Northern Ireland
The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council
The Lord Chancellor's Department
The Public Appointments Unit within the Cabinet Office
Sir Jeremy Rowe CBE, (former Chairman of the Occupational Pensions Board)
The Secretary of State for Scotland
The Social Security Advisory Committee
The Department of Trade and Industry
The Trade Union Congress
HM Treasury
The Secretary of State for Wales

National Continence Week

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what projects his Department instigated in respect of National Continence Week.

Mr. Scott: As the Department of Health has the lead on this matter, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, on 25 March, at column *463*. This Department ran no such specific projects.

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is as follows. All appointments are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Except where shown, appointments are for a three-year term and non-salaried.

Occupational Pensions Board
Chairman (£26,000):
Mr. P. Carr CBE
Deputy Chairman (£12,000), 3·5 year appointment:
Miss C. H. Dawes
Members:
Mr. R. Amy
Mrs. R. Brown
Mr. R. Ellison
Mr. H. Harris Hughes
Mr. A. Herbert
Mr. D. Lyburn
Mr. A. Pickering
Mr. W. Ramsey
Mr. M. Slack
Mr. K. Thomas
Miss P. Triggs

Central Advisory Committee for War Pensions
Members:
Mr. M. B. Day, MBE
Councillor T. S. Deeming, MBE
Mr. P. H. Dixon, OBE MA
Mr. I. Duncan-Smith, MP
Mr. W. Dunn, MBE JP
Mr. C. G. Fox, FRSH FCIArb
Mr. I. Grainger
Mr. D. B. Hilton
Mr. R. R. Holland, MBE
Mr. R. W. E. House, MBE
Mr. J. Hughes, CBE
Mr. E. R. Jobson, OBE
Councillor T. J. Jones, JP BEM KSG
Mr. O. C. S. Light, MBE
Lord Mackie of Benshie, CBE DSO DFC
Mr. A. Meale, MP
Mr. G. R. Miller
Mrs. H. Murphy
Mr. W. S. Mutimer, MBE JP
Mrs. M. F. K. Neale, MBE
Mrs. P. L. Newnes, OBE
Mr. F. E. Onyon, MBE
Sir Roger Palin, KBE
Mr. H. L. Payne, OBE
Mr. C. G. S. Pigott, MBE
Mr. J. J. Ray, MBE
Mr. H. B. Salmon, MBE

Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board
Chairman (two year appointment):
Professor R. Grahame, MB BS MD FRCP
Deputy Chairman (two year appointment):
Miss S. Knibbs, CQSW
Members:
Mrs. J. Allen-King, MBE
Mrs. J. Ashcroft, MBE
Mrs. P. Case, CBE BA
Dr. A. Clarke, BSc MB BS FRCP
Miss E. Fanshawe, OBE DipCOT
Mrs. J. Franklin, CQSW
Mr. S. Gallop, OBE MA
Mrs. C. Henry, RGN
Dr. J. Hunter, BSc MB ChB FRCP
Sir Peter Large, CBE BSc
Mr. C. Laurenzi, BSc CQSW
Dr. R. Lucas, BSc MB BS MPhil FRCPsych
Dr. I. McKinlay, BSc MB ChB FRCP DCH
Mrs. S. Philbrook, BA MCSP
Dr. T. Phillips, MB BS FRFPS MRCP MFOM
Dr. M. Piper, MB BS FRCP
Dr. M. Richards, BSc MB BChir FRCPGP
Dr. S. Shorvon, MB BChir MD FRCP

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council
Chairman:
Professor J. M. Harrington
Members:
Dr. J. Asherson
Miss J. C. Brown
Mrs. J. Carter
Professor M. J. Cinnamond
Dr. D. N. M. Coggon
Professor A. D. Dayan
Dr. C. P. Juniper
Mr. T. Mawer
Professor A. J. Newman Taylor
Mr. R. Pickering
Dr. L. Rushton
Dr. C. Taylor
Mr. O. D. Tudor
Ms M. Twomey

Social Security Advisory Committee
Chairman: Mr. M. Bett CBE
Members:
Mrs. J. Anelay OBE
Mr. A. Dilnot
The Reverend G. H. Good OBE
Mr. D. Guereca
Mr. N. Hardwick
Mr. M. Hastings
Professor A. Ogus
The Hon. Mrs. R. H. Price CBE
Esme Scott CBE
Professor O. Stevenson
Dr. A. V. Stokes OBE
Mr. O. Tudor
Mr. R. G. Wendt DL

Far East (Prisoners of War and Internees) Fund
Trustees: (5 year appointments)
Lord Gridley
Reverend R. Rossiter
Dr. Peter Watson

Queen Mary's Roehampton Trust
Trustees:
Mr. C. J. Flind
Mr. M. Forrester MBE
Dr. J. Watkinson

Independent Living Fund
Chairman (indefinite term): Mr. S. Shore
Trustees (indefinite term):
Mrs. A. Davis
Mr. G. Mackey
Mr. W. Morrison
Mr. J. Shepherd
Dr. A. Stokes
Mr. R. Wendt

Motability Tenth Anniversary Trust
Trustees (indefinite term)
Mr. D. Chislett
Sir Peter Large CBE

Pensions Ombudsman (indefinite term), £53,500, Mr. M. Platt

Social Fund Commissioner (salary range £46,100 to £55,800), Mrs. R. Mackworth

Agency Chief Executives
Benefits Agency five year appointment, (salary range £75,000 to £82,000), Mr. M. Bichard
Child Support Agency (salary range £46,100 to £55,800), Mrs. R. Hepplewhite
Contributory Agency (salary range £51,300 to £59,600), Miss A. Chant
Information and Technology Services Agency (salary range £51,300 to £59,600), Mr. I. Magee
Resettlement Agency (salary range £37,600 to £55,800), Mr. A. Ward
War Pensions Unit to achieve Agency status in April 1994, (salary range £36,000 to £53,700), Mr. P. Mathison

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons;

(2) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Hague: Where an appointment gives access to classified information the need for security vetting will be considered.

Income-related Benefits

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how many people receive part or all of their income by way of one or more of the income-related benefits.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The number of people claiming each benefit is in the table.

Benefit	*Recipients —May 1993*
Income Support[1]	5,643,000
Housing Benefit[2]	4,530,000
Council Tax Benefit[2]	5,231,000
Family Credit[3]	515,000
Disability Working Allowance	3,184

[1]Does not include partners or dependants.
[2]Benefit Units.
[3]Figures are for September 1993.
Note: As individuals can be entitled to more than one income related benefit all figures are subject to overlap.

Medical Boards and Tribunals (Appeals)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the current waiting targets, and current waiting times, for appeals to special medical boards and medical appeal tribunals.

Mr. Scott: The information requested on special medical boards is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Medical appeal tribunals are the responsibility of the president of the independent tribunal service. I am informed that the information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the target and current outturn for the time taken from lodgement of an appeal to the issue of the tribunal's decision.

Target	*Outturn*
15 per cent. in 4 months	18·6
40 per cent. in 6 months	46·5
90 per cent. in 12 months	79·9

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades, 1 to 7 and overall, in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Hague: The information for permanent staff employed by the Department, including its agencies, is in the table.

Grade (including equivalent professional and other grades)	*(a) Women (as at 28 February 1994)*		*(b) Ethnic minorities[1] (as at 28 February 1994)*		*(c) Registered disabled[2] (as at 1 July 1993)*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Grade 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 3	3	18	*	8·3	0	0
Grade 4	3	33	0	0	0	0
Grade 5	29	24	*	2·3	0	0
Grade 6	73	23	21	12·2	0	0
Grade 7	152	22	7	1·4	4	0·6
All Grades	64,119	67	3,394	5·1	1,396	1·6

Notes:

[1] Ethnic origin representation is calculated by taking ethnic minority respondents as a proportion of all respondents to the Department's ethnic survey. The response rate as at 28 February 1994 was 63·2 per cent. Asterisks have replaced very small numbers to avoid identifying individuals.

[2] Figures for disabled staff are for full time equivalents and cover only those registered as disabled: there are other staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

Disability Working Allowance

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of applications for the disability working allowance, and the number accepted, for each month since the allowance was introduced; and what percentage of people with disabilities of working age this represents.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the table. The survey of disability conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, based on fieldwork conducted in 1985-1988 and published in 1989, suggested that there were around 2 million disabled people between the ages of 16 and 65. However many of these would be unlikely to qualify for disability working allowance because they were only slightly disabled or because their disability would prevent them from undertaking any work.

Disability working allowance

Period	*Claims*	*Awards*
1992		
April	7,056	476
May	2,666	317
June	2,697	295
July	2,841	296
August	2,085	284
September	1,746	446
October	1,573	533
November	1,298	414
December	1,001	298
1993		
January	1,190	405
February	1,350	400
March	1,565	570
April	1,205	595
May	1,070	610
June	1,235	570
July	1,002	518
August	1,103	480
September	1,306	681
October	1,228	680
November	1,121	646
December	838	392
1994		
January	1,100	683
February	1,200	647
TOTAL	39,476	11,236

Occupational Deafness

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will approve the addition of occupational deafness to the list of prescribed injuries for which disablement benefit is payable.

Mr. Scott: Occupational deafness has been prescribed as a disease, in relation to certain occupational activities, since October 1974.

War Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what replies the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Viscount Astor, has received from members of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions to his letter of 15 March about tobacco and alcohol-related claims for war pensions and war widows' pensions; how many members of the committee had previously indicated, when they were consulted, their approval of his Department's proposals to amend the Service Pension Order; and what further action he will be taking.

Mr. Hague: One member of the central advisory committee has written in response to the letter of 15 March.

Eight members expressed approval of the proposals set out in the consultation letter of 4 January, three with reservations on points of detail.

In accordance with normal procedures for amendments to the Service Pension Order, the changes were made by Order in Council. That order was laid before the House on 25 March and came into force on 28 March.

Staff Sickness

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average loss of days worked per employee in sickness in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993 for (i) staff in DSS benefit offices and (ii) staff employed by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Hague: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he has chosen to purchase any official gift since becoming Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: That is a private matter.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *319*, if he will list those charities which have benefited from the proceeds of the sale of small gifts given to him and his predecessor.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* That is a private matter.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how much has been spent by his Office on the provision of official gifts in each of the last three years.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Provision of official gifts* £
1991	17,470
1992	21,241
1993	18,385

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if details of gifts received by Ministers in their official capacity and reported to the departmental permanent secretary are made available to the public; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 March 1994:]* Gifts received by Ministers in their official capacity are dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". The details are not made public.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report,* column *319,* if he will state the amounts accruing to official funds from the sale of gifts from the official inventory in each year since 1985.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The only sales have been those to the Prime Minister of the day. These have all been carried out in accordance with "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". It is not the practice to publish details.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

The Prime Minister *[pursuant to his reply, 8 December 1993, c. 222]:* The charge to my office for ministerial use of the Government car service during 1992-93 was £130,198. Two vehicles are involved.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost to his office in 1990-91 of use of the Government car service other than the vehicles for his ministerial use; and which persons other than Ministers had a car specifically allocated to them.

The Prime Minister: The charge to my office for official use of the Government car service in 1990-91 was £192,998. No cars were specifically allocated to individuals.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

The Prime Minister *[pursuant to his reply, 14 December 1993, c. 561]:* The charge to my office for ministerial use of the Government car service during 1990-91 was £75,954. Two vehicles were involved.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to a fall in the cost of cars for Prime Minister's use since 1990-91; what change has taken place in the cost of cars for No. 10, other than for the Prime Minister's use, since 1990-91; and what changes have taken place in the rules governing their use.

The Prime Minister: Since my answers of 8 and 14 December 1993, a detailed examination has been carried out of the invoices from the Government car service over the period from 1990-91 to 1992-93, in particular to check on the allocation between ministerial and official use. This has produced some changes from the figures originally given to the hon. Member.

Since 1990-91, GCS costs have increased, and in addition GCS charges have been restructured to reflect the fact that it had been under-recovering its costs in 1990-91. These factors have affected the costs of the cars for ministerial use and of those for official use. In addition, for the Prime Minister's cars, the basis of funding the necessary security work has changed, and now falls on the No. 10 running costs budget; this has increased the costs of the Prime Minister's cars by some 60 per cent., on top of the 12 per cent. increase in GCS charges for long-term hire. For the cars for official use, there has been an increase in costs arising from a change away from the GCS providing 24-hour cover for the cars on long-term hire towards greater use of pool cars. There has been no change in the rules governing the use of official cars by staff in 10 Downing street.

The revised figures (net of recovered VAT) are as follows:

	Ministerial use £	*Official use* £
1990-91	75,954	192,998
1992-93	130,198	339,549

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister when he will provide substantive answers to the questions from the right hon. Member for Swansea, West tabled for answer on 16 December and on 13 January relating to the costs of cars used by his Office.

The Prime Minister: I have done so.

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions took place between the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence prior to the Secretary of State's March 1988 visit to Malaysia about the range of subjects to be covered in the protocol; to what extent the question of civil aid was considered; what documentation is held at No. 10 Downing street and the Cabinet Office reporting on the progress of the negotiations in Kuala Lumpur; and how the Prime Minister's office was kept informed of the progress of the negotiations.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 March 1994]:* In January 1988 my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence wrote to ministerial colleagues to secure agreement to the signing of a protocol covering the purchase of defence equipment by the Malaysian Government. This exchange made no mention of civil aid. No. 10 files confirm that the Prime Minister's office was informed about the negotiations in Kuala Lumpur, and the inclusion of the paragraph on civil aid, only after the protocol had been signed.

EDUCATION

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Forth: None.

Assisted Places

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report,* column *678,* if he will list in order the 20 independent schools in England which received most money during the 1993-94 academic year from his Department under the assisted places scheme with *(a)* the number of pupils covered by the assisted places scheme, *(b)* the number on that institution's school roll, *(c)* *(a)* as a percentage of *(b)* and *(d)* the fee charged for each pupil.

Mr. Forth: Information for the 1992-93 academic year, the latest for which complete data are available, is given in the table:

Assisted Places Scheme 1992-93 academic year

School name	*Number of assisted pupils*	*Total roll*	*Per cent. of assisted pupils*	*Average fee £*[1]
Dulwich College	273	1,380	20	5,720
Wisbech Grammar school	326	628	52	4,050
St. Edward's College	396	937	42	3,085
Emanuel school	290	763	38	4,130
Latymer Upper school	312	1,049	30	4,235
Alleyns school Dulwich	203	1,038	20	5,240
Haberdasher's Aske's Boys	250	1,327	19	4,795
Royal Grammar school	282	916	31	3,930
Newcastle-under-Lyme school	390	1,329	29	3,010
Hereford Cathedral school	233	587	40	3,960
Bristol Grammar school	267	1,232	22	3,430
Wolverhampton Grammar school	256	646	40	3,910
Bolton school (Boys)	267	1,003	27	3,855
Queen Elizabeth Grammar	260	1,220	21	3,370
James Allens Girls school	168	1,039	16	5,005
St. Mary's College Crosby	254	789	32	3,195
Manchester Grammar school	274	1,436	19	3,495
King Edward VI school	241	958	25	3,900
Kings school	182	931	20	4,570
Wellington school	226	838	27	3,805

[1] Tuition fees including incidental expenses.

Advertising Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report,* columns *587-88,* if he will place in the Library the results of the pre and post-campaign market research on each campaign listed.

Mr. Robin Squire: The market research listed in the answer of 14 February was commissioned for internal purposes only—for campaign evaluation and planning. It is analogous to the advice given by officials to Ministers. I am unable, therefore, to place the results in the Library.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report,* columns *587-88,* how many coupon and telephone responses were received and leaflets issued in respect of each campaign.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 1993 testing publicity campaign resulted in 24,000 telephone and coupon responses. A total of 2,100,000 copies of the leaflet "How is your child doing at school?" were issued.

The GM advertising campaign resulted in over 3,000 telephone and coupon responses. A total of over 125,000 booklets were issued.

The 1994 testing campaign is still running. By 25 March some 21,000 telephone and coupon responses had been received and 3,300,000 copies of the leaflet "National School Tests in 1994" had been issued.

For the 1993 publicity campaign for the charters for further and higher education, by the end of February 1994 a total of 52,000 telephone and coupon responses had been received and 1,700,000 charters had been issued. Charters are continuing to be requested.

There was no coupon or telephone service associated with the DFC Roadshow. Around 30,000 leaflets were issued.

Education and Training Grants

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was *(a)* the total money spent, *(b)* the percentage of that money allocated according to decisions made by Ministers on competitive bids and *(c)* the percentage of that money allocated according to some statistical measure of need in the last available operational year of the grants for education and training scheme.

Mr. Forth: The grants for education support and training programme for 1994-95 will support local education authority expenditure of £270·6 million, mainly at a grant rate of 60 per cent. Of this, £47·8 million—18 per cent.—was allocated on the basis of competitive bids from LEAs. All bids were carefully examined on their merits and each LEA's needs. The remaining £222·8 million was allocated by formula, but dependent on satisfactory bids from LEAs. All GEST grants are allocated subject to LEAs indicating their ability to take them up.

Books and Equipment

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent by each local education authority on books and equipment, in constant prices, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: Information on total expenditure by each local education authority on books and equipment for the years 1988-89 to 1992-93, in 1992-93 prices, is given in the following table.

Expenditure on books and equipment in real terms

£000

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
ILEA	44,076	33,543	—	—	—
Corporation of London	—	—	20	22	25
Camden	—	—	2,107	2,320	2,770
Greenwich	—	—	2,882	1,178	[1]5,052
Hackney	—	—	1,255	1,740	[1]5,120
Hammersmith	—	—	1,743	2,432	2,209
Islington	—	—	1,671	2,014	[1]4,571
Kensington and Chelsea	—	—	1,509	1,851	1,192
Lambeth	—	—	1,399	1,216	[1]5,027
Lewisham	—	—	1,917	1,090	9,529
Southwark	—	—	3,795	4,578	4,112
Tower Hamlets	—	—	4,464	3,931	[1]5,837
Wandsworth	—	—	5,292	4,502	3,514
Westminster	—	—	2,750	2,716	4,910
Barking	3,049	2,988	3,005	2,317	3,465
Barnet	5,977	3,449	3,199	4,101	5,069
Bexley	3,165	2,794	2,572	2,999	2,274
Brent	3,077	4,032	2,849	3,980	4,239
Bromley	3,172	3,331	2,604	2,661	2,322
Croydon	5,628	4,520	4,584	4,574	5,403
Ealing	3,539	2,396	2,839	3,123	2,686
Enfield	2,291	2,152	3,170	2,706	1,337
Haringey	n/a	4,175	1,019	869	[1]3,374
Harrow	2,967	4,039	3,523	3,388	[1]3,750
Havering	3,363	3,816	3,491	4,340	4,392
Hillingdon	2,448	2,415	2,220	1,864	3,014
Hounslow	n/a	2,391	3,289	3,951	[1]3,065
Kingston upon Thames	5,866	2,694	1,785	2,039	[1]2,270
Merton	4,754	2,895	2,474	1,791	[1]3,144
Newham	3,093	3,564	3,342	4,365	[1]3,955
Redbridge	2,659	3,338	3,673	3,657	3,831
Richmond upon Thames	1,998	2,433	2,139	2,002	2,130
Sutton	1,908	1,927	1,726	1,694	1,801
Waltham Forest	2,236	2,835	2,044	2,271	3,015
Birmingham	13,328	16,220	21,543	13,478	17,895
Coventry	7,322	5,787	6,601	5,273	[1]5,116
Dudley	3,825	3,108	3,325	2,780	3,027
Sandwell	3,756	5,028	785	1,200	2,738
Solihull	3,901	2,865	3,136	3,547	3,505
Walsall	3,072	1,513	4,168	4,224	4,730
Wolverhampton	6,097	3,402	1,896	3,922	2,975
Knowsley	1,886	2,228	2,606	3,202	2,832
Liverpool	8,671	4,174	3,838	4,662	4,921
St. Helens	2,232	3,269	2,292	2,955	[1]3,094
Sefton	2,972	2,765	2,137	4,432	4,316
Wirral	7,524	7,789	5,438	4,701	5,122
Bolton	3,953	3,286	2,731	3,586	[1]3,666
Bury	2,547	2,426	2,381	2,532	[1]2,593
Manchester	n/a	9,212	6,829	8,007	7,904
Oldham	2,876	2,868	3,371	3,167	3,891
Rochdale	2,728	3,225	2,667	2,451	2,221
Salford	4,371	3,513	3,163	2,851	1,316
Stockport	4,271	4,013	4,559	5,227	5,586
Tameside	2,292	3,015	2,588	2,434	3,120
Trafford	2,740	2,739	2,422	3,212	[1]2,884
Wigan	3,490	6,167	5,136	5,404	5,723
Barnsley	2,019	2,330	2,077	3,242	4,645
Doncaster	3,292	2,427	1,810	1,071	1,110
Rotherham	2,675	3,574	2,173	2,703	3,999
Sheffield	5,707	4,143	5,223	6,581	7,397
Bradford	7,490	6,801	6,422	8,306	8,422
Calderdale	2,712	3,040	2,637	2,857	2,886
Kirklees	6,719	4,254	4,217	3,123	9,193
Leeds	7,303	3,070	7,293	8,602	9,499
Wakefield	n/a	4,609	3,585	4,675	[1]4,428
Gateshead	2,552	1,874	2,383	2,694	2,797
Newcastle upon Tyne	6,050	4,504	3,524	3,922	3,588
North Tyneside	n/a	1,959	2,022	2,185	[1]2,590
South Tyneside	2,381	2,248	1,740	1,641	2,656
Sunderland	5,278	3,941	4,189	5,994	5,422
Isles of Scilly	28	35	38	17	5
Avon	13,578	10,606	12,778	14,318	17,988
Bedfordshire	8,502	7,342	8,691	11,083	12,347
Berkshire	10,089	8,554	13,282	15,329	17,118
Buckinghamshire	8,324	8,164	7,964	8,413	11,552
Cambridgeshire	11,804	9,414	8,744	9,945	11,153

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Cheshire	10,996	10,853	12,197	14,109	12,276
Cleveland	4,979	6,739	3,890	9,130	[1]10,691
Cornwall	6,658	5,120	5,979	5,866	8,311
Cumbria	7,335	5,919	4,949	5,416	6,574
Derbyshire	11,232	16,703	12,769	13,255	12,914
Devon	14,954	15,173	13,443	14,690	18,741
Dorset	11,041	9,939	8,917	10,017	9,024
Durham	7,604	9,441	8,674	9,786	8,660
East Sussex	10,422	9,357	7,755	9,549	10,087
Essex	22,212	21,865	17,603	22,514	20,296
Gloucestershire	6,840	8,380	8,113	7,331	7,952
Hampshire	27,350	23,310	17,970	27,202	26,957
Hereford and Worcester	8,586	8,533	14,560	11,000	10,782
Hertfordshire	20,493	17,047	18,430	7,651	7,030
Humberside	15,756	15,190	17,139	21,534	21,141
Isle of Wight	1,817	1,678	1,727	2,151	2,117
Kent	19,064	14,771	22,570	21,975	n/a
Lancashire	21,309	20,899	15,913	19,465	[1]25,623
Leicestershire	16,800	15,615	16,625	19,696	25,876
Lincolnshire	3,960	4,503	6,574	9,725	9,693
Norfolk	8,429	8,387	7,444	8,811	8,153
North Yorkshire	9,806	10,549	11,139	12,100	15,476
Northamptonshire	10,579	11,272	11,258	12,101	11,000
Northumberland	4,307	4,639	3,870	4,255	4,113
Nottinghamshire	15,696	12,762	12,192	15,535	15,973
Oxfordshire	9,489	9,047	8,125	9,769	11,602
Shropshire	4,971	6,665	6,991	7,526	6,680
Somerset	7,777	8,649	7,311	6,715	8,400
Staffordshire	20,377	17,040	17,012	18,708	17,330
Suffolk	8,863	13,894	10,101	18,631	20,396
Surrey	11,812	7,274	8,656	13,557	9,884
Warwickshire	8,599	9,189	8,299	8,477	14,351
West Sussex	7,779	10,796	8,173	9,090	12,693
Wiltshire	8,518	10,361	9,788	10,205	11,709

Notes to table

[1]The figures for 1992-93 include estimates of expenditure for the LEAs. The 1992-93 figures are subject to final checking by the Department of Environment and the Department for Education.

1. figures are derived from local education authorities' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment.
2. "N/A" indicates that a return has not been received from the local education authority or that the return is subject to further enquiries.
3. Real terms figures are at 1992-93 prices, repriced using the latest GDP (Market Prices) Deflator index.

Parental Choice

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give figures, in total and for each local education authority, on the number of parents who secured the secondary school of their first choice for their child; and if he will give these figures for both the earliest and latest years for which they are available since 1964.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested for the academic years 1988-89 and 1991-92, the earliest and latest dates for which information is available, is given in the tables.

Admission Appeals 1988-89[1] Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools[2]

	Not heard by appeals committee:				*Heard by appeals committee:*			
	Appeals withdrawn before committee stage		*Appeals settled to mutual satisfaction of authority and parents before committee stage*		*Appeals rejected by committee*		*Appeals decided in parent's favour by committee*	
Local education authority	*number*	*percentage*	*number*	*percentage*	*number*	*percentage*	*number*	*percentage*
Barking and Dagenham	0	0	2	11	14	78	2	11
Barnet	26	9	38	13	172	59	57	19
Bexley	48	52	2	2	22	24	21	23
Brent	13	22	14	23	23	38	9	15
Bromley	9	2	36	10	233	62	99	26
Croydon	40	10	71	19	210	55	61	16
Ealing	15	8	14	12	52	44	37	31
Enfield	10	3	24	7	226	67	76	23
Haringey	9	13	4	6	26	37	31	44
Harrow	0	0	0	0	109	64	61	36
Havering	17	9	0	0	134	68	45	23
Hillingdon	11	9	42	34	38	31	32	26
Hounslow	5	9	0	0	1	2	52	90
Kingston Upon Thames	7	19	0	0	26	70	4	11
Merton	12	18	21	32	10	15	22	34
Newham[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Redbridge	0	0	0	0	270	77	82	23
Richmond Upon Thames	5	4	5	4	60	51	48	41

	Not heard by appeals committee:				Heard by appeals committee:			
	Appeals withdrawn before committee stage		Appeals settled to mutual satisfaction of authority and parents before committee stage		Appeals rejected by committee		Appeals decided in parent's favour by committee	
Local education authority	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Sutton	15	4	204	60	64	19	54	16
Waltham Forest	0	0	6	7	44	53	33	40
Birmingham	171	15	12	1	558	50	372	33
Coventry	9	7	15	11	52	39	57	43
Dudley	1	4	6	26	12	52	4	17
Sandwell	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	100
Solihull	4	3	25	21	36	31	53	45
Walsall	10	11	1	1	38	40	45	47
Wolverhampton	0	0	0	0	61	72	24	28
Knowsley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liverpool	0	0	23	10	114	49	94	41
St. Helens	5	4	21	17	46	38	50	41
Sefton	6	23	2	8	11	42	7	27
Wirral	120	44	0	0	93	34	60	22
Bolton	0	0	8	9	24	26	61	65
Bury	24	5	94	21	89	20	238	53
Manchester	6	1	187	36	192	37	134	26
Oldham	0	0	109	37	127	43	59	20
Rochdale	88	38	0	0	69	30	75	32
Salford	1	3	6	20	6	20	17	57
Stockport	32	25	5	4	46	35	41	32
Tameside	1	1	5	4	12	9	115	86
Trafford	1	1	4	2	85	52	69	43
Wigan	11	19	16	27	18	31	14	24
Barnsley	3	10	2	7	7	23	18	60
Doncaster	6	7	16	18	27	30	39	44
Rotherham	3	7	5	12	21	49	14	33
Sheffield	36	13	198	74	1	0	34	13
Bradford	5	1	252	31	293	36	257	32
Calderdale	57	29	1	1	90	46	48	24
Kirklees	4	3	15	12	19	16	81	66
Leeds	0	0	0	0	25	10	238	90
Wakefield	0	0	1	1	34	41	48	58
Gateshead	2	4	8	15	18	35	23	44
Newcastle upon Tyne	0	0	8	21	0	0	31	79
North Tyneside	0	0	21	48	21	48	2	5
South Tyneside	0	0	4	100	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	6	4	5	4	76	54	55	39
Inner London Education Authority	471	19	0	0	1,326	54	650	27
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avon	60	11	66	12	176	33	220	41
Bedfordshire	8	3	15	7	114	50	88	38
Berkshire	54	7	149	19	346	45	220	29
Buckinghamshire	15	4	6	1	269	65	122	30
Cambridgeshire	5	6	18	20	49	56	16	18
Cheshire	1	2	15	31	12	24	21	43
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	20	69	9	31
Cornwall	1	50	0	0	0	0	1	50
Cumbria	2	15	2	15	7	54	2	15
Derbyshire	16	7	20	8	90	38	111	47
Devon	21	9	23	10	110	47	78	34
Dorset	3	3	2	2	55	55	40	40
Durham	24	13	38	20	62	32	68	35
East Sussex	4	6	23	33	27	39	15	22
Essex	5	2	26	13	141	68	35	17
Gloucestershire	11	5	55	27	72	35	62	31
Hampshire	13	21	20	32	6	10	23	37
Hereford and Worcester	23	19	19	16	56	46	23	19
Hertfordshire	52	14	0	0	197	55	112	31
Humberside	5	2	28	13	65	29	123	55
Isle of Wight	7	10	36	52	17	25	9	13
Kent	576	47	276	23	274	23	89	7
Lancashire	0	0	373	24	370	24	820	52
Leicestershire	0	0	102	63	36	22	25	15
Lincolnshire	9	8	0	0	57	49	51	44
Norfolk	64	44	12	8	48	33	23	16
North Yorkshire	4	5	10	13	24	30	41	52
Northamptonshire	3	4	23	33	31	44	13	19
Northumberland	0	0	0	0	16	29	39	71
Nottinghamshire	42	34	0	0	43	34	40	32
Oxfordshire	10	16	1	2	29	45	23	36
Shropshire	6	3	11	6	8	5	147	85

	Not heard by appeals committee:				Heard by appeals committee:			
	Appeals withdrawn before committee stage		Appeals settled to mutual satisfaction of authority and parents before committee stage		Appeals rejected by committee		Appeals decided in parent's favour by committee	
Local education authority	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Somerset	23	12	63	32	39	20	74	37
Staffordshire	1	2	3	5	30	54	22	39
Suffolk	10	8	55	42	37	28	28	22
Surrey	0	0	120	34	113	32	121	34
Warwickshire	4	4	1	1	39	40	53	55
West Sussex	0	0	0	0	31	54	26	46
Wiltshire	41	59	8	12	13	19	7	10
England	2,448	12	3,177	15	8,510	40	6,996	33

[1] Does not include appeals still to be decided by committee.
[2] Includes County, Voluntary Controlled, Voluntary Aided, and Special Agreement Schools.
[3] No LEA return for the 1988-89 academic year.

Admission appeals 1991-92[1]
Maintained (including self-governing (GM) primary and secondary schools[2]

	Not heard by appeals committee				Heard by appeals committee				
	Appeals withdrawn before committee stage		Appeals settled to mutual satisfaction of authority and parents before committee stage		Appeals rejected by committee		Appeals decided in parents' favour by committee		
Local education authority	number	per cent.	number	per cent.	number	per cent.	number	per cent.	per cent.
Corporation of London	0	0	4	100	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	85	22	14	4	221	57	65	17	17
Greenwich	34	8	116	27	149	34	129	30	30
Hackney	16	5	81	26	152	50	57	19	19
Hammersmith and Fulham	9	4	21	9	152	65	51	22	22
Islington	40	15	0	0	158	58	72	26	26
Kensington and Chelsea	10	23	1	2	29	67	3	7	7
Lambeth	127	25	74	15	202	40	95	19	19
Lewisham	0	0	131	21	413	65	95	15	15
Southwark	42	7	78	14	239	42	208	36	36
Tower Hamlets	12	2	97	18	367	67	52	10	10
Wandsworth	101	59	10	6	47	27	14	8	8
Westminster	18	10	12	7	140	76	14	8	8
Barking and Dagenham	0	0	72	32	70	31	81	36	36
Barnet	175	22	176	22	311	39	141	18	18
Bexley	20	5	80	19	77	19	239	57	57
Brent	13	10	63	47	40	30	16	12	12
Bromley	59	12	100	21	251	52	71	15	15
Croydon[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ealing	11	5	14	6	117	49	99	41	41
Enfield	200	22	9	1	488	53	228	25	25
Haringey	28	13	36	16	98	45	57	26	26
Harrow	101	20	118	24	196	40	78	16	16
Havering	20	4	33	7	326	70	86	18	18
Hillingdon	8	5	12	8	98	66	27	18	18
Hounslow	17	7	18	7	166	64	58	22	22
Kingston upon Thames	6	5	19	17	68	59	22	19	19
Merton	63	40	27	17	37	24	29	19	19
Newham	18	5	33	9	119	33	189	53	53
Redbridge	0	0	0	0	301	79	78	21	21
Richmond upon Thames	5	2	0	0	144	70	58	28	28
Sutton	5	1	112	32	168	48	63	18	18
Waltham Forest	6	3	7	3	116	54	84	39	39
Birmingham	311	16	9	0	1,079	55	552	28	28
Coventry	13	3	65	14	227	49	154	34	34
Dudley	51	16	38	12	181	55	59	18	18
Sandwell	106	8	1,112	86	10	1	61	5	5
Solihull	37	13	92	33	116	41	36	13	13
Walsall	11	8	23	17	54	40	46	34	34
Wolverhampton	6	8	0	0	49	65	20	27	27
Knowsley[4]	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liverpool	57	8	0	0	384	51	314	42	42
St. Helens	12	13	15	16	32	34	35	37	37
Sefton	5	5	36	35	40	38	23	22	22
Wirral	0	0	101	18	330	60	121	22	22
Bolton	10	7	12	9	52	37	67	48	48
Bury	85	13	197	31	112	18	237	37	37

Local education authority	Not heard by appeals committee: Appeals withdrawn before committee stage		Not heard by appeals committee: Appeals settled to mutual satisfaction of authority and parents before committee stage		Heard by appeals committee: Appeals rejected by committee		Heard by appeals committee: Appeals decided in parents' favour by committee		
	number	per cent.	number	per cent.	number	per cent.	number	per cent.	per cent.
Manchester	87	6	142	10	772	54	421	30	30
Oldham	2	0	226	56	138	34	40	10	10
Rochdale	11	4	81	31	95	37	72	28	28
Salford	2	3	14	23	17	28	27	45	45
Stockport	8	4	0	0	94	52	79	44	44
Tameside	16	17	0	0	23	24	57	59	59
Trafford	9	5	42	24	65	38	51	29	29
Wigan	38	15	51	20	92	37	70	28	28
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	8	29	20	71	71
Doncaster	6	15	5	13	24	60	5	13	13
Rotherham	14	11	10	8	56	46	43	35	35
Sheffield	54	17	228	71	15	5	25	8	8
Bradford	132	14	343	36	302	31	189	20	20
Calderdale	70	48	17	12	35	24	24	16	16
Kirklees	22	14	69	44	48	30	19	12	12
Leeds	41	2	1,475	68	301	14	337	16	16
Wakefield	6	6	4	4	48	48	41	41	41
Gateshead	10	13	51	65	7	9	10	13	13
Newcastle upon Tyne	8	7	27	25	21	19	54	49	49
North Tyneside	0	0	5	36	7	50	2	14	14
South Tyneside	0	0	3	60	2	40	0	0	0
Sunderland	7	5	18	14	56	44	47	37	37
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avon	100	11	86	10	293	33	404	46	46
Bedfordshire	3	2	2	1	88	55	30	19	19
Berkshire	61	8	80	11	361	48	242	32	32
Buckinghamshire	13	3	9	2	234	59	144	36	36
Cambridgeshire[3]	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire[4]	7	10	1	1	43	59	22	30	30
Cleveland	5	6	0	0	44	52	35	42	42
Cornwall	0	0	4	15	10	38	12	46	46
Cumbria	6	6	61	57	20	19	20	19	19
Derbyshire	28	6	71	14	199	40	204	41	41
Devon	22	6	100	26	154	41	103	27	27
Dorset	0	0	26	10	113	45	114	45	45
Durham	31	15	43	20	61	29	76	36	36
East Sussex	24	9	67	26	113	43	58	22	22
Essex	23	8	6	2	169	62	75	27	27
Gloucestershire	54	14	57	15	173	45	97	25	25
Hampshire	7	15	7	15	28	61	4	9	9
Hereford and Worcester	9	6	28	19	72	48	41	27	27
Hertfordshire	82	10	125	15	392	46	259	30	30
Humberside	27	7	42	10	135	33	204	50	50
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	14	52	13	48	48
Kent	222	14	925	57	276	17	199	12	12
Lancashire	297	14	53	3	650	32	1,058	51	51
Leicestershire	9	3	37	12	197	63	71	23	23
Lincolnshire	15	7	36	18	80	39	74	36	36
Norfolk	38	16	144	61	39	17	14	6	6
North Yorkshire	9	4	38	16	77	31	121	49	49
Northamptonshire	4	4	47	43	24	22	35	32	32
Northumberland	0	0	0	0	3	21	11	79	79
Nottinghamshire	75	27	28	10	80	29	92	33	33
Oxfordshire	3	2	1	1	64	36	108	61	61
Shropshire	13	7	9	5	35	19	130	70	70
Somerset	22	9	53	22	98	41	67	28	28
Staffordshire	12	7	13	7	96	55	55	31	31
Suffolk	7	8	28	31	25	28	29	33	33
Surrey	20	5	128	33	139	36	96	25	25
Warwickshire	8	9	35	41	25	29	18	21	21
West Sussex	1	1	19	25	37	49	18	24	24
Wiltshire	4	7	4	7	34	57	18	30	30
England	3,760	10	8,493	23	15,047	40	10,286	27	27

[1] Does not include appeals still to be decided by committee.
[2] Includes County, Voluntary controlled, Voluntary Aided, Special Agreement and Self-governing (GM) Schools.
[3] No LEA return for 1991-92 year. The figures relate to the self-governing (grant-maintained) sector only.
[4] Figures based on incomplete data.

Asthma

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children in the age range five to 11 years attend schools in England; and what percentage of these children is classified as suffering from asthma.

Mr. Forth: The information requested regarding numbers of children who have asthma is not collected centrally.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make a statement on his policy on the carriage of asthma ventilators on their person, at all times, on school premises by children in the age group five to 11 years;

(2) to what extent the carrying at all times of asthma ventilators by asthma suffering children of the age range five to 11 years, while at school is a matter to be decided by *(a)* the child's parents, *(b)* the school's head teacher or *(c)* other education authority groupings.

Mr. Forth: It is considered good health care practice for children with asthma, where possible, to manage their own condition as early as is consistent with their development. Teachers should, in consultation with parents and with the benefit of appropriate medical advice, do all that is reasonable to enable children to participate as fully as possible in school life.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what major building projects since 1989, valued at over £1 million are being, or have been wholly or partly financed in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

Mr. Forth: There have been no major building projects at voluntary aided and special agreement schools since 1989, valued at over £1 million financed by this Department in any of the local education authorities cited above. The Department does not control the funding of projects at individual county and voluntary controlled schools. It is for authorities to decide their own capital expenditure priorities and to make the best use of the resources available to them.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to promote further the opting out of schools.

Mr. Patten: I intend to ensure that parents, governors and teachers have access to the factual information that they need about grant-maintained status in order to make an informed decision about whether it would be right for their school. I expect that in most cases the benefits will be very apparent.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

9. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of participating states and organisations in the middle east peace negotiations to discuss progress.

22. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of participating states and organisations in the middle east peace negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visited Israel, the occupied territories, Lebanon and Jordon from 2 to 6 January and met the key figures involved in the peace process. He and I met Mr. Arafat's envoy, Nabil Shaath, on 3 March.

27. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom co-sponsored United Nations Security Council resolution 904 was adopted on 18 March. This calls for the implementation without delay of the Israeli-PLO declaration of principles. We hope for early agreement on Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho. We welcome the announcement that bilateral talks between Israel and Syria, Lebanon and Jordan will resume in Washington in April.

28. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's support for the Washington accord in resolving the Palestine-Israeli conflict.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom co-sponsored UN Security Council resolution 904. This calls for the implementation without delay of the Israeli-PLO declaration of principles. Our aid to the occupied territories will amount to £20 million this financial year and £70 million for the next three financial years. We have also provided £85,000 to help fund surgeons and specialist medical equipment and supplies to treat the victims of the Hebron massacre.

Today we have provided £500,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross for its operation in the occupied territories.

31. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's role in bringing about a recommencement of the middle east peace negotiations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom co-sponsored United Nations Security Council resolution 904. We have urged on all parties to the negotiations the importance of concluding a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement as soon as possible.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the chance of further progress on the middle east peace accord, until there is better protection of the Palestinians; and what representations he has made to the Israelis about this subject.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The details of an international presence and of security measures for the protection of Palestinians in the occupied territories are under discussion between Israel and the PLO. We hope negotiations on Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho will resume soon. I wrote to the Israeli ambassador drawing his attention to the statement on 7 March by European Union Foreign Ministers which called for protection of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent he is involved in international discussions to supply an international security force for the occupied territories in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We co-sponsored United Nations Security Council resolution 904 which called for an international or foreign presence. We are in close touch with interested parties on the follow-up to that resolution.

India

17. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions about human rights he had with the Indian Prime Minister on his recent visit to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

18. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what human rights issues he raised with the Indian Prime Minister during his recent visit to London.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed human rights with Mr. Narasimha Rao during his visit to Britain last week.

23. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last had discussions with the Indian Government about human rights in the Punjab; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed human rights in India with the Indian Prime Minister during his visit to Britain earlier this month. The main focus of the discussion on human rights was, however, Kashmir.

East Timor

19. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on human rights in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: We believe the Indonesian Government have made progress in observing their human rights obligations. We are encouraging them to continue this positive trend and, in particular, to co-operate with the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

26. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indonesian Government over the illegal occupation of East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: We are encouraging Indonesia and Portugal to continue to co-operate with the United Nations Secretary General to find a solution to East Timor.

We hope the return to consensus language at this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights will help provide an atmosphere conducive to progress at the next round of talks on the territory's future between Portugal and Indonesia under the Secretary-General's auspices in May.

European Union

20. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the European Union to discuss greater political union.

Mr. Hurd: There are no plans for a meeting of European Union Foreign Ministers to discuss greater political union.

Falkland Islands

21. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current position concerning discussions with Argentina about prospecting for oil in the waters surrounding the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are considering the next steps for the development of the Falklands continental shelf. We shall be discussing the matter shortly with the Falkland Islands Government. In due course we would expect also to have discussions with the Government of Argentina.

Malaysia

24. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made to restore trading relations with Malaysia.

Mr. Goodlad: We have been in close and frequent touch with the Malaysian Government, the business community and others both here and in Malaysia. We want to restore the flourishing state of our relations as soon as possible.

The Malaysian Government's concern has been about certain articles in the British press. I believe that they have reflected fully how much the Malaysians helped us in finding the missing British service men in Sabah. That assistance highlights the real relationship between our two countries.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *294*, if he will state the dates on which representations were made by the Government of Malaysia.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* No. The details of our relations with other Governments are confidential.

Turkey

25. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he hopes to discuss the question of human rights with the Turkish Government.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have no immediate plans to do so. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised human rights with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkey when he visited Ankara on 19 and 20 January. I stressed our concerns to the Turkish Minister for Human Rights in London recently.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy

29. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress the Westminster Foundation for Democracy is making.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1993-94, with a grant-in-aid of £2 million, the foundation embarked on 205 projects in 37 countries.

Kashmir

30. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Indian and Pakistani Governments to discuss the situation in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed the situation in Kashmir when he met the Indian Prime Minister earlier this month during his visit to Britain.

I last discussed the subject with the Pakistan Foreign Secretary in February.

Israel

32. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Israel relating to the disarming of Jewish settlers in the occupied territories following the massacre at Hebron.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I wrote to the Israeli ambassador drawing his attention to the statement on 7 March by European Union Foreign Ministers which called for protection of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

UNESCO

33. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about the up-to-date position of the United Kingdom Government on the possibility of re-joining the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to keep this issue under close review, but have not yet reached any decision.

Pacific Rim

34. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with EEC counterparts about relations with Pacific rim countries.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Relations with third countries are discussed on an ad hoc basis at Foreign Affairs Councils. We and our partners understand the growing political and economic importance of this part of the world —in 1992, 7·8 per cent. of United Kingdom exports went to the Asia Pacific region and, for the first time, the European Union traded more with east Asia than with north America. The EC has co-operation agreements with the Association of South-East Asian Nations and with China and one is currently being negotiated with Vietnam.

During the United Kingdom presidency we made a priority of developing the Community's relations with Japan, based on the arrangements for consultation as laid out in the EC-Japan joint declaration of 1991 and we continue to press for this to be consolidated. The Germans have stated that the strengthening of relations between the European Union and Asia will be a focal point of their presidency—including intensification of the European-Japanese dialogue, and examination of the options for concluding a co-operation agreement with the Republic of Korea, as well as the normal ministerial EC/ASEAN meeting scheduled for September. We have welcomed this.

European Union

35. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the enlargement of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member (1) to the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *474-77* and to the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) on 21 March, *Official Report*, columns *11-12*, (2) to my reply to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) on 25 March, *Official Report*, columns *478-79*, (3) to the reply of my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 22 March, *Official Report*, columns *120-22* and to the statement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the House on 29 March, *Official Report*, columns 797-98.

Cyprus

36. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Turkish and Turkish Cypriot authorities regarding the occupation of properties in northern Cyprus by Turkish settlers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Turkish Government and the Turkish Cypriots are aware of our position on this issue. The communique issued at last October's Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting expressed concern at the influx of Turkish settlers to Cyprus and emphasised that nothing should be done to change the demographic structure of the Island.

Asia and Pacific Rim

37. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are being made to reinforce the commercial sections of British embassies in Asia and the Pacific rim countries.

Mr. Goodlad: Since 1990, total export promotion effort at FCO posts in Asia and Pacific rim countries, measured in man years, has risen by 23 per cent.

This year alone we are creating 23 new frontline commercial jobs at our Asian and Pacific rim missions in Hong Kong, Tokyo, Osaka, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and at the British trade and cultural office in Taipei.

In addition, discussions are well advanced for opening new commercial offices in Pusan in Korea and Nagoya in Japan, to be run by locally employed staff.

Hong Kong

38. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of the People's Republic of China to discuss the future of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary last met ambassador Ma Yuzhen to discuss Hong Kong issues on 23 November. We wish to co-operate with China in the interests of a smooth transition for Hong Kong and full implementation of the Sino-British joint declaration.

Russia

39. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he is taking to assist the progress of democratic and economic reform in Russia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have given our full support to the process of democratic and economic reform in Russia, and shall continue to do so, providing assistance through both bilateral and multilateral aid programmes.

Nigeria

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Government of Nigeria regarding the protection of human rights and the introduction of democracy in that country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave on Monday 21 February at column *30* to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry).

Somalia

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Somalia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no plans to visit Somalia. He last visited in September 1992, as part of an EC Foreign Ministers Troika who went to see personally the situation in Somalia. My noble friend, Baroness Chalker of Wallasey has no current plans to visit the country.

We welcome the latest Security Council resolution adopted on 4 February which underlines the international community's continuing commitment to assist the people of Somalia. The Somali people should now build on the momentum created by the agreement signed in Nairobi on 24 March by Ali Mahdi and General Aideed. We hope a process has started which will lead to the creation of a national reconciliation conference.

IAEA

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the International Atomic Energy Agency's board of governors' meeting on 21 March; how Britain was represented; and what was the United Kingdom's stance at the meeting.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A resolution was passed by the IAEA board of governors on 21 March which expressed

grave concern at North Korea's continued failure to comply with its safeguards agreement, and requested the agency's director-general to transmit the report on the most recent round of inspections to the UN General Assembly. We fully supported this resolution. Her Majesty's permanent representative at the United Kingdom's mission to the IAEA attended.

Mrs. Timmreck

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 March, when Mrs. Timmreck left St. Helena; how long she had been resident on the island; and whether any civil or criminal cases involving Mrs. Timmreck had been brought before her departure.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: When Mrs. Timmreck left St. Helena in August 1993, she had been on the island for 32 months from October 1990, except for two brief visits to Cape Town. Prior to that, following her first arrival on St. Helena in December 1985, she made four visits totalling 7½ months. No civil or criminal cases involving her had been brought before her departure.

Korea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the present military position between North and South Korea.

Mr. Goodlad: There is a high concentration of military forces on the border. There has been a steady shift of North Korean forces over the last decade which has led to the present deployment of 750,000-1 million troops near the border. This is a cause for anxiety, and increases the need for North and South Korea to pursue the dialogue between them.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Iran

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) in which way the United Kingdom delegation voted in the United Nations on the question of the violation of human rights and on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in March this year; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will make a statement on Iran's refusal to comply with international instruments on human rights, including the international covenant on civil and political rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our European partners condemn Iran's refusal to fulfil its obligations under international instruments of human rights. We were involved in the drafting and co-sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution on Iran introduced by the European Union at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in March. It reflected our concerns at Iran's human rights record and called on the Iranians to co-operate with the United Nations special representative on human rights in Iran.

Trade and Aid

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he has had with representatives of the Indonesian Government to discuss trade and aid agreements with that country.

Mr. Goodlad: We regularly discuss a wide range of issues with the Indonesians, including trade, education, human rights, regional political and security matters, aid and economic issues.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Indonesia in April last year. I will be visiting Indonesia myself after Easter.

EMPLOYMENT

Departmental Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what property, leased or owned for the purposes of his Department, is not in current use.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Group has an estate of 1,779 properties and holdings of which:

702 are occupied and are part of the Government Estate managed by Property Holdings;

902 are occupied and managed by the Department.

Some 175 properties managed by the Department are not in current use and are being marketed actively for sale or disposal.

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Mr Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes into account the background and experience of candidates before making an appointment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The appointment to public bodies for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible are listed in "Public Bodies 1993" a copy of which is available in the Library, with the additions of the Commissioner for Protection against Unlawful Industrial Action, and Investors in People (UK), which are new appointments.

Any remuneration attached to a post is also listed in "Public Bodies".

The information about terms of appointment and current appointees could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible apppointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State makes such inquiries as may be necessary before making an appointment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State consults such organisations as are appropriate to the appointment in question.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total number of ethnic minority appointments made by the Department to public bodies was given in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is in the Library.

Information on ethnic minorities is collected in confidence, and it is not the Department's practice to release the details of the ethnic origin of individual members of public bodies.

Workplace Deaths

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of time of each investigation by Health and Safety Executive inspectors in each region into each workplace death.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action was taken as a result of each workplace death investigation completed in the last 12 months in each region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested.

The following table shows the number of fatal injuries, provisional, reported to each region in the Health and Safety Executive's field operations division between 1 April 1992 and 31 March 1993 and how many of them have led to inspectors taking prosecution action to date.

HSE region	*Number of fatal injuries reported*	*Of which resulted in prosecution action*
Wales and South West	52	6
Home Counties	46	7
London and South East	48	5
Midlands	55	9
Yorkshire and North East	54	10
North West	46	8
Scotland	45	10

Information on any other action taken as result of each workplace death investigation is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive investigations into workplace deaths were started in each year since 1983 in each region; and how many of these were completed within *(a)* one week, *(b)* two weeks, *(c)* one month, *(d)* two months and *(e)* longer than two months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested.

The Health and Safety Executive gives a high priority to the investigation of fatal injuries in the workplace. The following table shows the number of fatal injuries reported to HSE's factory, agricultural and quarries inspectorates from 1983 to 1992-93, provisional:

Year	*Number of fatal injuries reported*
1983[1]	472
1984[1]	485
1985[1]	518[2]
1986-87[1]	399
1987-88[1]	455
1988-89[1]	472
1989-90[1]	586[3]
1990-91	468
1991-92	368
1992-93	346[4]

[1] Excludes reports made to the Quarries Inspectorate.
[2] Includes 56 members of the public killed in the Bradford City FC fire disaster.
[3] Includes 95 reportable fatalities arising from the Hillsborough Stadium disaster.
[4] Provisional.

Information is not available on the length of time taken to complete investigations.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive staff in each region are involved in the investigation of each workplace death.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested. The number of Health and Safety Executive staff involved in the investigation of each workplace death varies according to the technical, medical and scientific expertise required during the investigation.

Productivity Rewards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *433*, concerning rewards for productivity, what steps he has taken to ensure that the decisions referred to in his first paragraph are taken on a level playing field.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Government policy remains that decisions on pay and related matters are for the employers and workers concerned to make in the light of their particular local circumstances, without Government intervention.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *433*, concerning rewards for productivity, whether he will publish a table showing the annual increase in output per person employed for the whole economy less manufacturing together with the figures for the whole economy and manufacturing.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The annual increases in ouput per person for the whole economy and manufacturing, since 1979, are given in the table. Figures for the whole economy less manufacturing are not calculated.

	Manufacturing	*Whole economy*
1979	0·3	1·4
1980	–3·8	–1·3
1981	3·3	2·4
1982	6·3	3·9
1983	7·6	4·6
1984	5·3	0·3
1985	3·3	2·9
1986	3·6	3·8
1987	5·6	2·8
1988	5·6	1·6
1989	4·4	–0·2
1990	1·9	–0·1
1991	1·4	0·5
1992	4·8	2·2
1993	5·5	3·5

Offshore Safety

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many improvement notices the offshore safety division of the Health and Safety Executive has instigated since taking over this responsibility; and if he will list each company and installation to which such notices have been issued.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Some 41 improvement notices have been issued by the offshore safety division of the Health and Safety Executive since taking over responsibility for offshore safety. The companies and installations are listed in the following tables:

Improvement notices
1 April 1993 to 28 February 1994

Number	*Date*	*Name of company*	*Installation/vessel*
1.	2 April 1993	ETPM Services UK Ltd.	ETPM Laybarge LB200
2.	10 June 1993	Amoco (UK) Exploration	49/27C
3.	12 August 1993	Shell UK Exploration	Shell/Esso 49/24K
4.	18 August 1993	Sedco Forex Drilling	Sedco Installations
5.	26 August 1993	Amoco (UK) Exploration	Amoco 23/21A
6.	8 September 1993	Dolphin Drilling	Borgny Dolphin
7.	24 September 1993	Shell UK Ltd.	Brent Delta
8.	20 October 1993	Conoco (UK) Ltd.	All installations
9.	20 October 1993	Conoco (UK) Ltd.	All installations
10.	20 October 1993	Conoco (UK) Ltd.	All installations
11.	20 October 1993	Conoco (UK) Ltd.	All installations
12.	20 October 1993	Conoco (UK) Ltd.	All installations
13.	28 October 1993	Phillips Petroleum	Maureen Alpha
14.	28 November 1993	Phillips Petroleum	Maureen Alpha 16/29a
15.	8 November 1993	Amerada Hess Ltd.	Foating Pro Facility AH001
16.	8 November 1993	Amerada Hess Ltd.	Floating Pro Facility
17.	25 November 1993	Mobil North Sea Ltd.	Beryl Alpha
18.	6 December 1993	Texaco North Sea	Tartan Alpha
19.	16 December 1993	Shell UK Ltd.	Auk A 30/16
20.	15 December 1993	Santa Fe Drilling	Auk A 30/16
21.	28 January 1993	Marathon Oil	Brae B
22.	3 February 1994	Agip UK Ltd.	Tiffany 16/17

Improvement notices
1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993

Number	*Date*	*Name of company*	*Installation/vessel*
1.	29 April 1992	Elf Enterprise Caledonia	Claymore A
2.	20 May 1992	EE Caledonia Ltd.	MSV Tharos
3.	8 June 1992	Texaco North Sea UK Co.	Tartan A
4.	8 June 1992	Shell UK Ltd.	Fulmar A
5.	16 June 1992	Dolphin Drilling Ltd.	Borgny Dolphin
6.	15 October 1992	Sonat Offshore	Sonat Arcade
7.	3 November 1992	Global Marine Drilling	Global Labrador I
8.	3 November 1992	Global Marine Drilling	Global Labrador I
9.	5 November 1992	BP Exploration	Thistle A
10.	5 November 1992	BP Exploration	Thistle A
11.	6 November 1992	Emerald Field Contracting	Emerald Producer

Number	Date	Name of company	Installation/vessel
12.	6 November 1992	Emerald Field Contracting	Emerald Producer
13.	11 November 1992	Shell UK Ltd.	Kittiwake
14.	9 December 1992	Hamilton Oil Co. Ltd.	Deep Sea Pioneer
15.	21 December 1992	Sedco Forex	Drillstar
16.	21 December 1992	Sedco Forex	Sedneth 701
17.	20 January 1994	Elf Enterprise Caledonia Ltd.	Salitre
18.	3 March 1993	Elf Enterprise Caledonia Ltd.	MSV Tharos
19.	3 March 1993	Elf Enterprise Caledonia Ltd.	MSV Tharos

1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992
Nil improvement notices

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many recommendations for prosecution under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 the offshore safety division of the Health and Safety Executive has instigated; and if he will list the companies and installations to which such recommendations have applied.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since 1 April 1991, prosecutions have been instigated by the procurator fiscal in Scotland in 22 cases, following receipt of a report from the Health and Safety Executive. One of these was subsequently abandoned. One case has been prosecuted in England. Details are set out in the following tables:

Table 1

Year	Company	Installation	Date of offence	Date convicted
1991-92	Allseas Marine Contractors	Lorelay	7 August 1990	15 May 1991
1991-92	Smedvig Ltd.	NW Hutton	9 September 1990	9 March 1992
1991-92	Amoco (UK) Exploration	NW Hutton	9 September 1990	9 March 1992

Table 2

Year	Company	Installation	Date of offence	Date convicted
1992-93	Atlantic Drilling	Benreoch	10 December 1990	21 April 1992
1992-93	Stena Offshore Ltd.	DSV Seaspread	10 June 1990	9 May 1992
1992-93	Employee DSV Seaspread	DSV Seaspread	10 June 1990	8 May 1992
1992-93	Sedco Forex Drilling Services	Sedco 703	31 January 1992	22 July 1992
1992-93	ETMP Services (UK)	LB200	18 April 1992	26 November 1992
1992-93	BP Exploration	Miller	20 June 1992	17 December 1992
1992-93	Amoco UK	DSV British	unsuccessful	
1992-93	Stena Offshore	Enterprise V	unsuccessful	

Table 3

Year	Company	Installation	Date of offence	Date convicted
1993-94	Shell UK Exploration and Production	Brent Delta	5 March 1993	Awaiting court hearing
1993-94	Smedvig Ltd.	West Sigma	7 January 1993	Awaiting English court hearing
1993-94	BP Exploration and Production	Forties Bravo	16 March 1993	4 November 1993
1993-94	Sedco Forex Drilling Ltd.	Sedco 704	24 July 1992	17 May 1993
1993-94	Cape Scaffolding Ltd.	Bruce	28 December 1992	16 May 1993
1993-94	Heeremac	DB102	12 March 1993	Abandoned
1993-94	Rookwater	DSV Regalia	8 June 1993	24 September 1993
1993-94	Dolphin Drilling	Borgny Dolphin	24 August 1993	24 February 1994
1993-94	Arco British Ltd.	Ocean Odyssey	22 September 1988	24 September 1993
1993-94	Odeco Drilling (UK) Ltd.	Ocean Odyssey	22 September 1988	10 August 1993
1993-94	Hamilton Oil Co.	Deepsea Pioneer	28 October 1992	8 October 1993
1993-94	Santa Fe	Santa Fe Magellan	20 July 1993	11 February 1994
1993-94	Odeco UK Ltd.	Ocean Victory	7 November 1990	29 November 1993

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many improvement notices, prohibition notices and pending prosecutions were outstanding when the offshore safety division of the Health and Safety Executive took over responsibility for those matters from the Department of Energy; which *(a)* companies and *(b)* installations they applied to; and how many are still outstanding.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No improvement notices or prohibition notices were outstanding when the Health and Safety Executive took over responsibility for offshore safety. In England, no pending prosecutions were outstanding at that time. Decisions on prosecutions in Scotland are solely the responsibility of the procurator fiscal and the Crown Office for Scotland.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further changes he proposes to make to improve health and safety on offshore installations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive is reviewing a large number of safety cases and

discussing with individual owners and operators of installations any improvements which may need to be made.

In addition, the Health and Safety Commission has put in hand a review of offshore health and safety legislation with the aim of modernising and streamlining provision, and replacing or revoking existing prescriptive requirements. New goal-setting regulations are being developed, in line with Lord Cullen's recommendations, to cover fire and explosion, emergency response, management and administration; and design and construction.

Consultants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will provide a table showing the contracts currently being worked on for his Department by Coopers and Lybrand, Ernst and Young, Price Waterhouse, KPMG Peat Marwick, Grant Thornton, Robson Rhodes, BDO Binder Hamlyn, Levy Gee, Hacker Young, Pannell Kerr Forster and Stoy Harward.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Jobplan Workshops

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring arrangements of the standard of jobplan workshop courses is in place; what complaints about such courses have been received; if he will summarise the nature of the complaints; what arrangements there are for complaints to be made and taken into account in the running of the workshops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. G. Johnson to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 30 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about arrangements to monitor Jobplan Workshops and the nature and handling of complaints about their delivery. I am replying in the Chief Executive's absence.

It may be helpful if I explain that Jobplan is designed to help people who have been unemployed for some time compete for jobs and opportunities. During the workshop, which lasts for one week, clients are able to take a fresh look at their situation, review their strengths and skills and set themselves clear and achievable job goals. The workshop was developed to accommodate people with varying experiences and backgrounds. During the workshop, people have the opportunity for personal reviews as well as undertaking group work. Since April 1993, over 270,000 people have attended Jobplan.

Jobplan is delivered by organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors on the Employment Service's (ES) behalf. Contracts are awarded following a competitive tendering exercise.

A full specification is issued to all prospective contractors. This specification, and a manual which sets out how the programme is to be run, forms the basis against which subsequent monitoring and assessment of the provider is undertaken.

At the end of each workshop, management information is collected and sent to the ES. This covers the number of people who have taken part in the workshop and the action they have decided to take at the end. This information is used by people in the ES to assess the performance of the provider and the value for money that is being achieved. Participants are issued with review sheets at the end of the workshop and invited to comment on the delivery of the workshop. These provide us with further information about the quality of the workshop.

A schedule of monitoring visits is drawn up for each contract to ensure that workshops are inspected regularly. We will observe workshop sessions and assess whether the provider is delivering the workshop to the appropriate standard and quality. The findings of these visits are discussed with the provider and their leaders and where remedial action is required, the provider will be asked to take the action within a specified time. We will later review to ensure that any problems have been put right.

As part of the Citizens Charter we have established, in the Jobseekers Charter, a suggestions and complaints procedure which enables people to comment on the quality of the service they have received. Providers are contractually obliged to follow the principles of the Jobseekers Charter, which amongst other things, requires them to have posters and leaflets on display so that people who wish to complain or make suggestions may do so easily. The responsibility for answering these lies initially with the provider who is required to reply to the person within seven days.

Should someone who has complained feel that their complaint has not been satisfactorily answered, they can approach our local managers for redress. Where complaints are made to the provider or to the local manager the focus is on setting things right locally. We do not collect statistics centrally but, of course, the contract managers pay close attention to the number and nature of complaints when workshops are re-tendered. In some cases complaints are also made through an MP or directly to the Secretary of State for Employment. We have central statistics on these. Since April 1993, seven people have written to complain about the standard of delivery of the workshop and three have written to say that they felt that the workshop was not helpful to them. I am sure you will agree that as a proportion of the 270,000 people who have taken part, this number of complaints is remarkably low.

I am also encouraged that a number of people who have attended workshops have written to say how useful the workshops have been in their search for work and how positive they found the experience. I am attaching a sample of the comments that have been made about Jobplan.

I hope this is helpful.

What people say about Jobplan

"Very helpful—I was lost and stranded until I attended Jobplan."

"I was dubious about what Jobplan could offer but found the workshop of immense benefit to me—full marks—it was just what I needed."

"The personal interview was the most helpful thing I've had. There are courses I didn't know about and I've applied for one of them."

"I found it to be rewarding and enlightening and would not hesitate to recommend it to anyone seeking work."

"I wish this had been offered to me a year ago."

"It's a lot better than I thought. I'm glad we can make choices for ourselves."

"I was really nervous before I came here, but now I'm glad I was told about it."

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities or *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the following table:

Staff in the Employment Department (ED) Group

Grade	Women staff at 1 April 1993		Ethnic minority staff at 1 April 1993		Registered disabled staff at 1 July 1993	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number G1-G7	Percentage G1-G7
Grade 1	0	0·0	0	0·0	[2]2·0	0·7
Grade 2	1	20·0	0	0·0		
Grade 3	1	4·0	0	0·0		
Grade 4	0	0·0	0	0·0		
Grade 5	22	20·2	0	0·0		
Grade 6	17	12·0	1	0·7		
Grade 7	182	23·7	7	0·9	3·0	0·4
All Staff	42,659	67·2	3,669	[1]6·2	2,020·5	3·4

[1] Figure represents respondents to the ethnic origin survey.
[2] Separate information by grade for registered disabled staff is not available above Grade 7. Registration is voluntary therefore the ED Group employs more disabled people than are counted.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report,* column *861,* what is his assessment of the reasons for the fall in the number of hours worked; and what effect he expects economic recovery to have on this fall.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The fall in total hours worked by manufacturing operatives since 1989 is due to two main factors. First, a short-term, cyclical fall in demand for labour due to the economic recession. Secondly, the longer-term movement of jobs away from manufacturing and into services. The Department does not forecast changes in hours worked.

WALES

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh farmers asked the Agricultural Development Advisory Service for advice in the year *(a)* before and *(b)* after fees were introduced.

Mr. Redwood: This is a matter for the ADAS agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. M. Walsh to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 30 March 1994:

The Minister of State for Wales has asked me to reply to your Question on how many Welsh farmers asked the Agricultural Development Advisory Service for advice in the years *(a)* before and *(b)* after fees were introduced.

Part *(a)* of your question refers to the ADAS financial year 1986-87 (1 April to 31 March). Up to and including this period ADAS did not keep records of how many Welsh farmers asked ADAS for advice.

Part *(b)* of your question refers to the financial year 1987-88 during which ADAS first charged some of the beneficiaries of its services as a result of a policy decision to make ADAS more financially accountable.

Management Information Systems were new and undeveloped at this time and information is therefore limited. I am only able to tell you that out of 13,000 full time farm holdings in Wales (source: 1993 Agricultural Census) ADAS issued approximately 7,000 invoices to Welsh customers.

I would also estimate that there was no significant fall in customers after charging was introduced as our evidence indicates that charging for our consultancy services "added value" in the perception of some of our customers and certainly attracted a new type of farming customer to complement existing customers.

M4

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated cost of *(a)* introducing variable text signs on the M4 in south Wales and *(b)* employing a road manager for the M4.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The cost of upgrading the motorway signed infrastructure to provide variable text signs, as seen on the M25, would be between £8 million and £10 million. On the issue of road management, I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 14 March, *Official Report,* column *526.*

Housing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how his proposals for access to local authority and housing association tenancies will ensure that decisions over housing tenancies will remain under the control of local authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities exercise nomination rights by agreement over elements of the housing association stock. In allocating their own tenancies, councils are expected to take account of relevant legislation and of good practice advice. Similar considerations would apply under the Government's recent proposals for change.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the extent to which rent bonds and guarantees increase in the private housing sector when private sector landlords know that local authorities will be responsible for such payments.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These schemes are run by local authorities. No such indications have been reported to the Welsh Office.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Redwood: The amounts spent by the Welsh Office on official hospitality were:

	£
1990-91	45,419
1991-92	35,982
1992-93	38,382
[1]1993-94	26,375

[1] To 25 March 1994.

The number and cost of individual receptions could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what date he expects all applications for sheep annual premium in the current year to be paid out.

Mr. Redwood: Almost 90 per cent. of claimants for the 1993 sheep annual premium in Wales have received the two advances of payments. The balance of the premium should be paid by June. Most of the unpaid claims await the resolution of queries and some require farm visits. Priority is being given to clearing these cases as quickly as possible.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by county how many applications for payment of sheep annual premium he has received in the current year; and what proportion in each county remained unpaid on 1 March.

Mr. Redwood: The information, which is available only on an administrative area basis, for the week ending 4 March, is as follows:

	Gwynedd/ Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Powys/ Gwent/ Glamorgans*
Application for 1993 premium	5,701	5,101	6,676
Proportion unpaid on 1 March 1993 (per cent.)	9	20	9

Oscar Ceremonies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek from the respective chairmen of *(a)* the Welsh Development Agency, *(b)* the Welsh Tourist Board, *(c)* S4C and *(d)* BBC Wales the number of their respective employees who visited the recent Oscar ceremonies in Los Angeles; what was the cost in each case for the staff visits to Los Angeles; and if the cost will be borne by the Exchequer or in the case of *(d)* be a charge on the television licence.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Such operational matters are for the respective organisations concerned.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a table showing the amount of *(a)* Welsh Office grant and *(b)* self-generated income which financed each TEC in each year since their inception in (i) cash prices and (ii) 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Redwood: The amounts of income received by the seven TECs in Wales for delivering their training and enterprise activities under contract with the Welsh Office together with other income generated for the three years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 are shown in the published audited annual accounts of TECs, copies of which are in the Library of the House. The figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the budget and *(b)* the outturn for each of the TECs for each year since their inception in (i) cash prices and (ii) 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Redwood: Much of the information requested has been provided to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short), in my letter dated 10 February 1994, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House. I will write to the hon. Member in the new financial year when the further information requested is available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many training weeks were undertaken by each of the TECs in each year since their inception; and how many training weeks are expected to be undertaken in the current year.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is in the table. The statistics for 1993-94 refer to planned training weeks, whereas the figures for earlier years are training weeks delivered. Training for work replaced employment training and employment action in April 1993.

Training weeks provided 1991-92 to 1993-94

1991-92

TEC	*Youth Training and Credits*	*Employment Training*	*Employment Action*	*Total*
Gwent	156,778	82,826	2,656	242,260
Mid Glamorgan	193,746	98,734	6,228	298,708
North East Wales	91,426	38,157	145	129,728
Targed	104,581	45,351	0	149,932
Powys	35,798	17,886	107	53,791
South Glamorgan	93,619	63,572	1,302	158,493
West Wales	228,064	139,704	3,861	371,629

1992-93

TEC	*Youth Training and Credits*	*Employment Training*	*Employment Action*	*Total*
Gwent	128,673	107,639	12,338	248,650
Mid Glamorgan	151,215	99,273	25,702	276,190
North East Wales	82,357	36,506	6,185	125,048
Targed	106,611	53,961	12,118	172,690
Powys	35,513	15,077	3,762	54,352

TEC	Youth Training and Credits	Employment Training	Employment Action	Total
South Glamorgan	89,729	61,071	14,910	165,710
West Wales	218,017	146,367	19,181	383,565

1993-94

TEC	Youth Training and Credits	Training for Work	Total
Gwent	160,000	95,000	255,000
Mid Glamorgan	170,040	100,000	270,040
North East Wales	98,240	36,000	134,240
Targed	122,000	54,600	176,600
Powys	35,000	17,000	52,000
South Glamorgan	98,751	65,650	164,401
West Wales	225,122	134,000	359,122

Source:
1991-92 and 1992-93 TEC Management Information Statistics.
1993-94 TEC Plans.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many neighbourhood watch schemes there are in operation in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At 31 December 1993 there were 5,748 neighbourhood watch schemes operational in Wales.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many neighbourhood watch schemes were initiated in each year since 1989.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is included in the table.

	Total schemes	Initiated in-year
1989	2,856	n.a.
1990	3,162	306
1991	3,857	695
1992	4,971	1,114
1993	5,748	777

European Charter on Minority Languages

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the Government will decide whether or not to become a signatory to the European charter on minority languages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Government will make a decision on this matter in due course.

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the projected expenditure for each *(a)* health authority, *(b)* family health services authority and *(c)* national health service trust for 1994-95;

(2) on which date spending levels for 1994-95 were communicated to each *(a)* health authority, *(b)* family health service authority and *(c)* national health service trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend announced the provisional cash allocations for 1994-95 for health authorities and family health services authorities and the provisional external financing limits for NHS trusts on 16 March. Health authorities and family health services authorities will provide information relating to their income and expenditure planning intentions for 1994-95 —indicating how these will be contained within the cash allocations notified—in their final health plans which are due for submission to the Department by 16 April. NHS trusts will similarly provide information relating to their expenditure plans in their final 1994-95 operational plans which are due for submission by 30 April.

Water Pollution

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement concerning the discharges into the Irish sea, Liverpool bay and the Dee estuary from industries and the impact upon beaches and health and safety of local communities of these discharges;

(2) if he will prepare and publish a report on the discharge by dangerous and impure substances into Liverpool bay and the River Dee estuary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Discharges into inland and coastal waters are controlled by the National Rivers Authority under the Water Resources Act 1991 and by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Under this legislation, details of consents and authorisations, and the results of subsequent monitoring, are kept on public registers.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food monitors contaminants in the aquatic environment and the latest results are published in Aquatic Environment Monitoring Reports Nos. 36 and 38.

Waters on the United Kingdom coastline that are popular for bathing come within the scope of the EC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC which sets water quality standards intended for the protection of public health. The water industry is currently undertaking a major investment programme to improve its discharges into coastal waters to ensure that bathing waters consistently meet these standards.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the area of the pre-1974 counties of Anglesey, Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire and the present county of Powys will be included within the boundaries of the counties of the same name proposed in the Local Government (Wales) Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Redwood: All the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The present county of Powys would be wholly included in the new county of that name.

National Health Service Staff

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many qualified NHS nurses and midwives, unqualified NHS nursing staff and nursing learners there were in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993 in *(a)* numbers and *(b)* as a percentage of the total NHS nursing and midwifery staff.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the table.

Nursing and midwifery staff in post (whole-time equivalents) as at 30 September[1]

	Qualified		*Unqualified*[2]		*Learners*[3]	
	Number	*Percentage of total*	*Number*	*Percentage of total*	*Number*	*Percentage of total*
1989	17,850	63·7	7,069	25·2	3,118	11·1
1990	17,986	64·0	7,031	25·0	3,075	10·9
1991	18,010	64·4	7,019	25·1	2,934	10·5
1992[4]	18,096	66·0	7,355	26·8	1,970	7·2
1993[5]	17,912	68·3	7,220	27·5	1,033	3·9

[1]Includes staff employed by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority.
[2]Staff paid as grade A, B or nursery staff.
[3]Since the autumn of 1991 student nurses have been reclassified as students and are no longer included in the NHS staff figures. Staff included here are students finishing courses begun before this date. However at 1 October 1993 there were about 1,900 Project 2000 nursing students in Wales.
[4]Excludes staff paid on local payscales whose staff group cannot be identified centrally.
[5]In addition there are 72 whole-time equivalent nursing staff for whom no grade details are known centrally. The percentage shown do not, therefore, add to 100 for 1993.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation and with Balfour Beatty Costain Construction consortium in relation to the start date of the barrage construction contract and the complaints by the environment directorate of the European Union, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the World Wide Fund for Nature regarding the Cardiff bay barrage and the Cardiff bay site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Redwood: I have had no such discussions with Balfour Beatty Costain. The chairman of the development corporation has been kept fully informed of the position regarding the complaint to the European Commission.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial controls he proposes should apply to councils during the suspension of compulsory competitive tendering because of local government reorganisation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The suspension of compulsory competitive tendering does not affect the duty for councils to achieve a specified rate of return under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, or my right hon. Friend's powers to take action in cases of failure to achieve the rate of return.

The suspension of CCT means that, for principal councils in Wales, there would be no requirement to achieve a specified financial objective, or any sanctions in case of failure, for work which is currently a "defined activity" for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1988.

The Government propose to bring forward an amendment to the Local Government (Wales) Bill to provide that, notwithstanding the suspension of CCT, authorities should continue to be under a duty:

—to keep accounts for this work;
—to submit returns to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State; and
—to achieve a specified financial objective.

The amendment would also give my right hon. Friend the power to act in the event of failure to achieve the specified financial objective. The obligations and powers sought would have retrospective effect, from 1 April 1994, but would not differ from those which currently apply.

Local authorities will be informed of the detail of the Government's proposal.

Health Authorities (Restructuring)

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will publish his proposals to restructure health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I have today written to Welsh Members enclosing a copy of a consultation paper which I have published, setting out a range of proposals, including my preferred option. I have also arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. Comments on the proposals have been invited from a wide range of interested bodies.

Ancient Monuments Board

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the next report of the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The 39th annual report of the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales has been published today. The report covers the financial year 1992-93 and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

SCOTLAND

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Lang: This information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Lang: There is no set list of organisations or individuals that are consulted about appointments to bodies which are sponsored by my Department, although there may be specific legislative requirements regarding consultation in relation to appointments to a particular body.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Mr. Lang: Appointments are made on the basis of aptitude and merit. No central record is kept of the political affiliation of those appointed to public bodies.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Lang: There are no formal procedures. Given the qualities required of the holders of such posts however it is in practice unlikely that an individual with extreme political views would be appointed where his or her views would be relevant to the responsibilities of the post.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Lang: The Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies" lists those public bodies sponsored by my Department at 1 April each year and indicates the number of appointments which I make to each body at 1 September. This publication also shows the level of remuneration, if any. Copies of the latest edition of this publication are available in the Library of the House. Information about the current appointees to these bodies is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take action to prevent national health service trusts reducing the take-home pay of their work forces.

Mr. Stewart: Trusts are free to negotiate terms and conditions with their employees. Take-home pay of the staff of an NHS trust is a matter between the staff concerned and the trust as an employer.

Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the specific skills being learnt by people on Government training schemes for young people or the unemployed; and what assessment his Department has made of the extent to which these meet Scotland's training needs.

Mr. Stewart: Information about the specific skills being learnt by people on Government training schemes for young people or the unemployed is not available. It is the responsibility of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to deliver, through their respective networks of local enterprise companies, Government training schemes, with the aim of providing young people and unemployed adults with the skills, vocational qualifications and work experience to meet the needs of local labour markets.

Schools (Opting Out)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many current applications he has before him from schools seeking to opt out of local authority control.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One, namely the application from St. Mary's episcopal primary school, Dunblane, on which additional information from the St. Mary's school board has been requested in order that its application can be further considered.

Royal Scottish National Hospital

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what assessment he made of the financial viability of the Royal Scottish national hospital management application for trust status before giving it approval;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of a detailed statement of the financial accounts of the Royal Scottish national hospital trust since its inception;

(3) if he will conduct a thorough investigation into the finances of the Royal Scottish national hospital before deciding on the application for merger with Forth Valley Healthcare;

(4) if he will arrange for an independent inquiry into the finances of the Royal Scottish national hospital trust.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* A thorough assessment of the finances of the Royal Scottish national NHS trust involving financial consultants was made during the public consultation period on the hospital's trust application. Trust status would not have been granted if the hospital had been considered not to be financially viable. The trust is required to make monthly financial monitoring returns to the management executive and these show that the trust is on course to meet its year end financial targets for the first year of its operation. The trust must also produce an annual report including accounts in respect of its first year of operation by September 1994. This is a public document which will be obtainable from the trust.

In order to inform my noble and learned Friend's decision on the merger application, a thorough assessment of the finances of the Royal Scottish national hospital and Forth Valley Healthcare will be conducted by independent financial consultants in conjunction with the management executive. There are no reasons for any further investigation or independent inquiry.

Trade Descriptions

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been in the past 10 years under section 14 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 for knowingly or recklessly making a false statement about the provision of business; and what was the penalty in each case of guilt being established.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The information requested is not separately identifiable within the Scottish Home Office and Health Department's classification of crimes and offences.

Hospital Staff

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the numbers of nurses, doctors, administrative staff, senior managers and domestic staff employed in each hospital *(a)* at the nearest available date and *(b)* three years ago.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not collected as part of the workforce data set submitted centrally by the NHS in Scotland. Limited statistics are available in section 2A of "Scottish Health Service Costs" for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93, copies of which are held in the House of Commons Library. Data for earlier years are not published in SHSC in the exact form required.

Coastal Quarries

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the national planning guidelines on coastal quarries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend intends to publish a national planning policy guideline on land for mineral working as soon as possible. This will include guidance on coastal quarries.

Patients Charter

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to extend patients charter maximum waiting times guarantees to include the waiting time for the first out-patient appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* Maximum waiting times guarantees covering the time from GP referral to first out-patient appointment were introduced in Scotland in April 1993.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps the Greater Glasgow health board took to satisfy itself that Executive Healthcare was not dependent on financial support from related companies before allocating contracts to the company;

(2) if he will investigate the time taken for Greater Glasgow health board's evaluation of tenders for contracts at Glasgow royal infirmary and Glasgow royal maternity hospitals;

(3) what steps the Greater Glasgow health board has taken to satisfy itself about the past history of Executive Healthcare and its parent company or any associated companies.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the replies which I gave her on 29 March, *Official Report,* column 715.

Executive Health Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will carry out a study of the pay and conditions of the staff employed on contracts currently held by Executive Healthcare at Carstairs in comparison with their previous employment.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* No. Pay and conditions of service are matters entirely between Executive Healthcare and its employees.

Family Mediation and Conciliation Services

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to give financial support to family mediation and conciliation services in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement on his office's attitude to such services.

Mr. Stewart: Family Mediation Scotland will receive a grant of over £56,000 in 1994-95 as part of a three-year award under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. In addition, four local services—Borders, Central, Tayside and Western Isles—will receive grant in 1994-95 as part of three-year awards. The precise amounts are still being worked out with the organisations concerned.

We have received letters of support for the mediation services from throughout Scotland and the award of grants is an indication of how we value their worthwhile work of mediation.

Child Care Law

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce legislation relating to child care law and policy in the present parliamentary session.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to promote legislation this Session beyond that already indicated in the Queen's Speech.

Adoption

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what future arrangements he plans for adoption agencies and prospective adopters; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what specific proposals he has to ensure that adoption services are part of the full range of child care services which will require to be provided by each of the new local authorities;

(3) what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the arrangements for adoption following local government re-organisation; what co-ordination there will be; who will provide funding; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what arrangements he intends making to ensure that children have the opportunity of adoption in each of the new local authority areas.

Mr. Stewart: Adoption is, and will continue to be, an important part of the range of services available for the care of children. Adoption law has been subject to extensive review and consultation in Scotland over the last few years and we propose to publish a policy statement shortly.

Reorganisation of local government will clearly involve some restructuring of services and every care will be taken to ensure that services available now will be maintained, including those provided by adoption agencies. The strategic child care plans which are to be developed from the proposals in the White Paper "Scotland's Children" are of direct relevance in this context. Scottish Office officials have had preliminary discussions about reorganisation with the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering which are grant aided by the Government and which have an important national role to play in the development of adoption services.

Record Office

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the targets he expects the Scottish Record Office to achieve in 1994-95.

Mr. Lang: I have set the Scottish Record Office the following key targets for 1994-95:

to reduce the unit cost of preserving and making available the records of Scotland by 7 per cent. (omitting the start up costs of the new repository building);

to increase the number of catalogue entries available for public scrutiny on the electronic system from 116,000 in 1993-94 to 119,000;

to maintain the standards of reader services;

material in some building produced for readers in 30 minutes or less in 90 per cent. of cases;

90 per cent. of photocopying for legal customers produced in 24 hours;

95 per cent. of correspondence dealt with in 10 days;

while absorbing an expected 2 per cent. increase in demand; and

to complete and occupy the new repository building within budget by 31 March 1995.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many Forestry Commission woods have been sold off since 1981; and in how many of those sold all prior public access have been preserved.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* Between July 1981 and 31 December 1993 the Forestry Commission sold over 2,000 individual areas of forestry land.

Access along public rights of way is not, of course, affected by a change of ownership and so any rights of way through these woodlands are still freely available. In addition, the commission offers to make access agreements with local authorities before woodlands are sold; these agreements ensure that full public access is maintained.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his latest estimates of the transition cost of local government reform.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* The transitional cost of reorganisation of local government is estimated at between £120 million and £194 million for a 30-council structure.

Purchasing Health Boards

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each purchasing health board in Scotland, the figures for revenue funding in 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95, and the estimated figures for 1995-96 and 1996-97; and if he will identify the changes for each health board's revenue budget resulting from the replacement of the resource allocation working party system of determining funding allocation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 March 1994]:* Revenue funding is as follows:

Health Board	*1992-93 £ million*	*1993-94 £ million*	*1994-95 £ million*
Argyll and Clyde	220,019	231,224	242,301
Ayrshire and Arran	172,159	183,530	193,226
Borders	54,717	58,374	62,855
Dumfries and Galloway	78,616	81,524	86,965
Fife	158,314	171,020	178,766
Forth Valley	127,242	138,154	142,756
Grampian	254,470	271,938	277,805
Greater Glasgow	562,296	586,662	577,370
Highland	108,666	112,182	120,336
Lanarkshire	239,761	258,272	262,876
Lothian	405,413	405,131	418,193
Orkney	11,209	12,525	12,731
Shetland	12,898	14,494	14,789
Tayside	241,455	242,979	243,375
Western Isles	20,929	23,012	25,525

(Note:

1. The allocations for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are exclusive of the provision for AIDS, artifical limbs and appliance centres and breast cancer screening services which are now funded as national services.
2. The 1994-95 allocation excludes funding for doctors in training, which is now funded through the Scottish Council for Post-graduate Medical and Dental Education, and includes funding for ambulance services which were previously funded through the Common Services Agency.
3. Initial allocations for 1994-95 are shown. Further allocations will be distributed to Health Boards later in the year for a number of specific services.)

Estimated figures for 1995-96 and 1996-97 are not available.

Details of allocations based on the resource allocation working party system are not available. It is not therefore possible to identify the changes to Health Board Revenue budgets resulting from the replacement of the system of determining funding allocation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Policing Structures

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will issue his consultation document on policing structures.

Sir John Wheeler: I am today issuing a paper entitled "Policing in the Community" which examines policing structures in the light of the considerable changes which have occurred in the Province since the present system was established a quarter of a century ago.

The existing structures have stood under the most difficult circumstances, but it is now time to examine the best means of further improving the effectiveness of the police service, while ensuring that it is properly accountable to the whole community. The paper proposes

a strengthened framework for policing in Northern Ireland, by clarifying responsibilities and lines of accountability between the Secretary of State, the Police Authority and the Chief Constable. I believe that these changes will secure substantial improvements in the effectiveness and responsiveness of the arrangements for policing in Northern Ireland.

I have invited comments on the paper by 31 May 1994.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Sir John Wheeler: At 1 January 1993, there were 12,989 female staff in Northern Ireland civil service, which is 43 per cent. of the service. There were 1,282 staff—4·3 per cent. of the service—who self-reported a disability and, of these, 463—1·5 per cent. of the service—were, or had been, registered as disabled. The Northern Ireland civil service does not monitor the ethnic origin of its staff.

The number and percentage of female staff and staff with disabilities in each grade—1 to 7—was:

Grade	Number of Females	Per cent. Females	Number who self-reported a disability (SED)	Per cent. SRD	Number registered as disabled (RD)	Per cent. RD
1	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	1	2·5	1	2·5	1	2·5
4	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	13	7·5	8	4·0	—	—
6	61	17·3	11	3·1	3	0·9
7	100	11·4	20	2·3	3	0·3

In addition, 77 civil registered disabled people are currently working in the Northern Ireland civil service under the sheltered placement scheme.

At 1 March 1994 there were 108 female staff in the Northern Ireland Office, HCS, which represents 52 per cent. of the Department. The number in grades 1 to 7 was as follows:

Percentage of Women in Grades 1 to 7

Grade	Number	Percentage
1	0	—
2	0	—
3	0	—
4	0	—
5	0	—
6	0	—
7	5	20

Some 16 per cent. of the Department are from the ethnic minorities, London only, and none of the staff are registered disabled.

Institute of Irish Studies

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the hon. Members who have written to him asking for the funding of a chair at the institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have received only one such letter on this subject, from the hon. Gentleman himself. I hope to be in a position to reply to that letter very shortly.

Fisheries Policy

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last discussed fisheries policy with *(a)* the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* the Scottish Office; and if he will make a statement about co-operation on fisheries policy with both the Republic and Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The last occasion on which fisheries policy was discussed with the Republic of Ireland by Northern Ireland Office Ministers was at the Anglo-Irish conference held in Dublin on 28 January 1994 when inland fisheries was the economic and social item on the agenda. United Kingdom sea fisheries policy is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the last occasion when all EC Fisheries Ministers met was at the 20 to 21 December Fisheries Council when the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food led the United Kingdom delegation on behalf of the whole of the United Kingdom including Northern Ireland. The next meeting of the Council will be on 12 April. Officials of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland are in constant dialogue with their colleagues in the other United Kingdom Fisheries Departments including the Scottish Office and as necessary with the Department of the Marine in Dublin. My noble Friend, Baroness Denton, has as recently as 23 March written to United Kingdom colleagues about aspects of fishery policy as they affect the Northern Ireland industry.

University Students

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Northern Ireland students are receiving university education in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: In 1992-93, the latest year for which information is available, the numbers of Northern Ireland students receiving university education were 2,401 in Scotland and 761 in the Republic of Ireland.

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for attracting private sector finance into the water and sewerage capital works programme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The purpose of the Government's private finance initiative is to encourage the involvement of the private sector in the provision of high quality, good value public services. As such it offers real benefits to the public by promoting efficiency and improving services by harnessing the private sector's expertise. As part of the initiative, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has appointed Price Waterhouse to carry out a study into the scope for attracting private sector finance to the Department's water and sewerage construction and improvement programme. The study, which is expected to take three months to complete, will begin in early April 1994. The consultants have been asked to advise on the most appropriate mechanisms for securing and utilising

private finance, to identify schemes where private finance could play a part and to identify the detailed requirements for taking forward any particular projects.

Mr. Thomas Francis Doheny

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the basis of the prosecution against Mr. Thomas Francis Doheny in March 1993; on what basis his home was raided by police officers acting on a warrant granted to the Royal Ulster Constabulary; what was the source of authorisation for the issue of warrants against him *(a)* in Ulster and *(b)* in the United Kingdom; and who gave backing for the warrant for execution in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* A warrant was sought and issued for Mr. Doheny's arrest based on a complaint about the theft of a vehicle. This warrant was duly executed in England by virtue of section 38 of the Criminal Law Act 1977.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the investigation into the case of Mr. Thomas Francis Doheny referred to in the letter of 9 March from the Northern Ireland Office to Mr. M. O'Brien of the Committee on the Administration of Justice to be completed; if the report of the investigation of the case will be made available on publication; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The investigation of Mr. Doheny's case has been completed and a file is currently with the Director of Public Prosecutions. Reports of such investigations are not published.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his customary practice for Northern Ireland in suspending the issue of warrants for imprisonment upon convicted persons for a number of hours following such convictions; what is the purpose of such delays in issue; what is the frequency of instances where the issue of warrants upon convicted persons is delayed; and if he will make a statement on the operation of those principles in the case of Mr. Thomas Francis Doheny, convicted in the petty sessions district of Omagh on 12 March 1993.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The decision to delay the issue of a warrant in any particular case is a matter within the discretion of the resident magistrate and it would not therefore be appropriate for me to comment. The frequency of instances where such delays are applied is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor to answer. However, I understand that the information is not available in the form requested and to extract it would incur disproportionate cost.

Terrorism

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a table showing the number of cases dealt with by *(a)* magistrates courts *(b)* trial by jury and *(c)* judges sitting alone under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in each year since 1983; and how many and what percentage in each category were recorded as (i) guilty pleas, (ii) convictions after not guilty plea and (iii) acquittal.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The following tables provide, for each available year, information on the number of defendants dealt with *(a)* by magistrates' courts, and *(b)* by the Crown court. Information is provided on the numbers and percentages of guilty pleas recorded, convictions following not guilty pleas and acquittals. The 1993 figures are not yet available for publication.

Crown court figures have been divided into scheduled and non-scheduled business according to schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.

Subject to the approval of the Director of Public Prosecutions, some scheduled offences can be tried at magistrates' courts. These tend to be of a less serious nature and are included within the figures for all offences dealt with at magistrates' courts. They could be identified separately only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1

Magistrates' courts	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Findings (indictable and summary)	16,428	15,613	16,667	16,313	16,931	16,210	14,662	14,315	13,696	13,327
Guilty pleas	13,598	12,945	13,881	13,886	14,031	14,471	12,340	11,927	11,491	10,872
Percentage	83	83	83	85	83	83	84	83	84	82
Conviction after not guilty plea	1,302	1,397	1,203	773	876	821	461	430	470	665
Percentage	8	9	7	5	5	5	3	3	3	5
Acquittals	1,528	1,271	1,583	1,654	2,024	1,918	1,861	1,958	1,735	1,790
Percentage	9	8	9	10	12	12	13	14	13	13

Table 2

Crown Court: scheduled offences	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Findings (Indictable and Summary)	638	507	698	596	713	515	456	470	423	413
Guilty Pleas	464	426	552	528	634	442	373	386	343	301
Per cent.	73	84	79	89	89	86	82	82	81	73
Conviction after not guilty plea	113	38	73	39	46	45	41	54	45	53
Per cent.	18	7	10	7	6	9	9	11	11	13
Acquittals	61	43	73	29	33	28	42	30	35	59
Per cent.	10	8	10	5	5	5	9	6	8	14

Table 3

Crown Court: Non-scheduled offences	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Findings (indictable and summary)	1,231	1,121	1,333	1,263	1,210	971	911	952	919	891
Guilty pleas	1,055	926	1,090	1,101	1,056	783	767	716	717	673
Percentage	86	83	82	87	87	81	84	75	78	76
Conviction after not guilty plea	84	99	115	78	79	97	53	100	104	108
Percentage	7	9	9	6	7	10	6	11	11	12
Acquittals	92	96	128	84	75	91	91	126	98	110
Percentage	7	9	10	7	6	9	10	14	11	12

Notes:
1. Some scheduled offences may be heard at the Magistrates' courts and do not appear in Table 2.
2. Cases tried before jury and tried before judges sitting alone equate to non-scheduled and scheduled cases heard in the Crown court respectively.
3. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Public Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Mr. Howard: Where appointments are made to posts for which security clearance is necessary, the normal procedures set out in the then Prime Minister's statement of 24 July 1990 will apply. As the Prime Minister announced on 23 March, these procedures are currently under review.

Chairmen and deputy chairmen of public boards and other full-time members of boards are expected to show a degree of detachment from political activities. Rules for the guidance of members of public boards are listed in annex 7A of the "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Howard: Details of principal appointments for which I have overall responsibility are as follows:

Chairman of Alcohol Education and Research Council
- *(a)* Mr. Charles Wardle MP
- *(b)* Expenses only
- *(c)* 3 years, extendable to 6 years
- *(d)* Vacant

Chairman of panel of advisers on deportations made at my personal direction under section 3(5)*(b)* of the Immigration Act 1971.
- *(a)* Mr. Charles Wardle MP
- *(b)* Expenses only
- *(c)* 3 years
- *(d)* Lord Lloyd of Berwick

Chairman of Criminal Justice Consultative Council
- *(a)* Mr. David Maclean MP
- *(b)* No remuneration
- *(c)* 3 years
- *(d)* Lord Justice Rose

Chairman of Horse Race Betting Levy Board
- *(a)* The Right Hon. Peter Lloyd MP
- *(b)* £40,000
- *(c)* 2-3 years renewable
- *(d)* Sir John Sparrow

Chairman of Horse Race Totalisator Board
- *(a)* The right hon. Peter Lloyd MP
- *(b)* £95,000
- *(c)* 2 years
- *(d)* Lord Wyatt of Weeford

Chairman of Health Advisory Committee to the Prison Service
- *(a)* The Right Hon. Peter Lloyd MP
- *(b)* £10,560
- *(c)* 3 years
- *(d)* Sir Donald Acheson

Chairman of Parole Board for England and Wales
- *(a)* The Right Hon. Peter Lloyd MP
- *(b)* £45,060
- *(c)* 5 years
- *(d)* Lord Belstead

Chairman of Animal Procedures Committee
- *(a)* Mr. Charles Wardle MP
- *(b)* £155 per day
- *(c)* 4 years
- *(d)* Professor Margaret Brazier

Civil Emergencies Adviser
- *(a)* The Right Hon. The Earl Ferrers
- *(b)* £27,600 (3 days per week)
- *(c)* 3 years, extendable to 5 years
- *(d)* Mr. David Bawtree

Chairman of Police Discipline Appeals Tribunal
- *(a)* The Right Hon. The Earl Ferrers
- *(b)* £306 per day plus expenses
- *(c)* Appointments are made for an indefinite period
- *(d)* Chairmanship taken on an ad hoc basis

Chair of Advisory Board on Restricted Patients
- *(a)* Mr. David Maclean MP
- *(b)* Expenses only
- *(c)* 3 years
- *(d)* Judge Valerie Pearlman

Chairman of Appeals Panel to Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority
- *(a)* Mr. David Maclean MP
- *(b)* £15,675
- *(c)* 2 years
- *(d)* Mr. Michael Lewer QC (as from 1 April)

Chairman of Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
- *(a)* Mr. David Maclean MP
- *(b)* £32,420

(c) 5 years
(d) The Rt. Hon. Lord Carlisle of Bucklow QC

Chairman of Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
(a) Mr. David Maclean MP
(b) Expenses only
(c) 3 years
(d) Professor David Grahame-Smith CBE MB BS MRCS LRCP PhD FRCP

Chairman of Misuse of Drugs Professional Panel
(a) Mr. David Maclean MP
(b) £179·46 per hearing
(c) Appointments made for each hearing only

Chairman of Advisory Committee on Service Candidates
(a) The Rt. Hon. Peter Lloyd MP
(b) No remuneration
(c) Appointments made for an indefinite period
(d) Vacant

Chairman of Gaming Board for Great Britain
(a) The Rt. Hon. Peter Lloyd MP
(b) £31,450
(c) 3 years
(d) Lady Littler

Person appointed to review the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.
(a) The Right Hon. The Earl Ferrers
(b) Salary, civil service grade 4 daily rate
(c) 3 years
(d) Mr. J. J. Rowe, QC

Chairman of Police Promotions Examinations Board
(a) The Right Hon. The Earl Ferrers
(b) Expenses only
(c) 3 years
(d) Professor John Andrews, MA, BCL (Oxon)

Chairman of Firearms Consultative Committee
(a) The Right Hon. The Earl Ferrers
(b) Expenses only
(c) 5 years from 1989
(d) Lord Kimball

Chairman of Retail Action Group for Crime Prevention
(a) Mr. Charles Wardle, MP
(b) None
(c) 2 years, renewable
(d) Mr. Keith Ackroyd

Chairman of Vehicle Crime Prevention Group
(a) Mr. Charles Wardle, MP
(b) No remuneration
(c) 2 years, renewable
(d) Mr. Peter Batchelor

Chairman of Fire Service Research and Training Trust
(a) Mr. Charles Wardle
(b) Expenses only
(c) Appointments made for an indefinite period
(d) Mr. R. Shuffrey

Chief Executive of Commission for Racial Equality
(a) The Right Hon. Peter Lloyd, MP
(b) £70,000
(c) 5 years
(d) Mr. Herman Ouseley

Chair of the Immigration and Nationality Department Complaints Audit Committee
(a) Mr. Charles Wardle, MP
(b) £203·12 per day plus expenses
(c) 3 years
(d) Mrs. Diana Rookledge

Chief Executive of Community Development Foundation
(a) The Right Hon. Peter Lloyd, MP
(b) No remuneration
(c) 3 years
(d) Mr. Alan Haselhurst, MP

Chairman of National Lottery Charities Board
(a) The Right Hon. Peter Lloyd, MP
(b) Salary, civil service grade 3 pro rata (2-2½ days per week)
(c) Term of appointment not more than five years
(d) Vacant

Information about other appointments, including chairmen of boards of visitors and local review committees, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Howard: As at 1 September 1993, of 1,875 appointments to Home Office non-departmental public bodies where the ethnic origin of the appointee was known, 4·2 per cent. of appointees were Asian and 3·6 were black. An undertaking was given when the information was collected that individuals would not be identified.

South Yorkshire Police

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were available in *(a)* the South Yorkshire police authority area and *(b)* by each division for beat duties in 1993; what are the projected figures for the current year; and what are the comparable figures for those allocated to desk duties.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At the end of 1993, 1,694 officers were deployed to beat duties in the South Yorkshire police area as a whole. Information is not held centrally on deployments at divisional level, or on projected deployments. Data held on other police activities do not distinguish the proportion allocated to desk duties.

Schizophrenia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to ensure that severely disturbed victims of schizophrenia in need of treatment are not kept in police cells in lieu of psychiatric care.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The codes of practice issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 require police custody officers immediately to call the police surgeon to examine a person in their custody who appears to be suffering from a mental disorder. Persons who are detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 for their own protection or for that of others should be assessed as soon as possible by a psychiatrist and an approved social worker to ensure that they receive any necessary care and treatment. Under section 136 the police are empowered to remove persons to a place of safety, which the Government recommend should be a hospital rather than a police station, with a view to providing appropriate facilities for the care of the mentally disordered.

Mr. Horam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the funding for the course on mental illness run for police officers by the National Schizophrenic Fellowship; and what plans he has for improving the training in mental illness available to police officers generally.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that the Association of Chief Police Officers is currently in touch with the National Schizophrenic Fellowship and is looking at ways of funding a national training video. The Home Office intends to issue further guidance shortly to those working in the criminal justice system generally about dealing with cases involving mentally disordered persons. In particular, chief officers of police will be asked to examine existing force policy and practice, including current training provision.

Blakenhurst Prison

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners rioted at Blakenhurst prison, Birmingham, on or around 24 February: why it was necessary to call in the Prison Officers Association to rescue the situation; and how many other riots or disturbances have occurred at privately run prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Michael Meacher, dated 30 March 1994:

HM PRISON BLAKENHURST

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the incident at Blakenhurst prison on 24 February.

A total of 111 prisoners was in the particular houseblock where the incident occurred, but not all were actively involved in the subsequent events.

No member of the Prison Officers Association was called or required to attend the incident, other than any Blakenhurst staff who may be members of the Association. Sixty-one prisoners were transferred temporarily to other prisons establishments. This is normal practice in such an event and Blakenhurst, as an integral part of the Prison Service, has received prisoners from other establishments when they have experienced difficulties.

You also requested information on disturbances at the contracted out prisons. Details of incidents, including acts of concerted indiscipline, at Wolds between the opening of the prison and 29 June 1993 have already been provided to Parliament (Official Report: 26 July 1993, column WA 75-79). Since that time there have been three instances of concerted indiscipline, making a total of 28 incidents in all. There have been a total of seven acts of concerted indiscipline at Blakenhurst since its opening.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Prison Service is to withhold any part of the payment to United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. in respect of the contract to manage Blakenhurst prison; how much money is to be withheld; and for what reason.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 30 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Blakenhurst prison.

It is intended to take an appropriate financial remedy under the terms of the contract in relation to the incident on 24 February. The amount has not yet been finally settled.

Brian Charrington

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what part will be played by his Department in the investigation by Thames Valley police into the conduct of the Brian Charrington case by Cleveland police force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Vehicles (North Yorkshire Police)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vehicles leased to the north Yorkshire police are currently mothballed; why these vehicles are not being used to police the county; from whom the vehicles are leased; how much it has cost to replace the mothballed vehicles with other vehicles; how much it would have cost under the terms of the leasing agreement to keep on using the leased vehicles; and whether he intends to issue advice to chief constables about the terms for leasing vehicles.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The procurement and use of police vehicles is a matter for chief officers of police and their police authorities.

Guidance notes providing advice on vehicle fleet management, including leasing arrangements, have been issued by the Treasury's central unit on procurement. Copies of the relevant notes—Nos. 24a to 24e and 37—are available in the Library.

Youths (Reoffending)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the reoffending rates for the various different forms of treatment of convicted youths up to the age of 18 years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the reoffending rates for youths sentenced to periods of detention in *(a)* prisons and *(b)* other forms of detention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is for reconvictions within two and four years of commencement of probation or community service orders and within two and four years of discharge from Prison Service establishments. Reconviction statistics relate to "standard list" offences as defined in appendix 4 of "Criminal Statistics England and Wales, 1992", Cm 2410. Estimates of reconviction rates are shown in the table for samples of males aged 17 or under when they commenced supervision under the probation service in 1987 and for a sample of males discharged from Prison Service establishments in 1987 aged 17 or under on sentence.

Asylum Seekers (Sudan)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider his decision to return unsuccessful asylum seekers to Sudan; and what account he has taken of the human rights situation in that country.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Circumstances in both northern and southern Sudan, including the human rights situation, are kept under continual review, but we see no reason at present to change our practice on returning unsuccessful asylum seekers to Sudan.

Young Offenders (Employment)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of young offenders finds gainful employment upon release from *(a)* prison and *(b)* other custodial sentences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Police Officers (Assaults)

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults upon police officers are recorded in each of the years 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1993 in total and by constabulary using *(a)* automatic weapons, *(b)* knives or *(c)* other weapons.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not collected centrally.

Civilian Hours

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hours per week are worked by civilians in functions which were previously police jobs *(a)* in total and *(b)* per person.

Mr. Charles Wardle: These figures are not kept centrally and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Transferred Police Functions

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what functions formerly performed by the police service have been transferred to *(a)* traffic wardens and *(b)* civilians since 1980.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The powers of traffic wardens to carry out certain police functions in relation to traffic offences are set out in the Functions of Traffic Wardens Order 1970. This was amended on 1 June 1993 to enable wardens to authorise the clamping or removal of illegally parked vehicles and to empower them to deal with endorsable parking offences.

No police functions have been formally transferred to civilian staff. It is the responsibility of chief officers to allocate staff to suitable posts.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what jobs are currently performed by civilians which previously were police functions.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The specific information sought is not held centrally. However, a number of areas have been identified in which civilian staff could provide support services to police officers and these are listed. It is, of course, for chief officers to decide how best to organise their staff.

Aliens Registration
Buildings Maintenance
Catering
Closed Circuit Television/Audiovisual services
CID Support
Communications
Computers
Coroner
Court Liaison
Court Security
Criminal Records Office
Dogs
Drivers
Equal Opportunities
Finance
Fingerprints/Photos
Firearms and Explosives
Fixed Penalties
Gaoler
HOLMES Unit
Juvenile Liaison
Licensing
Marine
Mounted Horses
Personnel
Plan Drawing
Property
Prosecutions (Administrative Support Units)
Protection Administration
Research/Planning/Analysis
Scenes of Crimes Officers
Special Branch Administration
Statistics
Stores and Suppliers
Traffic Support
Traffic Warden Administration
Underwater
Vehicle Fleet Management
Warrants
Welfare
Other Administration/Clerical

Slopping-out

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each prison in England where slopping-out is still in practice; and if he will state his plans and estimated date for ending slopping-out for each prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 March 1994:

ACCESS TO SANITATION

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the Prison Service's programme to end slopping-out.

Only 27 of 131 establishments are without 100 per cent. access to sanitation throughout 24 hours but, as you will note from the following table, in many cases this involves small numbers of cells. The dates in the table are the dates on which we currently plan to take the last of these cells at each establishment out of use for the installation of sanitation, at which point slopping-out will end at those establishments. Population changes and other operational factors may require adjustments to some of those dates, which are kept under regular review.

The Prison Service continues to give very high priority to completing the sanitation programme as planned. Ninety per cent. of prisoners now have 24 hour access to sanitation and this should increase to over 95 per cent. by December 1994. We aim to achieve 100 per cent. access nationally by February 1996.

Prison establishments without 100 per cent. 24 hour access to sanitation

Establishment	*Number of cells*	*Planned end date*
Aylesbury A, B and C wings	210	3/95
Birmingham hospital	18	7/94
Brixton G wing	173	10/95
Brockhill C, D and F wings	72	10/94
Bristol B wing	102	7/94
Chelmsford D wing	33	6/94
Dartmoor C and E wings	167	2/96
Durham A, C and B (North) wings	202	9/94

Establishment	Number of cells	Planned end date
Erlestoke Wessex wing	60	6/94
Everthorpe Seg unit	10	11/94
Exeter C wing and hospital	97	6/94
Grendon G and H wings	28	6/94
Hindley A nd B wings	124	1/95
Hollesley Bay Seg unit	11	5/94
Leeds A, C and D wings	508	2/96
Lewes C and G wings	130	1/95
Liverpool A, H and K wings	347	2/96
Long Lartin D wing	77	8/94
Moorland hospital	7	5/95
Norwich hospital	15	4/94
Parkhurst M wing	40	2/96
Pentonville A wing	153	3/95
Preston A, C and D wings	346	2/96
Standford Hill Seg unit	4	4/94
Wandsworth A, B wings and hospital	288	2/96
Winchester B wing	108	8/94
Wormwood Scrubs A and B wings	333	9/94

Competitive Bids

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the total money spent, *(b)* the percentage of that money allocated according to decisions made by Ministers on competitive bids and *(c)* the percentage of that money allocated according to some statistical measure of need in the last available operational year of (i) safer cities, (ii) section 11 grants, (iii) ethnic minority business initiative and (iv) ethnic minority grant.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: *Safer Cities* estimated out-turn for 1993-94 is £6 million. I am unable to give precise figures until the tendering process for the second phase of safer cities projects is complete. All safer cities projects have been chosen having regard to statistical data on crime rates.

Section 11, Ethnic Minority Business Initiative, Ethnic Minority Grant: In the 1992-93 financial year, £129 million was spent under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, £4 million under ethnic minority grant and £0·4 million under the ethnic minority business initiative. In all instances, grant is allocated to projects approved for funding strictly on the basis of the assessment of particular need identified in an application, and of the objectives and targets set out for addressing that need.

Hospital Visits

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hospital visits have been allowed to prisoners from *(a)* Durham, *(b)* Frankland and *(c)* Low Newton Prisons, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Jerry Steinberg, dated 30 March 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your Question seeking information about hospital visits by prisoners from Durham, Frankland and Low Newton since 1979.

Central statistical information about health care services is available only from 1985. The available information is as follows:

Year	Durham Male	Durham Female	Frankland	Low Newton Male	Low Newton Female
[1]1985	252	22	114	98	18
[2]1985	40	5	12	5	5
[1]1986	312	19	98	109	26
[2]1986	45	8	19	5	5
[1]1987	365	29	54	95	28
[2]1987	55	5	17	5	4
[1]1988	382	20	61	72	23
[2]1988	42	1	15	3	5
[1]1989	388	18	86	[3]—	[3]—
[2]1989	37	2	16	[3]—	[3]—
[1]1990	383	[3]—	124	68	33
[2]1990	51	[3]—	16	6	4
[1]1991	423	20	144	109	30
[2]1991	57	3	23	8	7
[1]1992	240	6	145	122	41
[2]1992	34	2	9	11	6

[1] Number of occasions on which prisoners attended outpatient facilities.
[2] Number of occasions on which prisoners were transferred to national health service hospitals.
[3] Information not available.

Firefighters

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firefighters have been *(a)* injured and *(b)* killed in London in the line of duty in each year since 1980.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the following table.

Number of London fire brigade firefighters seriously injured[1] or killed in the line of duty, 1980-92

	Fatalities	Serious injuries
1980	1	154
1981	2	147
1982	—	141
1983	1	184
1984	1	86
1985	—	164
1986	—	134
1987	1	152
1988	—	151
1989	—	133
1990	—	133
1991	2	139
1992	1	132

[1] Serious injuries are defined as those which result in absence of duty for at least one month.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Howard: From the information available, no Proton cars have been purchased by the Home Office in any of the last 10 years.

Paedophile Records

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the paedophile records that were recently sent to the national criminal intelligence service from the Metropolitan police are now still with the national criminal intelligence service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A card index system, containing in excess of 3,000 names, was transferred to the national criminal intelligence service by the Metropolitan police in April 1992. These records are in the process of being entered onto a computer database. So far, 1,466 computer records, some containing many names, have been created and 150 names have been weeded.

Traffic Videos

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report,* column *31,* (1) if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to police forces regarding the sale of road traffic video footage to private companies;

(2) when the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers is to consider the sale of road traffic videos to private companies;

(3) if he will discuss with the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers the use and disposal of road traffic video footage;

(4) what representations he has had from chief police officers regarding the use of this road traffic video footage;

(5) how the moneys received from the disposal of road traffic video footage can be utilised;

(6) by what criteria he decided that the release of police traffic videos is an operational matter for chief police officers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Guidance is issued to chief officers of police on the disclosure of information in respect of criminal and civil proceedings. However, chief officers retain an absolute discretion, subject to the direction of a court, to disclose or provide other information from police records. The provision of road traffic video footage is similarly a matter for chief officers. I understand that none of the police forces concerned received money for supplying footage. My right hon. and learned Friend does not intend to issue guidelines on the matter nor does he plan to discuss it with the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers. That committee will be considering the issue at its next meeting on 11 May. I have not received any representations from chief officers about the matter.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons who have applied for asylum in the United Kingdom are currently held in detention; what was the figure a year ago; and if he will list those establishments which are used regularly for such detention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 21 March 645 people who had applied for asylum at some stage were held in detention. Information on the number of asylum seekers held in detention a year ago is not available.

The establishments which regularly hold the greatest numbers of immigration detainees are as follows:

Immigration Service Accommodation
- Campsfield House
- Harmondsworth
- The Beehive, Gatwick Airport
- Queen's Building, Heathrow
- Manchester
- Stansted

Prison Service Accommodation
- Birmingham
- Blakenhurst
- Canterbury
- Dover
- Haslar[1]
- High Down
- Holloway
- Pentonville

[1] Haslar Holding Centre is primarily an Immigration Detention Centre, although managed by the Prison Service.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons, held in detention, who have applied for asylum in the United Kingdom are currently refusing to eat; what arrangements are made for such people to be seen by a doctor or to have access to standard hospital facilities; how many detainees held at Campsfield house are currently refusing to eat; how many detainees have been dispersed from Campsfield house to other establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 28 March, 69 detainees were refusing food, 22 of whom were located at Campsfield house.

Between 18 February and 28 March 87 detainees left Campsfield house. Of these, 27 were released on temporary admission or bail, 22 were sent to other establishments and the remaining 38 were removed from the United Kingdom.

Detainees in immigration detention centres have access on a daily basis to a resident or visiting doctor. The Prison Service is responsible for providing similar access to a doctor for those Immigration Act detainees accommodated at prison establishments. Depending on the circumstances of the case, a detainee who requires medical attention beyond that which can be provided in an immigration detention centre may be transferred to a prison hospital or outside hospital.

Illegal Drugs

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the quantities and estimated value of drugs seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the police for the last three years for which figures are available; and what estimate he made for the quantity and value of drugs illegally used for those years.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested with regard to the quantity of controlled drugs seized by Her Majesty's Customs and the police respectively is contained in tables S1.2 to 1.7 of the supplementary tables to the Home Office Statistical Bulletins "Statistics of drugs seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom" (1990-92), copies of which are in the Library.

In addition, Her Majesty's Customs informed us that the following quantities of controlled drugs were seized by them during 1993:

	Amounts in kilogrammes
Heroin	561
Cocaine	748
Amphetamines	1,096
Cannabis (all forms)	53,137

Data for 1993 for police forces will be published later in the year. The combined estimated value of police and Customs drugs seizures is not availble. Since drug misuse is by its nature a clandestine activity, there is no information on the estimated quantity and value of drugs actually used.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Moss Side, Manchester in respect of the control of illegal drugs; and what new initiatives will emerge as a result of his visit to Moss Side, Manchester.

Mr. Howard: I have written to the hon. Member today.

Prisoners (Costs)

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of keeping a prisoner in *(a)* a privately run prison and *(b)* a state prison; and if he will give a detailed breakdown of these costs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Andrew Welsh, dated 30 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the costs of keeping a prisoner in *(a)* a private run prison and *(b)* a state prison.

In 1992-93 the net operating costs per prisoner place per week were £333 in Wolds remand prison and £466 in the directly managed prison system, which included a range of different types of establishment.

The costs in directly managed establishments break down as follows:

	£
Prisoner control	191
Prisoner care	70
Prisoner occupation	50
Escorts of prisoners	16
Building services	44
Administration costs	95
	466

It is not possible to give a detailed breakdown of the costs for Wolds: the contractors are paid an agreed sum for a total service.

Fuel Subsidies

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what subsidies privately run prisons receive towards the cost of electricity or gas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Andrew Welsh, dated 30 March 1994:

CONTRACTED OUT PRISONS: UTILITY COSTS

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about any subsidies which privately run prisons receive towards the cost of electricity or gas.

No such subsidies are paid. The contractor who manages Blakenhurst prison pays these costs under the operating contract. This will also be the case at Doncaster when it opens in June. The position at Wolds prison is temporarily a little different, however, in that there the costs of gas and electricity are currently met directly by the Prison Service. This reflects the fact that Wolds' unique design made it impossible at the outset to set benchmark levels for consumption, and therefore cost, in the contract. They have, however, been included in the published total operating costs of the prison and in the published comparative cost analyses contained in the Prison Service Annual Report. Now that energy consumption levels are known, arrangements are in hand to amend the contract so that these costs become the contractor's responsibility.

The efficient use by contractors of public utilities is monitored by the Prison Service controllers who are assisted by the Prison Service Energy Management Group.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report,* column *223,* if he will list the number of contracts and their cost with management consultants in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The Home Office let 70 contracts to management consultants during 1993-94. The total cost was £3,489,463.

ENVIRONMENT

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Baldry: In November 1992, the Department commissioned Succession Planning Associates, a firm of executive search consultants, to identify women and ethnic minority candidates suitable for appointment to DOE-sponsored public bodies and now maintains a list of the names they obtained. The consultants approached a wide range of organisations and individuals in order to draw up their list. In addition, the Departtment usually asks the public appointments unit of the Cabinet Office for information on possible candidates. The Department welcomes inquiries from people interested in serving on the boards of its non-departmental public bodies.

Individuals from all walks of life may approach the Department and appointments are made on the basis of aptitude and merit. The Department has produced a form for self-nomination which is issued on request.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or

may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Baldry: The Department follows the advice on consultation set out in the Cabinet Office's "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures", a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. In addition to consulting in accordance with the guide, the need for any wider consultation is borne in mind depending on the individual circumstances of the particular appointments under consideration.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Baldry: A list of the appointments to nationalised industries and non-departmental public bodies, and their salaries, is published annually in "Public Bodies", a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. Other appointments by the Secretary of State, and their salaries, were listed in my answer of 1 March to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright). No central record is maintained of names of the persons currently appointed, who number over 900, or the terms of their appointments.

All appointments are the responsibility of the Secretary of State, other than those identified as exceptions in "Public Bodies" and my answer of 1 March to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, *Official Report*, columns *638-39*.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has no procedures for obtaining or storing information about political views. Nomination forms provided by the Department and the public appointments unit of the Cabinet Office do not contain questions about candidates' political affiliations. The aim of the appointment system is to obtain candidates who, on the basis of merit and experience, are considered the most suitable for the posts in question. Information to assist the Department is obtained from the nomination form, followed by shortlisting and interview, the taking-up of references and advice from other Government Departments.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available in a form useful to local authorities the programme used for calculating standard spending assessments.

Mr. Baldry: Standard spending assessments are calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the local government finance report. Local authorities already receive from my Department all the information they need to calculate their own standard spending assessments. My Department will discuss with the local authority associations whether other ways of presenting this material would be useful.

European Environment Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he plans to put to the European Environment Council in Brussels on 24 to 25 March.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at the Environment Council on 24 and 25 March. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside also attended on 24 March.

The Council unanimously agreed, on the basis of a United Kingdom text, a common position to ban the export of hazardous waste to non-OECD countries by 31 December 1997.

In a separate discussion of the draft directive on landfill waste the Council concentrated on the scope of the directive and the question of exemptions. I pressed our views on the environmental advantages of controlled disposal of certain difficult and non-hazardous waste together—"co-disposal"—but overall little progress was made and the Council referred the topic back to the Committee of Permanent Representatives—COREPER—for further work to prepare for the June Council.

In discussion of an amendment to the birds directive I secured assurances that the proposal would not reduce the level of protection for birds and that scientific and conservation criteria would be used in implementing it. The proposal will now be put to the European Parliament.

An amendment to the directive concerning noise from earth moving machinery was adopted after a vote in which the United Kingdom abstained. A unanimous decision was reached on the four year programme—1994-1997—on official statistics of the environment. The Council also agreed a common position on a minor amendment to the large combustion plants directive—88/609/EEC.

The Council agreed conclusions on climate change which urged all member states to complete by 1 May 1994 the national programmes aimed at limiting CO_2 emissions that they are required to prepare under the climate change convention and the Community's own monitoring mechanism. We published the United Kingdom programme on 25 January. The Council also decided to establish a working group to examine various aspects of Community approaches to the use of carbon and energy taxation to limit CO_2 emissions.

There was a useful orientation debate on the proposed directive on integrated pollution prevention and control. I welcomed the aims of the directive and was supported in this by most other member states. The draft directive will now be considered further in the environment working group.

The Council also adopted a resolution on integrated coastal zone management, and in a short discussion of the Commission White Paper, "Growth Competitiveness and Employment", the Commissioner outlined ideas for taking things forward in the coming months.

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Gummer: The figures requested are *(a)* 0 per cent. and *(b)* 2·8 per cent. I am unable to list the individuals' names as the Department's survey of the ethnic origins of appointees is voluntary and on the understanding that the information collected will be used for statistical purposes only.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations underpinned the omission from paragraphs 3.4.14 to 3.4.18, at page 54 of the United Kingdom report to the Commission on Sustainable Development 1994, in management of radioactive waste of Her Majesty's Government's policy to return to countries of origin reprocessing radioactive waste arising from the reprocessing of imported spent nuclear fuel to Sellafield and Dounreay.

Mr. Atkins: It was an editorial decision. As I made clear in the reply which I gave to the right hon. Member on 15 March, *Official Report,* column *579,* the Government intend that British Nuclear Fuels plc should exercise its options for the return of reprocessing waste to the country of origin.

Pollution (Appeals)

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 are awaiting determination and what were the dates on which each of those appeals was lodged.

Mr. Atkins: A total of 60 appeals under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 are currently before my right hon. Friend for determination. The dates on which the appeals were lodged are as follows:

Appeals at procedural stage (i.e. written representations being made by parties or appeal subject to a hearing)

29 April 1991
4 August 1992
8 March 1993
11 March 1993
6 May 1993
19 May 1993
5 July 1993
14 July 1993
10 September 1993
4 October 1993
10 November 1993
12 November 1993
23 November 1993
7 December 1993
17 December 1993
17 December 1993
21 December 1993
21 December 1993
19 January 1994
25 January 1994
3 February 1994
15 February 1994
17 February 1994
22 February 1994
24 February 1994
2 March 1994

Appeals at determination stage (i.e. submission of written representations by parties concluded or hearing held)

6 February 1989
7 February 1990
30 March 1990
22 August 1991
28 October 1991
31 January 1992
14 February 1992
31 March 1992
7 May 1992
15 July 1992
30 July 1992
15 September 1992
16 September 1992
9 October 1992
12 February 1992
22 March 1993
28 May 1993
15 June 1993

Appeals in abeyance (e.g. negotiations taking place between parties or awaiting resolution of planning issues)

9 December 1987
1 August 1988
26 April 1991
9 July 1992
26 August 1992
23 November 1992
5 January 1993
24 February 1993
9 March 1993
16 April 1993
26 April 1993
26 July 1993
10 August 1993
22 September 1993
20 October 1993
18 November 1993

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what effect he expects the additional grounds for appeal and the need to establish precedents to have on the incidence of waste licensing appeals following the introduction of the new waste management licensing system on 1 May;

(2) what assessment he has made of the time taken to deal with appeals under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974;

(3) how many staff are employed in his Department on appeals made under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974; and what proportion of their time was spent thereon in the periods *(a)* 1 March 1993 to 31 August 1993 and *(b)* 1 September 1993 to 28 February 1994;

(4) what steps he is taking to expedite determination of *(a)* current appeals made under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and *(b)* future appeals made under section 43 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 from 1 May.

Mr. Atkins: The administration or determination of appeals forms part of the duties of four members of staff within the Department's waste management division. Members of staff in the Department's planning inspectorate—PINS—are also employed on appeals where they take the form of a hearing. The proportion of staff time spent on the administration or determination of

appeals, and the administration and conduct of hearings, depends on a number of factors and varies from day to day. The time taken to determine appeals also depends on factors such as the time taken by the parties to provide written representations or their availability to attend a hearing. It is the Department's aim to deal with all appeals expeditiously and wherever possible to improve on the time taken to determine them.

Responsibility for the administration of appeals which are to be determined on the basis of written representations will be transferred from waste management division to PINS on 1 May 1994 when the new waste management licensing system under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 comes into force. PINS' duties will include responsibility for appeals made under section 43 of the 1990 Act and, where appropriate, appeals under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

Section 43 of the 1990 Act will widen the grounds on which an appeal may be made against a waste regulation authority's decision. However, sections 35(8) and 74(5) require authorities to have regard to any guidance issued to them with respect to the discharge of their functions. The guidance which we intend to issue under sections 35(8) and 74(5) should ensure that proportionately fewer appeals need to be made under section 43 of the 1990 Act than has historically been the case under section 10 of the 1974 Act.

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 have been determined in the periods *(a)* 1 March to 31 August 1993 and *(b)* 1 September 1993 to 28 February 1994.

Mr. Atkins: Eight appeals under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 were determined in the period 1 March to 31 August 1993; and two appeals were determined in the period 1 September 1993 to 28 February 1994.

Unitary Authorities

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library all submissions and other comments made to him on the most workable formula for the discharge, through joint working, of strategic functions and planning by new or proposed unitary authorities.

Mr. Baldry: We have received a large number of representations on the general issue of joint working, including those received in response to our 1992 consultation exercise on the policy guidance to the Local Government Commission. These could not be assembled except at disproportionate cost. We have said, however, that when we lay implementation orders for each area where the Local Government Commission recommends change to the structure of local government, we will place in the Library a summary of all representations received by the Secretary of State about the recommendations. Individual representations will be made available if requested unless the writers intended their views to be treated in confidence.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those people and organisations he has consulted as to the most workable formula for the discharge, through joint working, of strategic functions and planning by new or proposed unitary authorities.

Mr. Baldry: It is for the Local Government Commission to consider, for each area that it reviews, whether or not joint working between any proposed unitary authorities is necessary for particular functions. A list of those persons and organisations whom the Commission is required to consult on its draft recommendations is included in our procedure guidance to the Commission, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the strategic functions on which he has consulted as to their discharge, through joint working, by new or proposed unitary authorities.

Mr. Baldry: Annex B of the Department's policy guidance to the Local Government Commission sets out considerations relevant to structural change for a range of local government functions. That guidance, which was issued after an extensive consultation process, draws attention to options for joint working, particularly in relation to strategic planning. A copy of the guidance is in the Library.

Council Tax

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against council tax banding and valuation are currently outstanding *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each valuation district.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *276*.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall, in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Gummer: The following information covers non-industrial staff in my Department—excluding PSAS—as at 1 March 1994:

	Total staff	*Women*		*[1]Ethnic minority*		*[1]Disabled*	
		Men	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Grade 1	1	1	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 2	7	4	3	43·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 3	34	30	4	12·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 4	7	7	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Grade 5	140	119	21	15·0	1	0·7	1	0·7
Grade 6	322	293	29	9·0	1	0·3	0	0·0
Grade 7	788	654	134	17·0	11	1·4	7	0·9

	Total staff	Men	Women		[1]Ethnic minority		[1]Disabled	
			Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
OVERALL TOTAL	6,582	3,909	2,673	41·0	501	7·6	142	2·2

[1] Figures are based on voluntary responses to staff surveys. The response rate to the ethnic origin survey is 91 per cent. Respondents to the disability survey include registered and non-registered disabled staff.

House Improvement Grants

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many mandatory house improvement grants have been made available in the areas covered by the five district councils on Merseyside during the past financial year; how many applications were received; how many homes remain in the pipeline awaiting renewal; when he expects to make an announcement concerning the targeting of house improvement grants into designated renewal areas; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Information on the number of mandatory renovation grants made available by the five Merseyside district councils during 1993-94 is provided to my Department through local authority quarterly monitoring returns. The number of returns received to date and the number of grants approved is shown in the table.

1993-94	*Number of returns*	*Grants approved*
Knowsley	2	97
Liverpool	2	361
Sefton	—	—
St. Helens	3	158
Wirral	3	143

My Department does not hold statistics of renovation grant applications made to authorities or of applications still under consideration. The Government will announce their conclusions on the future of private sector housing renewal programmes following last year's consultations in due course.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the single regeneration budget he expects is likely to support bids from local partnerships as mentioned in paragraph 5.9 of the Department's annual report.

Mr. Baldry: The first round of bidding for single regeneration budget funding will be for new initiatives starting in 1995-96. On current plans, the total budget will be worth over £1·3 billion in 1995-96 and it is expected that about £100 million will be available to support new bids. Following the recent public consultation exercise, bidding guidance will be published soon.

Urban and Housing Programmes

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the total money spent, *(b)* the percentage of that money allocated according to decisions made by Ministers on competitive bids and *(c)* the percentage of that money allocated according to some statistical measure of need in the last available operational year of (i) city challenge, (ii) urban programme, (iii) inner city task forces, (iv) city action team, (v) English partnerships, (vi) urban development corporations, (vii) the docklands light railway, (viii) estate action and (ix) housing action trusts.

Mr. Baldry: The total amount of funding provided by my Department under each of these support regimes for the financial year ending March 1994 is estimated to be:

		1993-94 estimated out-turn (£m)
(i)	City Challenge	223·2
(ii)	Urban Programme	173·0
(iii)	Inner Cities Task Forces	18·0
(iv)	City Action Teams	3·4
(v)	English Partnerships	161·9
(vi)	Urban Development Corporations (including Docklands Light Railway)	380·8
(vii)	Estate Action	356·0
(viii)	Housing Action Trusts	78·1

City challenge and the £20 million urban partnership fund—which forms about 12 per cent. of the urban programme in 1993-94—targeted resources on projects selected by competition among the local authorities in the 57 urban priority areas. Local housing authorities also compete for estate action resources. The other support regimes operate in the most deprived urban areas, run-down council housing estates, and areas of concentrated or extensive dereliction. Since resources are limited, assistance is concentrated on projects which are likely to provide the best value for money.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish his response to the Environment Committee's report on standard spending assessments.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend has today laid before the House the Government's responses to the Environment Committee's first report on standard spending assessments. Copies of the response have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

The Environment Committee's recommendations will be reflected in the development work on SSAs which we will undertake in partnership with the local authority associations in 1994 and in the longer term.

Dumplington Scheme

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now refrain from participating in the appeal hearing due to be held in the Appeal Court, against the granting of planning permission for the Dumplington scheme in Greater Mancester.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* No.

Lewisham

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he or his Ministers last visited Lewisham, East; with whom they met and for what purpose; and if he intends to inform hon. Members when he visits their constituencies.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* All Ministers in the Department of the Environment customarily inform hon. Members when they are visiting their constituencies on official business. My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning has not recently visited Lewisham, East on official business.

Environmental Technology and Management

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution his Department made to the Employment Training '94 exhibition on environmental technology and management held in Birmingham from 22 to 24 March.

Mr. Atkins: Both the energy efficiency office and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution took stands at ET '94 in Birmingham to promote the benefits of energy efficiency, and to explain the work of HMIP on pollution control. One of our pollution inspectors also presented a talk.

Playgrounds, Leicestershire

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what percentage of playgrounds in Leicestershire comply with British Standards Institute BS 5696; and if he will publish a list of playgrounds which do not comply.

Mr. Sproat: I have been asked to reply.

This Department has policy responsibility for playground safety and issues guidelines advising local authorities and others on relevant playground standards including BS 5696 and the German DIN 7926 standard. Compliance information on individual playgrounds is not held centrally.

London Senior Regional Director

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the duties of the senior regional director for London; what support staff he will have; where he will be based; what will be the cost of this area of administration; what are the geographical boundaries of his administration; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The duties of the regional director will be those set out in my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State's, reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 8 February, *Official Report,* column *146.* The regional director will be supported by some 320 staff and contributing Departments are now finalising administrative budgets for the new office. A decision on the operational base of the regional director will be made in the very near future. The regional director and his office will be responsible for the Greater London area.

Incineration

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to respond to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report on incineration.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have welcomed the report by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on the incineration of waste as a clear and comprehensive analysis of the role of incineration as a waste management option. A full response by Government to the report will be published later this year.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he is making to improve the tendering process for local authority waste disposal contracts under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Atkins: Competitive tendering for waste disposal under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 generally works well and there are no plans to change the requirements of the 1990 Act. However, my Department is working on updated guidance to local authorities which will re-emphasise the importance of taking environmental factors into account in that process, such as the benefits of the waste-to-energy option in appropriate locations. We hope to consult on draft guidance later this year.

Cash Limits

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to his Department's cash limits for 1993-94.

Mr. Gummer: I propose to make the following changes:

1. The DoE/OES (other environmental services) non-voted cash limit will be increased by £2,676,000 from £45,000,000 to £47,676,000. This increase will be matched by a corresponding reduction in the DoE/NT (new towns) non-voted cash limit. The switch reflects local authority contributions to the Commission for the New towns under road cost sharing agreements. The increase in provision on the DoE/OES cash limit will be used to provide supplementary credit approvals to local authorities to cover their capital contributions to the Commission for the New Towns.

2. The DoE/LACAP (local authority capital) non-voted cash limit will be increased by £99,577,000 from £2,457,808,000 to £2,557,385,000. The increase will be matched by a corresponding reduction in the DoE/NT cash limit. This results from the provision of additional supplementary credit approval resources to Basildon district council to facilitate the bulk transfer of rented housing stock between the Commission for the New Towns and the council. It also includes provision for Milton Keynes borough council and Wrekin district council to purchase residual rented housing stock from the commission.

3. The DoE/NT (New Towns) non-voted cash limit will be reduced by £102,253,000 from –£96,325,000 to –£198,578,000. This is the result of reductions of £2,676,000 and £99,577,000 resulting from additional receipts from local authorities financed by the cash limit increases described above.

4. The cash limit for class VII, vote 8 (revenue support grant, payments of non-domestic rates, Valuation Office services, etc., England) will be reduced by £35,000 from £28,808,113,000 to £28,808,078,000. This reduction is due to a saving on the council tax preparation grant resulting from lower than expected claims. This saving will be used to offset increased expenditure within the new control total on class VII, vote 12 (community charge grants, council tax transitional reduction grant, rate rebate grants, emergency financial assistance to local authorities, non-domestic rates outturn payments, etc., England), to meet claims for

emergency assistance to local authorities. The increase within vote 12 is being met by virement from voted expenditure not included in the new control total.

All increases will be offset by reductions in other cash limited expenditure and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Birch Coppice

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *578*, when a decision was made not to comment on the merits of a decision or the process by which it was reached.

Mr. Baldry: This is a longstanding position to preserve the integrity of planning decisions.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *578*, what steps he has taken to ensure that parties in respect of the Birch Coppice opencast application have the opportunity to make a submission based on the case and therefore on the mineral planning guidance note on which any decision is to be based;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *578*, when he proposes to make a final decision on the Birch Coppice opencast application;

(3) by what date he expects the decision on Birch Coppice to be made;

(4) what procedures have to be complied with in the specific case of the Birch Coppice opencast application in north Warwickshire before a decision can be made;

(5) what arrangements he has made to seek representations from relevant parties on any further decision on opencast at Birch Coppice in Warwickshire;

(6) what sort of evidence will be sought by the public inquiry due to take place before a decision into opencast at Birch Coppice can be made;

(7) if his Department will write to all the objectors involved in the public inquiry in 1991 into the Birch Coppice opencast application to tell them that the decision may be reached on a basis other than that on which the original inquiry was conducted.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Monday 28 March, *Official Report*, columns 488-89.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer on 15 March, *Official Report*, column *578*, how many exceptions there have been to his policy of not answering questions on the merits of, or process leading to, decisions in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Baldry: None of which I am aware.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has spent on getting legal advice on the opencast decision at Birch Coppice in Warwickshire *(a)* from external sources and *(b)* from sources within his Department.

Mr. Baldry: Approximate figures to date are *(a)* £2,000 and *(b)* £1,000.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the available information on the total cost to his Department to date in dealing with all matters relating to the Birch Coppice opencast application.

Mr. Baldry: No records have been kept of this information.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek a statement from *(a)* North Warwickshire borough council and *(b)* Warwickshire county council on the amounts they spent on the Birch Coppice public inquiry on 30 July to 23 August 1991; and how much the Birch Coppice inquiry cost the applicants and his Department.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *578*, on which version of mineral planning guidance 3 he expects to base his decision on Birch Coppice.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 15 March, *Official Report*, column *578*.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his practice to take legal advice before announcing a decision on opencast applications; and whether his Department obtains legal advice from other Departments on opencast decisions as a matter of practice.

Mr. Baldry: Consideration is given on a case-by-case basis for the need to seek legal advice. My Department does not obtain legal advice from other Departments on opencast decisions as a matter of practice.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many lawyers are employed in his Department *(a)* generally and *(b)* dealing with opencast decisions; and how many lawyers in his Department have given legal advice on opencast decisions in each of the last three years.

Mr. Baldry: *(a)* 43 full time equivalents.

(b) Currently and at any one time over each of the last three years, two lawyers have been available to give legal advice on opencast decisions.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans and provision he has made to compensate persons prejudiced by his decision of 24 February on the Birch Coppice opencast inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what compensation his Department has paid out in each of the last 10 years as a result of maladministration of any sort during the planning process.

Mr. Baldry: Compensation was paid out in four of the last 10 years. This is broken down as follows: 1986, £8,804, 1987, £2,410·75, 1988, £6,710 and 1993, £1,322.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department takes to ensure citizens are informed of their rights to redress if the Department makes an error during the planning process.

Mr. Baldry: All appellants are sent a copy of "Planning Appeals—A Guide" which explains the process for High Court challenges and investigations by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Interested parties who write to the Department are informed of these rights.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions has he had concerning the costs to councils, British Coal and objectors of his decision of 24 February to set aside his decision of 2 August 1993 on Birch Coppice in Warwickshire.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *578*, if he will set out in respect of each of the responsibilities of his Department those matters on which it is his practice not to answer parliamentary questions.

Mr. Baldry: The general practice of this and previous administrations is described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *578*, regarding the Birch Coppice opencast decision, which mineral planning guidance note was in force on 2 August 1993.

Mr. Baldry: Mineral planning guidance note 3 (1988) as amended by the interim planning guidance for opencast coal issued on 25 March 1993.

Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a list of approved or suitably qualified bodies available to carry out environmental impact assessment studies.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not maintain a list of approved or qualified persons suitable to prepare environmental statements.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department has issued on environmental impact assessment procedures to local authorities, other statutory bodies, non-governmental bodies funded by central Government practitioners and other bodies or individuals.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has issued the following guidance on environmental assessment:

—Circular 15/88 "Environmental Assessment", dated 12 July 1988

—Circular 7/94 "Environmental Assessment: Amendment of Regulations", dated 18 March 1994

—a booklet "Environmental Assessment: A Guide to the Procedures", 1989

—a free leaflet "Environmental Assessment", 1989.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors should be taken into account in environmental impact assessment studies in cases where proposed developments would have an effect on the local environment.

Mr. Baldry: Where a project which is the subject of a planning application requires environmental assessment, the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 provide that the environmental statement submitted by the applicant shall include a description of the likely significant effects on the environment. These include the impact on human beings, flora, fauna, soil, water, air, climate, the landscape, material assets and the cultural heritage. The statement must also describe the measures envisaged to avoid, reduce or remedy any significant adverse effects.

Basle Convention

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for United Kingdom waste management policy of the decisions taken at the recent review meeting of the Basle convention.

Mr. Gummer: The major issue considered at the second meeting of the conference of the parties to the Basle convention which took place between 21 and 25 March was a proposal to ban movements of hazardous waste from OECD to non-OECD countries. The Government entered the negotiations with two objectives: the first objective, shared with environmentalists, was not to allow the export of wastes for recovery to those non-OECD countries which were unable to manage wastes in an environmentally sound manner. The second objective was to protect legitimate trade in secondary raw materials with non-OECD countries wishing to import hazardous wastes for recovery. During the negotiations the G-77 countries were unanimous in their view that a ban was the best way to protect the environment in non-OECD countries. In view of this unanimous position the Government decided, along with their EC and OECD partners, to agree to a ban. The Government welcome the decision, which was adopted by consensus.

The decision prohibits immediately all movements of hazardous waste for final disposal from OECD to non-OECD states, and prohibits from 31 December 1997 all movements of hazardous wastes for recycling or recovery from OECD to non-OECD states. Movements for recycling or recovery can continue until 31 December 1997 if a non-OECD country allows such imports and has provided information about the categories, quantities and management of acceptable waste imports to the Basle secretariat. The decision will be implemented in the United Kingdom under the Waste Shipments Regulation and will take effect when the United Kingdom becomes a party to the convention on 8 May.

The conference also decided to develop guidance to assist states on the question of what constitutes hazardous waste under the convention. The guidance will be presented to the third meeting of the conference of the parties to be held in September and October 1995. The United Kingdom intends to play an active part in this work. The Government consider that non-hazardous wastes are an important source of business both to OECD and to non-OECD states and ought not to be affected by the decision taken.

"Decision

Recalling the request of the G-77 countries at the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention in Uruguay, 30 November—4 December 1992, for the total ban on all exports of hazardous wastes from OECD countries to non-OECD countries.

"Recognising that transboundary movements of hazardous wastes from OECD to non-OECD States have a high risk of not constituting an environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes as required by the Basel Convention.

"1. Decides to prohibit immediately all transboundary movements of hazardous wastes which are destined for final disposal from OECD to non-OECD States;

"2. Decides also to phase out by 31 December 1997, and prohibit as of that date, all transboundary movements of hazardous wastes which are destined for recycling or recovery operations from OECD to non-OECD States;

"3. Decides further that any non-OECD State, not possessing a national hazardous wastes import ban and which allows the import from OECD States of hazardous wastes for recycling or recovery operation until 31 December 1997, should inform the Secretariat of the Basel Convention that it would allow the import from an OECD State of hazardous wastes for recycling or recovery operations by specifying the categories of hazardous wastes which are acceptable for import; the quantities to be imported; the specific recycling/recovery process to be used; and the final destination/disposal of the residues which are derived from recycling/recovery operations;

"4. Requests the Parties to report regularly to the Secretariat on the implementation of this decision, including details of the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes allowed under paragraph 3 above. Further requests the Secretariat to prepare a summary and to compile these reports for consideration by the Open-ended Ad Hoc Committee. After considering these reports, the Open-ended Ad Hoc Committee will submit a report based on the input provided by the Secretariat to the Conference of the Parties of the Convention;

"5. Requests further the Parties to cooperate and work actively to ensure the effective implementation of this decision."

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his decisions on the extension of compulsory competitive tendering to local authorities' security work, management of on-street parking and vehicle management.

Mr. Baldry: My Department received 90 responses to the consultation paper issued on 16 November 1993 from local authorities and other interested parties. We are considering carefully the comments made. I expect to lay the necessary draft statutory instruments before the House shortly.

It is widely accepted that competition is the best guarantee of value for money in public service provision. I am keen to see local authorities press ahead with competitive tendering for these services as soon as possible. Neverthless, I recognise that they must be allowed adequate time to prepare for tendering and to conduct a fair and even-handed competition.

We would expect the tendering process to take up to 12 months, and authorities will need a little time to prepare for market testing once the statutory instruments have come into force. The date originally proposed for vehicle management in England, 1 April 1995, would not allow authorities adequate time and I have therefore decided to defer the start date for this work until 1 October 1995. This brings vehicle management into line with security work, where I intend the start date to remain 1 October 1995. After this date, the in-house team will not be able to carry out this work unless they have won it in competition. I anticipate that authorities will begin inviting tenders in the autumn of this year. As I told the House on 15 December, *Official Report,* columns 734-35, CCT for all new services will be introduced in shire areas following the local government review.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London has today made a separate announcement about the implementation timetable for CCT for the management of on-street parking services.

Old Mineral Permissions

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the consultation paper on the reform of old mineral permissions.

Mr. Curry: The consultation paper on reform of old mineral permissions granted between 1948 and 1981 is to be published today.

This consultation paper follows on from the options paper issued by my Department two years ago in March 1992 as part of the review of the operation of the Minerals Act 1981. That paper received a wide ranging and diverse response which has informed today's specific proposals for reform.

The Government recognise that minerals are vital to our economy and I am very pleased that the minerals industry recognises that it has a duty to the public to operate to high environmental standards and to be considerate neighbours to those communities most affected by mining. We want to develop and extend the good work done by the industry and are determined to secure improved operating and environmental standards for all old mining permissions granted between 1948 and 1981.

One of the points made most forcibly to us in the response to the 1992 paper was the need to establish a level playing field between minerals operators regardless of the date when their permissions were granted. At the moment holders of modern permissions and reformed IDO permissions granted between 1943 and 1948 are perceived to be at a disadvantage. We are determined to update standards as a whole across the range of these permissions and are concerned that quicker action has not been taken under the existing powers introduced by the Minerals Act 1981. We are therefore proposing a statutory timetable for reviews and for the updating of conditions. There are also particular proposals for dealing with ancillary mining development, compensation, and change to the 2042 expiry date for pre-1982 permissions as well as consideration of other issues including minerals waste tipping.

Conservation Areas

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he and his right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, have reached on the response to last July's consultation paper on planning controls in conservation areas.

Mr. Curry: We accept that conservation areas merit protection from unharmful change. We aim to achieve this objective without unreasonable restrictions on house-owners or unacceptably increasing the workload of local planning authorities.

We have concluded that each planning authority should be enabled to identify conservation areas which merit additional protection and to introduce stricter control in those areas. We propose a new power for planning authorities to make a direction withdrawing "permitted development" rights for a prescribed range of development materially affecting some aspects of the external appearance of dwelling houses, such as doors, windows, roofs and frontages. There would be no requirement to obtain the Secretary of State's approval for a direction but authorities would have to publicise their proposals in

advance and have regard to the views of local people. We shall be consulting about the detailed arrangements but hope to include the new power in amendments to the General Development Order to be laid before Parliament as soon as possible.

Drinking Water

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the drinking water inspectorate has completed its consideration of the report of the review of the process of technical audit of water companies, carried out by the late Professor Stott; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to announce that the drinking water inspectorate has today published its response to the report of the independent review of the technical audit process. I have placed a copy of the inspectorate's response in the Library.

Professor Stott confirmed the validity of the system and methods devised and developed by the inspectorate for checking the compliance of water companies and the regulatory requirements. His main recommendation was that water companies should develop quality assurance systems to assist them in meeting their statutory obligations consistently and to enable the inspectorate to determine whether the statutory requirements have been met.

The inspectorate agrees that quality assurance systems should become more widespread as a means of ensuring consistently high quality drinking water. As such systems are introduced the inspectorate will adapt its techniques of inspection so that it can be satisfied that those systems are fully observed and that they remain appropriate for delivering wholesome drinking water and protecting public health.

Waste Imports

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his future policy on the importation of wastes for treatment and disposal into the United Kingdom subsequent to the new powers available to him to prohibit waste imports after 6 May.

Mr. Atkins: I have nothing to add to my answer of 7 March to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), *Official Report,* column *43.*

European Environment Council

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions were made at the March meeting of the European Council of Environmental Ministers on *(a)* the environmental appraisal of goods to be traded under the general agreement on tariffs and trade and *(b)* the EC birds directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Council did not discuss the question of environmental appraisal of goods to be traded under GATT. The Council considered an amendment to the birds directive to clarify the arrangements for protecting birds. My right hon. Friend obtained important assurances that this proposal would not reduce the level of protection for birds and that scientific and conservation criteria would be used in implementing the proposal. The amendment will now be referred to the European Parliament for consideration.

Coal Industry Bill

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the National Rivers Authority regarding the Coal Industry Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department is in regular contact with the National Rivers Authority about the pollution which might result from colliery closures and is aware of its views. The Coal Industry Bill is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what new guidance he proposes to give to local authorities when their waste disposal contracts are tendered;

(2) what support he proposes for the United Kingdom waste to energy industry;

(3) what assessment he has made of the environmental benefits of integrated waste management schemes incorporating waste to energy;

(4) what plans he has to incorporate targets for energy from waste within revised recycling targets for local authorities.

Mr. Atkins: In its report on incineration published last year, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution concluded that there are significant environmental benefits in integrated waste management schemes incorporating waste to energy. It recommended that such schemes should play an increasingly important role in our future waste management practices. The Government broadly welcome the conclusions of the Royal Commission in this respect and we are preparing a detailed response which I hope will be completed in the summer.

In the meantime, the Government are taking steps further to encourage the development of incineration with energy recovery in the United Kingdom. In general, waste to energy schemes should be operated on a normal commercial basis. However, the Government recognise the environmental benefits of using waste as a renewable fuel source and so support waste to energy schemes through the non-fossil fuel obligation, under which operators can be paid a premium for the electricity they generate. A third NFFO order was announced last July. In addition, my Department is currently reviewing the guidance given to local authorities on tendering for waste disposal contracts. The updated guidance will re-emphasise the importance of taking environmental factors into account in that process, such as the benefits of the waste to energy option in appropriate locations. We hope to consult on draft guidance later this year.

We have no plans to revise our target for local authorities to recycle 25 per cent. of household waste by 2000 to include targets for waste from energy.

River Cleaning

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will commission a new and independent study into the cost of cleaning up rivers and water supplies to comply with European Union legislation.

Mr. Atkins: The costs of meeting current obligations arising from European Community legislation for cleaning up rivers and water supplies fall in the main to water companies. These costs are currently being assessed by the Director General of the Office of Water Services as part of his periodic review of water price limits.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Gummer: The total cost of official entertainment in the years from 1 April 1990 was £313,200 and is included in the running cost expenditure for my Department which is published every year in the annual report; figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. The entertainment budget is used for a variety of functions including receptions. Separate figures are not kept for individual functions.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many countries had submitted their sustainable development plans to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development by 21 March ; and to whom Her Majesty's Government have made available the United Kingdom sustainable development report in addition to the United Nations Commission.

Mr. Atkins: I understand that 22 countries, including the United Kingdom, have submitted their reports to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. Copies of the United Kingdom's report have been placed in the Library and are being sent to all member countries of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to other interested parties. Further copies are available from the Department of Environment.

Oil Pollution, Bournemouth

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report,* column *833,* on oil pollution at Bournemouth, what evidence he has that the incidence of such pollution is more frequent at and around bank holiday periods; and if he will consider the monitoring of the English channel during such periods.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have no evidence that incidences of oil pollution are more common at bank holiday periods. Surveillance for oil pollution in the English channel and elsewhere around the United Kingdom coast is already carried out.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the packaging producer responsibility group on the role of converting waste to energy in meeting national environmental targets on greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Atkins: Incineration of packaging waste to recover energy plays a significant part in the producer responsibility for industry group's proposals set out in its plan of 7 February, a copy of which is in the Library. The report of the group's technical committee on waste to energy reflects the view of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution that increased incineration of waste, with energy recovery, could make a significant contribution to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. We are considering with the group, and other interested parties, how the 7 February plan can best be taken forward.

Cardiff Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from the Environment Directorate of the European Union in relation to a delay in adjudicating on the complaint by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the World Wide Fund for Nature regarding the Cardiff Bay barrage and the Cardiff Bay site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 1 March, *Official Report,* column *643.*

Local Government Finance

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list *(a)* the 10 authorities which gained most proportionate to population from the use of residents of non-self contained accommodation as an indicator for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution, *(b)* the amounts gained and *(c)* the effect on Coventry's standard spending assessment of the use of this indicator;

(2) if he will list *(a)* the 10 authorities which gained most proportionate to population from the use of housing benefit claimants as an indicator for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution *(b)* the amounts gained and *(c)* the effect on Coventry's standard spending assessment of the use of this indicator;

(3) if he will list *(a)* the 10 authorities which gained most proportionate to population from the use of residents at non-self contained or non-permanent accommodation as an indicator for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution *(b)* the amounts gained and *(c)* the effect on Coventry's standard spending assessment of the use of this indicator;

(4) if he will list *(a)* the 10 authorities which gained most proportionate to population from the use of households living in rented purpose built flats as an indicator for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution *(b)* the amounts gained and *(c)* the effect on Coventry's standard spending assessment of the use of this indicator;

(5) if he will list *(a)* the 10 authorities which gained most proportionate to population from the use of elderly living in rented accommodation as an indicator for the purposes of standard spending assessment distribution *(b)* the amounts gained and *(c)* the effect on Coventry's standard spending assessment of the use of this indicator;

(6) if he will list *(a)* the 10 authorities which gained most from the use of children in rented accommodation proportionate to population as an indicator for the purposes of standard spending assessment distribution *(b)* the amounts gained and *(c)* the effect on Coventry's standard spending assessment.

Mr. Baldry: The information is provided in the tables. However, there are some important technical points relating to the interpretation of the figures provided.

In a simple arithmetic sense, it is possible to say how much of an authority's standard spending assessment arises from a particular indicator. In most cases, it is simply a matter of multiplying the value of the indicator in that particular authority by the weighting, and scaling factor, attached to it in "The Local Government Finance Report (England) 1994-95 [HC 179]". This is the basis for the figures in the tables.

But there are two important qualifications to the results of those calculations. One is general. The other applies specifically to four indexes reflecting social and economic conditions: the social index, the other social services index, the economic index and the children in need index.

The general qualification is that the simple arithmetic calculation does not show how much better off or worse off the authority is as a result of that particular indicator being included in the formula. It would do so only if the rest of the formula remained unchanged when that indicator was removed. But it would not remain unchanged, because that would normally lead to a reduction in the national total of SSAs. To maintain the national total, there would have to be other compensating changes in the SSA formula. This would not be a simple scaling up of the factors; it would be usual to draw on statistical analyses to determine the weights on the remaining indicators. The weights would be likely to change differentially, to make good, as far as possible, the effect of the indicator which had been left out. In practice, if one indicator was left out of the analysis, it might well be appropriate to bring in some other similar indicator in its place.

In other words, to find out how much an authority is advantaged or disadvantaged by a particular indicator would require the production of a hypothetical SSA in which that indicator had been omitted, but in which other compensating changes had been made. There is no basis on which such a hypothetical SSA formula could be defined conclusively. Consequently, there is no basis for saying conclusively how much an authority gained or lost by the adoption of an indicator in the actual SSA formula.

The specific qualification relates to the indicators which are within the indexes reflecting social and economic conditions. All the general qualifications apply equally to the components of these indexes. But, in addition, the indexes are unlike other indicators in that they are not intended to reflect the total amount in SSAs attributable to social and economic conditions, but are only the amount by which the relevant part of an authority's SSA is increased or decreased from a national average because of those conditions.

The figures in the tables have been calculated by applying the weighting and scaling factor for each indicator to the data for that indicator for the authority mentioned. The figures exclude any area cost adjustment. In each case, the amount for Coventry is shown for comparison.

Table 1
The proportion of household residents living in accommodation which is not self-contained

Ranking and Local authority		*Contribution per head to SSA (£)*
	Coventry	2
1	Islington	44
2	Hackney	39
3	Lambeth	38
4	Haringey	38
5	Camden	35
6	Hammersmith and Fulham	32
7	Kensington and Chelsea	28
8	Brent	25
9	Westminster	23
10	Lewisham	21

Table 2
The proportion of households living in rented purpose-built flats in residential buildings

Ranking and Local authority		*Contribution per head to SSA (£)*
	Coventry	0
1	City of London	236
2	Tower Hamlets	38
3	Southwark	29
4	Westminster	27
5	Hackney	26
6	Islington	23
7	Camden	21
8	Lambeth	18
9	Greenwich	12
10	Hammersmith and Fulham	11

Table 3
The proportion of household residents living in accommodation which is not self-contained or is non-permanent

Ranking and local authority		*Contribution per head to SSA (£)*
	Coventry	−3
1	Kensington and Chelsea	29
2	Westminster	29
3	Camden	25
4	Hammersmith and Fulham	20
5	Islington	19
6	Haringey	19
7	Brent	15
8	Lambeth	14
9	Runnymede	14
10	Hackney	13

Table 4
The average number of Housing Benefit claimants

Ranking and local authority		*Contribution per head to SSA (£)*
	Coventry	1
1	City of London	152
2	Manchester	9
3	Tower Hamlets	8
4	Camden	8
5	Hackney	8

Ranking and local authority		Contribution per head to SSA (£)
6	Haringey	7
7	Islington	6
8	Southwark	5
9	Newham	5
10	Salford	5

Table 5
The proportion of household residents under 16 years of age living in rented accommodation

Ranking and Local authority		Contribution per head to SSA (£)
	Coventry	0
1	Tower Hamlets	10
2	Southwark	7
3	Hackney	6
4	Islington	6
5	Lambeth	5
6	Isles of Scilly	5
7	Manchester	4
8	Camden	4
9	Greenwich	4
10	Westminster	4

Table 6
The proportion of household residents of pensionable age living in rented accommodation

Ranking and Local authority		Contribution per head to SSA (£)
	Coventry	12
1	Camden	32
2	Westminster	31
3	Tower Hamlets	31
4	Islington	30
5	Southwark	30
6	Sheffield	29
7	Hackney	29
8	South Tyneside	28
9	Newcastle upon Tyne	27
10	Manchester	27

TREASURY

VAT on Fuel (Advance Payments)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue lost to the Exchequer by advance payments of VAT by customers of utility companies now subject to VAT from April.

Sir John Cope: Some loss through advance payments was anticipated on this, as on other tax adjustments, and was taken into account in the Budget calculations. It is too early to say what the actual effect on revenue will be.

Taxpayers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number and percentage of *(a)* basic rate and *(b)* higher rate tax payers in each English county, metropolitan district and London borough for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The table provides estimates for each English county for 1991-92, the latest available year for which information can be provided below the United Kingdom level. I regret that information is not available for metropolitan districts and London boroughs.

Basic and higher rate taxpayers 1991-92

County	Taxpayers liable at only basic rate 000s	Per cent.	Taxpayers liable at higher rate 000s	Per cent.
Cleveland	171	96·2	7	3·8
Cumbria	256	96·3	10	3·7
Durham	221	95·4	11	4·6
Northumberland	141	95·4	7	4·6
Tyne and Wear	429	96·3	16	3·7
Humberside	327	94·8	18	5·2
North Yorkshire	359	93·7	24	6·3
South Yorkshire	505	97·2	14	2·8
West Yorkshire	862	95·9	37	4·1
Cheshire	413	93·5	29	6·5
Greater Manchester	1,040	96·1	42	3·9
Lancashire	601	95·2	30	4·8
Merseyside	561	96·4	21	3·6
Derbyshire	395	95·9	17	4·1
Leicestershire	384	94·8	21	5·2
Lincolnshire	257	95·7	11	4·3
Northamptonshire	288	94·4	17	5·6
Nottinghamshire	431	96·4	16	3·6
Hereford and Worcester	317	95·5	15	4·5
Shropshire	169	95·8	7	4·2
Staffordshire	426	95·8	18	4·2
Warwickshire	210	92·6	17	7·4
West Midlands	1,040	96·6	37	3·4
Cambridgeshire	326	94·2	20	5·8
Norfolk	355	95·3	17	4·7
Suffolk	294	95·0	15	5·0
Bedfordshire	230	92·9	18	7·1
Berkshire	313	87·9	43	12·1
Buckinghamshire	259	85·7	43	14·3
East Sussex	312	93·8	20	6·2
Essex	709	92·1	61	7·9
Greater London	3,020	90·1	331	9·9
Hampshire	707	91·9	63	8·1
Hertfordshire	441	88·6	57	11·4
Kent	656	92·6	52	7·4
Oxfordshire	240	90·6	25	9·4
Surrey	477	85·2	83	14·8
West Sussex	354	90·9	35	9·1
Isle of Wight	54	97·8	1	2·2
Avon	423	94·3	25	5·7
Cornwall	202	97·2	6	2·8
Devon	503	95·5	24	4·5
Dorset	304	95·0	16	5·0
Gloucestershire	250	93·2	18	6·8
Somerset	211	95·5	10	4·5
Wiltshire	266	94·7	15	5·3

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information the Treasury holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Mr. Nelson: All relevant background and experience is taken into account when considering individuals for appointment to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what procedures the Treasury has to prevent the

possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury takes all reasonable steps to ensure that all relevant background and experience is taken into account when a Minister has to approve a person or shortlist for an appointment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the organisations and individuals outside the Treasury who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Nelson: The public appointments unit is sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the shortlist for appointment or the person appointed.

Foreign Assets

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the assets *(a)* in total and *(b)* per head of population of (i) El Salvador, (ii) Nepal, (iii) Paraguay, (iv) Benin, (v) Togo, (vi) Sierra Leone, (vii) Mauritius, (viii) Burundi, (ix) Rwanda, (x) Haiti, (xi) Chad, (xii) Albania, (xiii) Barbados, (xiv) Malta, (xv) Botswana, (xvi) Ukraine, (xvii) The Gambia and (xviii) Mongolia.

Mr. Nelson: Information on most countries' GNP and per capita GNP is available from various published sources, including the World bank's annual world development reports and the OECD's annual "Geographical distribution of financial flows to developing countries", copies of which are held in the Library.

Private Sector Debt

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total United Kingdom personal private sector debt; and what is the total United Kingdom personal private sector debt per household.

Mr. Nelson: Total indebtedness of the personal sector —which includes unincorporated businesses and private non-profit making bodies, as well as households—was £499 billion in September 1993. Figures for household debt are not available. The number of households in the United Kingdom was 22·4 million in April 1991. Both figures are the latest available.

Household Debt

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average level of household debt for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson: Debt figures for the personal sector—which includes unincorporated businesses and private non-profit making bodies, as well as households—are available from the Central Statistical Office database. Separate figures for the household sector are not available.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the reasons why the nominal exchange rate against the ecu in January was only 2 per cent. less than in December 1989; what was the corresponding reduction/increase in the real exchange rate against the ecu based on *(a)* relative producer prices, *(b)* relative export unit values and *(c)* the terms of trade for manufacturers: and what has been the effect on output and employment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Nelson: Movements in the nominal exchange rate between currencies reflect many factors in the countries concerned, including relative growth rates, cyclical positions and inflation prospects. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 March 1994, *Official Report,* column *15,* which provides references to data which can be used to calculate the information requested. In the same answer I made a statement about the effect of the real exchange rate on output and employment in manufacturing industry, to which I also refer him.

Personal Investment Authority

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the appointment of Mr. Joe Palmer as chairman of the Personal Investment Authority.

Mr. Nelson: A number of representations have been received. However, the appointment of the chairman of the Personal Investment Authority is a matter for the board of the authority.

Taxation

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning the effect Government tax policies will have from the beginning of April on the economic well-being of the average family with two children and one spouse on average male earnings.

Mr. Dorrell: Treasury Ministers have received a number of representations concerning the effects of the Government's tax policies on the living standards of families.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning the cost to the average family of the cumulative tax increases announced since March 1993.

Mr. Dorrell: Treasury Ministers have received a number of representations.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the tax burden of a married couple on typical earnings and with two children.

Mr. Dorrell: A single-earner couple with two children on average earnings is likely to pay under 22 per cent. of its gross earnings in income tax and national insurance contributions in 1994-95. Under the last Labour Government it paid 23 per cent. on average.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the change in the tax burden

for a married couple on typical earnings, and with two children, since 1978-79 is accounted for by increases and extensions in VAT.

Sir John Cope: The change in the tax burden since 1978-79 has been determined by a range of factors, including the growth in real earnings as well as changes in the tax system. Reliable estimates of the contribution of changes in the rate and coverage of VAT are not available.

Shareholders

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will instruct the Bank of England to ensure that individual shareholders in public companies continue to receive company reports and so on, and share certificates in any new trading system for the stock exchange.

Mr. Nelson: I take it that the hon. Member is referring to the proposed paperless share settlement system called CREST. The Bank of England has designed CREST to permit individual shareholders, if they wish, to participate in CREST while remaining on the company register and so receive company reports, etc. direct from the companies in which they hold shares. Moreover, membership of the system will be voluntary, so that any shareholder may instead continue to hold share certificates and remain on the company register. This may be a simpler option for the less active smaller investor.

Indirect Taxation

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people with earnings so low that they do not pay income tax will be affected this month by increases in indirect taxation.

Sir John Cope: It is not possible to determine the number of individuals with earnings but not paying tax who will be affected by indirect tax increases.

VAT

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new businesses have been registered for VAT in each of the last five years in *(a)* Milton Keynes, *(b)* Bedford and *(c)* Luton.

Sir John Cope: Customs hold registration information by local office. The local VAT office at Bedford covers Milton Keynes. The number of new businesses registered for VAT in Bedford and Luton in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*New registrations at the Bedford office*	*New registrations at the Luton office*
1989	3,222	2,574
1990	2,909	2,200
1991	2,160	2,320
1992	1,784	2,166
1993	1,912	2,084

Stable Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *665*, what priority he accords to stable prices; and what is the connection between that and *(a)* each of the priorities indicated in his answer and *(b)* reducing unemployment.

Mr. Nelson: Low inflation on a permanent basis is an essential condition for sustained economic growth and higher living standards. But in itself it is not enough. Combined with the Government's policies to improve the functioning of the labour market, and the operation of markets more generally, it will contribute to a lasting fall in unemployment.

Low Incomes

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to compensate the poorest 10 per cent. of wage earners, following the changes announced in last year's Budget which came into effect this month.

Mr. Portillo: Since 1979 those in the lowest decile of adult male full-time earnings have enjoyed a real increase in take home pay of 18·2 per cent.

Flower Growers

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence there is that mainland European flower growers are selling produce into British markets and evading taxation.

Mr. Dorrell: I am unaware of any evidence of tax evasion in this area. But the revenue departments are always prepared to investigate such evidence if brought to them.

Decentralisation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to revise his policy on the devolvement and decentralisation of Government functions and activity to the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The policy remains as set out in the relocation guidelines, as updated in January 1993, a copy of which is in the Library of the House of Commons.

Mortgage Interest Relief at Source

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people received MIRAS in 1988; and what was the total cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Dorrell: About 9·2 million single people or married couples received mortgage interest relief in 1988-89 at a total cost of £5·4 billion.

Industrial Building Allowance

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much revenue is forgone by allowing industrial building allowance to extend to office and retail premises for sporting and recreational facilities;

(2) if he will publish an estimate for the latest year for which information is available of the value of industrial building allowances against corporation tax due on buildings associated with the provision of sporting and recreational facilities to employees.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the industrial building allowance is available for workplace nurseries in workplaces other than factories and warehouses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Industrial building allowances may be available for workplace nurseries within premises which are in use for the purposes of a trade carried on in a factory, or for other purposes defined in sections 18 and 19 of the Capital Allowances Act 1990.

Workplace Nurseries

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many employers have workplace nurseries;

(2) how many employees get the benefit of tax relief for workplace nurseries.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not available centrally on the number of nurseries. It is estimated about 20,000 employees had a full-time or part-time place for their children in a workplace nursery in 1991.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish an estimate for the latest year for which information is available of the revenue raised from income tax charged on the benefit in kind to employees who make use of child care facilities paid for by their employers other than tax-exempt workplace nurseries.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that in 1993-94 the tax charged was about £5 million.

Vice President Gore (Meeting)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *446*, what agreements were reached on environmental matters during dinner with Vice President Gore on 14 March; and what decisions he took consequently to that dinner.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None. The discussion was an internal exchange of views and was not intended to be the occasion for decisions on specific issues.

Privatisation Costs

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what expenditure it is proposed to incur in order to finance privatisation costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Expenditure will be needed to cover:

(i) the initial costs of advisers, estimated at £2,000,000, in connection with the forthcoming sale of shares in the two Generating Companies;

(ii) expenditure, estimated at £600,000, in connection with the Treasury's sale of privatised companies' debt this year.

Parliamentary approval of these new services will be sought in the 1994-95 main and summer supplementary estimates for Her Majesty's Treasury's sale or sales of residual Government shareholdings and Government holdings of privatised companies' debt vote (class XVII, vote 16). Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £2,600,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

European Union (United Kingdom Payments)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the additional payments the United Kingdom will be obliged to make to the European Union in *(a)* 1994-95, *(b)* 1995-96 and *(c)* 1996-97 as a result of the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 25 March 1994]:* The contributions made to the EC Budget under the Community's VAT—or "Third"—resource are made on the basis of a harmonised VAT base, designed to ensure that variations in VAT coverage and rates do not affect contributions. The Community's GNP—or "Fourth"—resource is based on GNP at market prices, and the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel is likely to increase very slightly United Kingdom payments under this heading. The EC budget is only established one year in advance so estimates of future payments are necessarily uncertain and the amounts will depend on the detailed circumstances of the EC budget in each year and the overall growth in EC GNP in general and United Kingdom GNP in particular.

Fuel Consumption

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what advice Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has given to British Gas and the regional electricity supply companies setting out options for apportioning bills for supplies consumed before and after the day when VAT is introduced;

(2) if he will publish details of the agreements negotiated by British Gas and the regional electricity supply companies with Her Majesty's Customs and Excise regarding the calculation of fuel consumed after 1 April on the basis of warmer weather; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Apportionment can be based on meter readings taken on 31 March. Customs have also agreed that it would be acceptable to apportion bills by using the ratio of the number of days before and from 1 April or by applying weighting factors of 1·75:1 for electricity and 2·5:1 for gas. The actual method of apportionment chosen is a commercial matter between the individual suppliers and their customers.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice is given to consumers who believe that the apportionment of their electricity or gas bills for fuel consumed before and after 1 April 1994 is not fair or reasonable; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Consumers should approach their supplier with evidence that would support a different apportionment.

European Investment Bank Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the level of allocation of European Investment bank loans for projects in the United Kingdom in 1993 changed from previous years; and what were the reasons for the difference.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The following is the information:

European Investment Bank lending in the United Kingdom (Loan signatures)

Year	£ million	Million ecu
1993	1,502	1,929
1992	1,796	2,407
1991	1,467	2,091
1990	1,365	1,893
1989	1,084	1,623

Figures for European Investment bank lending in the United Kingdom, over the past five years, are shown in the table. It should be noted, however, that these do not reflect a pre-planned lending programme, with fixed amounts allocated in advance to lending in the United Kingdom.

The European Investment bank has a dual character, as both a development institution, and as a bank. It lends to capital investment projects which must both, contribute to the development of the Community, and meet normal banking criteria, especially that of financial viability. As a consequence, it does not attempt to set overall, national, or sectoral targets for lending, but rather responds to market demand, considering every application for a loan on an individual basis, against its objectives.

The annual outturn figures published by the European Investment bank reflect this process, but they can also be influenced by decisions by the bank and promoters as to exactly when they will choose to sign for a loan, once it has been approved. Delays in signing agreed loans over a year end can have a significant impact on the figures. This occurred in 1993, when, for this reason, an increase in approvals of loans was not matched by a corresponding increase in loan signatures.

HEALTH

Medicines (Advertising) Regulations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to make the Medicines (Advertising) Regulations under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972.

Mr. Sackville: This is currently under consideration.

Hospital Staff, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage ratio of trained nurses to the number of in-patients in the Doncaster area national health service hospitals for *(a)* 1982-83, *(b)* 1984-85, *(c)* 1990-91, *(d)* 1991-92 and *(e)* 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table:

	1990	1991	1992
In-patients[1]	48,867	49,856	50,984
Qualified nurses[2] in Doncaster Health Authority area at 30 September	1,380	1,350	1,350
Ratio nurses:in-patients	1:35	1:37	1:38

[1] In-patient figures are calculated by adding together ordinary admissions and day cases.
[2] The figure for qualified nurses excludes community nurses and midwives.

Planning Forums (Representation)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representation there is of disabled people, carers of disabled people, parents of disabled children and disabled children on the planning forums of each local authority in England.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities are obliged by law to consult service users and carers on their community care plans. It is for each authority to determine how best to consult and involve people.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the targets for improvements in mental health services which she has asked the national health service executive to monitor with regard to the care of patients in the special supervision group identified by the Ritchie report.

Mr. Bowis: From April 1 1994, providers of mental health services will be required to establish supervision registers of those patients with a severe mental illness, who may pose a significant risk to themselves or others. The national health service executive will monitor the introduction of the registers to ensure that all patients in contact with the specialist psychiatric services have been assessed for inclusion on local registers by October 1994. The executive will also be monitoring provider units to ensure that all patients in contact with the specialist psychiatric services are subject to the care programme approach.

Child Guidance Clinics

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child guidance clinics were operating in 1985 and in each year since 1990.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Children's In-patient Units

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children's in-patient units were operating in 1985 and in each year since 1990.

Mr. Bowis: The information available is shown in the table.

	Number of units	Number of beds
1990-91	427	14,458
1991-92	[1]306	14,436
1992-93	295	14,152

[1] Before 1991-92 information was collected by hospital site. Thereafter, as a result of National Health Service re-organisation, some individual hospital sites were aggregated under larger hospital and community units. The overall number of beds is therefore shown for comparative purposes.

Figures for 1985 are not comparable as they were then collected by consultant speciality—not by numbers of designated children's beds and units.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the average hours contracted for junior doctors in each EU country.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the results of her new deal initiative for junior doctors.

Dr. Mawhinney: We receive regular reports on junior doctors' hours from regional task forces. Between September 1990 and September 1993 the number of junior doctors and dentists contracted for more than an average of 83 hours a week fell from over 13,300 to 91, a reduction of 99 per cent. This is a remarkable achievement. The remaining few posts are being tackled as a priority.

From August 1992 to September 1993 the number of those working in hard-pressed on-call posts contracted on average for between 73 and 83 hours a week fell from over 10,200 to 7,800, a 24 per cent. reduction. We announced in December last year that eliminating the remaining posts in this category is a priority in 1994.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that hospital trusts abide by her new deal for junior doctors.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our regional task forces work very closely with trusts and authorities to monitor progress and support local action to reach the new deal targets. Task forces receive regular detailed reports from all units and, in turn, submit returns to the ministerial group on junior doctors' hours.

I and the chief executive of the national health service have also written respectively to chairmen and chief executives of trusts and authorities to re-affirm the Government's commitment to eliminating hard-pressed on-call posts contracted for more than 72 hours a week. This is a priority for 1994 and we have issued a detailed action plan to all regions, trusts and authorities.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to issue guidelines on minimum sleep for junior doctors within 24 hour and seven day periods.

Dr. Mawhinney: The guidance on the new deal for junior doctors issued in June 1991, copies of which are available in the Library, advises that those working on on-call rotas should have a reasonable expectation of eight hours rest during a period of 32 hours on duty, principally within the on-call period. Where possible the greater part of this rest period should be continuous. For junior doctors working on partial shifts there should be a reasonable expectation of four hours rest during a duty period of 16 hours. Those on full shifts should also be allowed reasonable time for natural breaks during their working time. The implementation of this guidance forms part of our overall policy of reducing junior doctors' hours of work as part of the new deal. No further guidance is necessary.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctors in each region are working more than 72 hours per week; and what plans she has to ensure that no doctor works more than 72 hours by her target date of 1 January 1995.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the number of hours worked by junior doctors is not available centrally. The number of junior doctors and dentists contracted for more than an average of 72 hours a week in England, by region, is:

Posts contracted for over 72 hours per week at 30 September 1993 (England)

Region	*Number*
Northern	780
Yorkshire	1,381
Trent	550
East Anglian	517
North West Thames	729
North East Thames	1,229
South East Thames	762
South West Thames	801
Wessex	520
Oxford	532
South Western	327
West Midlands	925
Mersey	783
North Western	1,369
England	11,205

Notes:
(i) Figures derived from the reports of the 14 English Regional Task Forces.
(ii) SHAs included in the figures for the Thames Regions.

Our priority is to eliminate all hard-pressed on-call posts contracted for an average of more than 72 hours a week by 31 December 1994. To this end I and the chief executive of the national health service have written respectively to chairmen and chief executives of trusts and authorities to re-affirm the Government's commitment to this target. Detailed guidance—EL(94)17—has also been sent to regions, authorities and trusts which provides a plan for action for the remainder of 1994. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

We are also providing in 1994-95 an extra £11·6 million from central funds to create at least 125 new consultant posts and for local initiatives to help the new deal. This will bring the total number of new posts for senior doctors created to reduce hours since the new deal was launched in 1991 to 750.

Orthopaedics

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what difficulties are being experienced in hospitals in the Hillingdon area in appointing suitable candidates to fill consultant posts in orthopaedics; what steps she is taking to increase the number of doctors qualifying in this specialty; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: At the last review of trauma and orthopaedics by the joint planning advisory committee—JPAC—in February 1993, the senior registrar national target was increased from 181 to 210 posts, and the career registrar national target from 153 to 202 posts. We are confident that all these posts will be funded within the target timescales. This should increase the number of suitable candidates to fill consultant vacancies.

My hon. Friend may wish to consult the chairmen of national health service trusts in Hillingdon for local details.

Fostering Respite Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of authorities offer fostering respite care.

Mr. Bowis: Information available centrally relates to local authorities who have provided children with a series of short term placements with foster carers under one

agreement. Such placements generally relate to respite care if parents need relief, either from caring for a disabled child or for other reasons, or because a child is at risk of harm from their own behaviour.

In the period 14 October 1991 to 31 March 1992, 76 authorities—78 per cent. of those submitting returns—looked after children in this way.

Redundant Health Facilities

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the amount spent by health authorities in keeping redundant hospital and other redundant health facilities wind and water tight and safe from vandalism and theft.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. Regional health authorities, and national health service trusts, are responsible for property management.

Asthma

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children aged five to 11 years have died following acute asthma attacks in each health region in England since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths from asthma (ICD[1] 493) in each health region of England for the grouped ages of 5 to 11, 1990-92

Regional health authority	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northern	1	1	—
Yorkshire	—	1	1
Trent	—	—	—
East Anglian	1	—	—
North West Thames	—	3	—
North East Thames	1	1	—
South East Thames	—	—	1
South West Thames	—	1	—
Wessex	1	—	1
Oxford	2	—	—
South Western	—	1	—
West Midlands	—	2	—
Mersey	3	—	1
North Western	3	1	—

[1] International Classification of Disease, 9th Revision.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many asthma-related deaths of children aged five to 11 years there have been on school premises in the current academic year in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for the current academic year are not available. There were four deaths recorded for this age group in 1992 in England and Wales but none occurred on school premises. Information relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her policy on the immediate availability of ventilators for children suffering from asthma aged *(a)* under 5, *(b)* 5 to 11 and *(c)* 11 to 18 years.

Mr. Sackville: I understand that the hon. Member is referring to the immediate availability of portable inhalers which are prescribed for asthma sufferers to help control their condition. Our advice is that children should have immediate access to the medication they require, and that in consultation with parents and with appropriate medical advice, children should be encouraged to manage their own medical condition as early as is consistent with their development.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of asthma were reported in each health region for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information available, which derives from hospital in-patient data and which does not cover all cases of asthma, is shown in the table. The 1979 to 1985 data are based on a survey of discharges and deaths in hospital, and the figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are based on finished consultant episodes. The first year of published data from the hospital episode statistics is 1989-90. The reason for the increase over the period 1979 to 1990-91 is not known, but some proportion of the increase can be attributed to a change in diagnostic practice.

Figures were not collected in 1986. As 1987-88 was the first year of changing to the, then, new Körner system there was considerable under reporting and the resultant data are incomplete in certain important areas.

Hospital episodes with a main diagnosis of asthma (ICD9 493)
In-patients by region of treatment

	Discharges and deaths							*Finished consultant episodes*	
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*[1]1989-90*	*[1]1990-91*
Northern	2,190	2,550	2,660	3,180	3,090	4,000	3,950	7,686	5,699
Yorkshire	3,230	3,630	3,960	4,220	4,230	4,650	5,610	7,189	7,928
Trent	3,710	3,710	4,970	5,150	5,790	6,300	7,300	8,722	8,490
East Anglian	1,240	1,520	2,060	1,770	1,950	2,480	2,700	3,198	2,914
North West Thames	2,740	3,320	3,880	4,480	4,840	5,560	6,460	8,922	7,378
North East Thames	3,650	4,140	4,950	5,550	5,650	6,920	7,090	9,538	8,341
South East Thames	2,690	3,490	4,040	4,150	5,080	5,690	5,910	7,817	7,053
South West Thames	2,090	2,400	3,140	3,390	3,560	4,190	3,890	5,548	5,511
Wessex	1,740	1,350	3,020	2,500	3,600	3,050	3,180	4,143	4,317
Oxford	1,780	2,280	2,390	3,020	3,240	3,440	3,660	5,161	3,691
South Western	1,960	2,310	2,570	3,000	2,950	3,460	3,820	5,683	5,455
West Midlands	3,510	4,090	5,080	6,050	6,900	7,140	8,320	10,130	10,034
Mersey	2,010	2,610	2,670	3,430	3,360	3,730	3,950	4,968	5,047
North Western	5,090	4,900	5,880	6,700	7,370	8,300	8,900	10,232	10,550
SHA's	1,020	1,310	1,510	1,710	1,500	1,450	1,390	1,251	869

	Discharges and deaths							Finished consultant episodes	
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	[1]1989-90	[1]1990-91
England	38,650	43,610	52,780	58,310	63,100	70,360	76,130	100,188	93,277

Sources: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE) 1979 to 1985.
Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) 1989-90 onwards.
[1] Provisional figures.

Emergency Contraception

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total annual cost to the national health service of prescriptions for emergency contraception.

Mr. Sackville: There is only one product under this category of drug. The information requested is therefore commercially confidential to the manufacturer and cannot be disclosed.

Care Orders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of homeless people aged under 16, 16 to 18 and 18 years or more have had care orders at some time in the past; and what is the national average percentage of children who have care orders.

Mr. Bowis: The Department does not collect information about the whereabouts of children once they have ceased to be looked after by a local authority. The number of children subject to care orders at 31 March 1992 in England, as a percentage of the estimated total number of children aged under 18 years, was 0·33 per cent.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were received into care because of homelessness in each of the 10 years preceding the implementation of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.

Mr. Bowis: The information available centrally relates to the number of children in England taken into care on a voluntary basis because their families were made homeless. Figures for the 10 years preceding 1977 are in the table.

Children admitted to care due to homelessness England 1968-77

	England
1968	—
1969	—
1970	—
1971	2,829
1972	2,811
1973	2,619
1974	2,204
1975	1,503
1976	1,194
1977	946

BCG Vaccination

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's target for coverage of BCG vaccination; and if she will list those district health authorities and regional health authorities not reaching those targets.

Mr. Sackville: There is no target for coverage of BCG immunisation. The Government recommend that BCG be offered to all school children between the ages of 10 and 14 years and also to new immigrants from countries with a high prevalence of the disease; to their newly born children; and to certain other higher risk groups which are listed in "Immunisation against infectious disease", copies of which are available in the Library. About 75 per cent. of school children are immunised each year whilst a further 5 to 7 per cent. are already tuberculin positive and, therefore, do not require immunisation.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to include the BCG vaccination in the targets for general practitioners.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 5 November 1993 at column *536*.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which districts no longer carry out routine school programmes for BCG vaccination; how many children were vaccinated for BCG in each of the last five years; and what percentage of children have had BCG vaccination by the target date in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: We understand that 15 health authorities have discontinued the school's BCG immunisation programme but details are not available centrally.

The number of children immunised with BCG in the last five years is shown in the table:

Children given BCG vaccination by age in the years 1988-89 to 1992-93

	Number of vaccinations (thousands)				
	Total	Under 1	1-9	10-13	14-15
1988-89	404·0	31·3	4·6	269·1	99·0
[1]1989-90	194·5	31·4	4·6	120·8	37·7
1990-91	472·5	36·7	5·5	300·0	130·3
1991-92	453·6	34·5	6·7	294·5	117·9
1992-93	393·6	43·9	4·1	262·8	82·8

[1]The school BCG programme was suspended in 1989 as there were insufficient supplies of BCG vaccine.

The percentage of children which have had BCG immunisation in each of the last five years is not available.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy on BCG immunisation of neonates; how many district health authorities and regional health authorities are without policies in BCG immunisation of neonates; and how many offer BCG immunisation of neonates.

Mr. Sackville: The Government's policy on the BCG —Bacille-Calmette-Guérin— immunisation of neonates is as set out in the memorandum, "Immunisation against infectious disease" copies of which are available in the Library. It is recommended that all babies born to immigrants to the United Kingdom who have come from

countries with a high prevalence of tuberculosis are immunised with BCG. Eighty per cent. of districts, including 14 of the 15 of those who have stopped the schools immunisation programme, offer BCG to neonates. Thirty-one districts do not offer BCG to neonates.

Commissioning Agencies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a list of commissioning agencies and the health authorities that they cover.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is currently being collected.

Vaccination Methods

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has on the extent to which pre-filling syringes to be used in vaccinations reduces anxiety in patients.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in her Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Sackville: The information shows the position on 23 March 1994.

Col 1 Grade	*Col 2* Total staff (Numbers)	*Col 3* Women Number	*Col 4* Per cent.	*Col 5* Ethnic Minorities Number	*Col 6* Per cent.	*Col 7* Disabled people Number	*Col 8* Per cent.
1	3	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
2	8	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
3	25	5	20·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
4	28	11	39·2	0	0·0	2	7·1
5	204	78	38·2	11	5·3	0	0·0
6	136	44	32·3	7	6·3	0	0·0
7	575	150	26·0	21	3·7	3	0·5
All Grades (including 1-7)	5,110	2,653	51·9	648	13·2	67	1·4

Notes:
1. Cols 2-4 exclude staff on loan to other government departments, on maternity leave of more than three months, on unpaid career/study breaks and casual staff.
2. Cols 5-8 exclude Youth Treatment Service, staff on loan, secondees into the Department and casual staff and the percentages shown relate to the numbers of staff in *this* definition, rather than the definition in note 1.
3. Numbers of staff from ethnic minorities relate to those responding to the Department's ethnic origin questionnaire.
4. The figures for disabled people are for Registered Disabled People only.

Family Centres

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to develop the network of family-based centres to help families in crisis.

Mr. Bowis: The Government fund local authorities, through the revenue support grant, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need by providing a range of appropriate services, including family centres.

They make their own decisions on the allocation of resources available to them. Local authorities have a duty to provide family centres as they consider appropriate, either themselves or through working jointly with other organisations including voluntary bodies.

The Department has funded the family centre network for a number of years with the aim of promoting the family centre approach. It also funds other voluntary organisations which run family centres with the support of local authorities and, in some cases of health authorities.

Behavioural Difficulties

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to establish an inter-departmental agency to co-ordinate responses to children with behavioural difficulties.

Mr. Bowis: None.

Young People (Support)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase funding for aftercare support for young people leaving residential care.

Mr. Bowis: It is for local authorities to determine their priorities and the level of funding to be allocated from within their overall budget.

Passive Smoking

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the findings of the most recent research she has commissioned on the health risks in terms of morbidity and mortality of passive smoking.

Mr. Sackville: The available evidence on the health effects of passive smoking is summarised in paragraph 2.13 of "Smoke Free For Health" which was published in February 1994. Copies of the report are available in the Library.

The Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health will be reviewing the available research findings on this issue at the earliest opportunity.

Adoption

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the length of time a child is fostered prior to adoption.

Mr. Bowis: No definitive timescale can be given about the length of time a child might spend in foster care prior

to adoption. A placement can be made only when all the important factors of the child's circumstances and needs have been carefully considered as well as the availability of prospective adopters to meet those needs.

Nurses (Smoking)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has of the percentage of nurses who smoke.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The Government are committed to ensuring that the whole of the health service works towards a virtually smoke-free environment for staff, patients and visitors.

Immunisation

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the relative costs of delivering immunisation by prefilled syringe and by the traditional method of vial, syringe and needle.

Mr. Sackville: Some vaccines are supplied in pre-filled syringes; the costs are matters of commercial confidence.

Vaccinations

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest average national targets being achieved by general practitioners for measles, mumps and rubella —MMR—polio, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccinations.

Dr. Mawhinney: At 1 October 1992, 88 per cent. of general practitioners had achieved the higher target and 7 per cent. had achieved the lower target.

Drug Companies

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to issue further guidelines on the relationship between general practitioners and drug company representatives.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to issue guidelines on the relationship between general practitioners and drug company representatives. Advice on professional conduct is a matter for the General Medical Council Ethical committee.

Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on children aged 16 to 18 years and young adults and after care within families.

Mr. Bowis: The Children Act provides a flexible framework of powers which enable local authorities to tailor support to the needs of the individual child leaving care.

Care Orders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans or guidelines she has for ensuring that children, subject to care orders, return to a family environment as soon as possible.

Mr. Bowis: Part III of the Children Act 1989 emphasises the duty on local authorities to provide services to support parents in bringing up children in need in their own home and to work in partnership with parents in looking after children away from home. The Children Act "Guidance and Regulations Volume 3", on family placements, contains guidance on the planned return of a child to his family after a placement with another carer under a care order. This takes into account the views of parents along with the views of the child—where he is of sufficient understanding—so far as this is practicable and in the best interests of the child.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in each year of age up to 18 years with care orders are *(a)* placed with foster families, *(b)* in homes and *(c)* in neither; and how many are placed with foster families who are relatives.

Mr. Bowis: Information available centrally is shown in the table.

Number of children under care orders by age and placement at 31 March 1992—England estimates

	Total	*Placement*				
		Foster placement total	*With relative or friends*	*Other placement*	*Community homes*	*Other*
Total	36,300	21,100	3,100	18,000	3,400	11,800
Under 1	550	400	30	370	10	140
Age at 31 March 1992						
1	1,200	750	80	670	10	460
2	1,400	810	100	710	10	550
3	1,600	920	140	780	10	680
4	1,600	970	140	830	40	640
5	1,700	1,000	160	840	40	660
6	1,700	1,100	150	900	60	600
7	1,800	1,100	160	960	70	620
8	1,800	1,100	160	980	80	560
9	1,900	1,200	170	1,000	130	540
10	1,900	1,300	170	1,100	150	510
11	2,000	1,400	200	1,200	200	430
12	2,200	1,500	200	1,300	250	500
13	2,200	1,500	200	1,100	340	510
14	2,500	1,500	220	1,300	440	580
15	2,900	1,600	260	1,300	620	700
16	3,500	1,700	270	1,400	590	1,200

	Total	Foster placement total	Placement: With relative or friends	Placement: Other placement	Community homes	Other[1]
17	3,500	1,400	230	1,200	330	1,700
18	300	100	10	90	30	170

Figures are rounded to the nearest 100 for estimates a thousand or more and to the nearest 10 otherwise.

Hospital Records

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what legislation is in place to safeguard *(a)* hospital medical records and *(b)* administrative hospital records; what provisions are made to send them to a central depository or local archives; what differences there are for NHS trusts; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Medical and administrative records of national health service authorities, hospitals and trusts in England and Wales are covered by the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. The safe keeping and archiving of these records is the responsibility of individual NHS bodies, under the guidance of the Public Record Office. Advice on this was given to the NHS in health circular HC(89)20, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Hospital records selected for permanent preservation are kept in places of deposit appointed by the Keeper of Public Records on behalf of the Lord Chancellor under section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958, the great majority of which are local authority record offices.

Cancer Treatment

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has conducted into which cancers are better treated in a specialist cancer centre and for which cancers where it makes no difference.

Mr. Sackville: On the basis of research undertaken by the childhood cancer research group, funded by the Department at the University of Oxford, the survival rates of children with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia—the most common form of childhood leukaemia—are found to be higher at centres treating larger numbers of patients.

For acute myeloid leukaemia, survival rates in children treated at specialist teaching hospitals were found to be higher.

For several other types of childhood cancer, survival rates were better when children were treated at specialist paediatric oncology centres.

Whether adult cancer patients are better treated in specialist centres, is one of the principal issues being addressed by the Government's Chief Medical Officer's expert advisory group, which is carrying out an overall examination of cancer services.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fundholders have informed her that they would go private if the system were ended.

Dr. Mawhinney: The recent Kings Fund Institute report, "Evaluating the NHS Reforms", states that the abandonment of fundholding

". . .would probably lead to a substantial exodus from the NHS of fundholders setting up private insurance based HMOs".

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has that non-fundholding general practitioners plan to go private.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the provisional figures for *(a)* the total general practitioner fundholding budget, *(b)* the total savings in real terms and *(c)* the total management cost of general practitioner fundholding in real terms in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: Provisional figures suggest that in 1992-93 general practitioner fundholders achieved savings of £30 million on budgets totalling about £805 million. The management allowance costs for these fundholders was about £19 million.

Laxatives

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths are caused by laxatives every year.

Mr. Sackville: No deaths were recorded due to laxative poisoning—ICD[1] 973.1, 973.2 and 973.3—or due to adverse effects in correct usage—ICD E943.1, E943.2 and E943.3—from 1990 to 1992 in England and Wales.

[1] International Classification of Disease (9th revision).

Diphtheria

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of diphtheria in EC countries in each year since 1991; and how many cases of diphtheria have been recorded in each year since 1988 in England and Wales.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of notifications reported to Office of Population Censuses and Surveys of Diphtheria in England and Wales 1988-1992

	Number
1988	1
1989	2
1990	2
1991	2
[1]1992	8

[1] Data for 1992 are provisional.

The information relating to European Community countries is not available.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce a booster vaccination for diphtheria.

Mr. Sackville: We are currently considering the introduction of a booster dose.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths from *(a)* diphtheria and *(b)* hepatitis B have occurred in the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

The number of deaths from diphtheria ICD[1] 032 and hepatitis B ICD 070-2-070-3 for the last five years in England and Wales

Year	Diphtheria	Hepatitis B
1988	—	59
1989	—	58
1990	—	53
1991	—	53
1992	—	78

[1] Ninth revision international classification of disease code.

Drugs Advertising

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which drugs and medicines cannot be advertised by law; and how many deaths are caused each year by such drugs;

(2) what rules govern the advertising of laxatives on television.

Mr. Sackville: Licensed medicines may be advertised under the control of the Medicines Act 1968 and supporting regulations. Those available without prescription may be advertised to the public including by television.

Information on the overall number of deaths caused by drugs is not available.

Water Births

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the Government are taking, in addition to commissioning the Oxford perinatal epidemiology unit study, to determine the safety for the baby of labour or delivery in water; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is currently considering proposals for research into outcomes for babies whose mothers have delivered or laboured in water and will make a decision as soon as possible.

Tobacco Advertising

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect in advertising terms of tobacco-sponsored events on television and the effect of banning such indirect advertising on the consumption of cigarettes.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Health discussion document "Effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption" reviewed the available evidence in this area. It made no assessment of either the effect in advertising terms of tobacco sponsored events on television or of the effect of banning indirect advertising on cigarette consumption. Copies of the report, published in October 1992, are available in the Library.

Sterilisation

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the present fees to surgeons performing *(a)* a vasectomy and *(b)* a female sterilisation procedure in the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: The family planning fees effective from 1 April 1994 are:

	Operating fee £	Anaesthetist's fee £
Fee per case of male sterilisation performed		
a. As a separate procedure	74·25	36·65
b. During the course of another procedure	50·25	24·30
Fee per case of female sterilisation performed		
a. As a separate procedure	100·45	49·05
b. During the course of another procedure	67·15	32·75

Temazepam

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ban temazepam capsules.

Mr. Sackville: The licensing authority has no plans to ban temazepam capsules. The matter currently under review by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department is whether temazepam should be rescheduled under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985.

Psychiatric Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average daily cost to the NHS of using *(a)* a private psychiatric hospital bed and *(b)* an NHS psychiatric hospital bed in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: The average daily cost to the national health service of using a NHS psychiatric hospital bed in each of the last five years is shown in the table. The annual accounts and financial returns of health authorities do not separately identify expenditure incurred specifically on the purchase of healthcare outside the NHS.

Average daily cost per patient for psychiatric specialties

	Directly managed units and national health service trusts—England (£)
1988-89	40·14
1989-90	46·45
1990-91	51·89
1991-92	103·44
1992-93	116·04

Source:
Annual financial returns of health authorities and NHS trusts.
Notes:
1. Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.
2. Figures for 1988-89 to 1990-91 are not comparable with later years because:
   a. Figures prior to 1991-92 include only direct costs. From 1991-92 they additionally include:
      (i) Overheads
      (ii) Capital charges
   b. Changes in accounting practice.

Nurse Redundancies

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the number of nurses likely to be made redundant by the reorganisation in London health services; and how much money is earmarked for retraining them.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of redundancies will depend on action taken within individuals trusts and units.

An initial sum of £200,000 has been made available for retraining nurses affected by the changes in London. Additionally, the London implementation group is developing retraining programmes for displaced hospital staff who wish to work in primary and community care.

National Lottery

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances NHS trusts will be allowed to prevent the sale of national lottery tickets from outlets on their premises.

Dr. Mawhinney: This will be a matter for individual national health service trusts.

Sex Education

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those AIDS, sexual health and sexual education projects funded by the Department of Health together with the size of any grants or loans made by her Department in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: Funding in the area of HIV-AIDS and sexual health falls into two categories, allocations to health and local authorities and to the voluntary sector. These all include a proportion of funds for prevention initiatives. Since 1990 the following amounts have been made available:

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Health Education Authority/National AIDS helpline	10.00	11.00	11.225	11.506	[1]—
Health Authorities	127.5	137.3	181.5	214.4	228.0
Local Authorities	9.8	10.2	15.3	12.4	12.98
Voluntary Organisations (HIV)	1.80	1.90	1.987	1.927	1.789
Voluntary Organisations (Sexual Health)	.228	.253	.294	.293	.283

[1] To be settled.
A list of individual projects is not available centrally.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the work of her Department, the national health service and the Health education authority to improve the sexual health and sex education of homosexual men and lesbians.

Mr. Sackville: The Government have developed a comprehensive approach to limit the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as providing treatment and care to those affected. The prevention strategy takes account of a range of sexual behaviours and seeks to discourage practices which carry a risk of HIV infection. The Health Education Authority, national AIDS helpline, voluntary organisations and the national health service all contribute in many ways to this approach.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints regarding private or voluntary nursing homes were received in each district health authority for each year since the implementation of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private or voluntary nursing home beds, and how many private or voluntary nursing homes, were registered with each district health authority for each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: This information will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many whole-time equivalent nursing staff were allocated to registration and inspection duties under the Registered Homes Act 1984 within each district health authority for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities are responsible for the registration and inspection of all independent nursing homes in their area. The number of nurses employed on registration and inspection is a decision for each health authority.

Dental Services

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been deregistered for NHS dentistry treatment in each of the health authority areas within the south West region for the last 52 weeks for which figures are available; and what these totals represent as a proportion of the total population in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information will be placed in the Library. At 30 September 1993 there were 22 more dentists in contract with family health services authorities in South Western region than at 30 September 1992.

Cancer Diagnosis

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are in place on the training of general practitioners and nurses in cancer diagnosis.

Dr. Mawhinney: Cancer is recognised as a major cause of morbidity and death. As such the diagnosis and treatment of the various forms of cancer figures prominently in the education and training at all stages of a doctor's career.

Nurses are not trained in the diagnosis of cancer which is a medical responsibility.

Breast Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many specialist breast care nurses are employed in the national health service, by region.

Mr. Sackville: There is no specific occupation code for breast care, therefore any nurses working within this area are not separately identifiable.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she plans to change the national health service trusts external finance limit for 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: The external finance limit for national health service trusts in England will be increased by £10,993,000 for 1993-94 from £319,013,000 to £330,006,000, reflecting the take up of agreed end year flexibility entitlement. This will be charged to the reserve and therefore will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Consultancies

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much of the money spent on all types of consultancy by her Department in 1992-93 was spent by *(a)* the national health service management executive, *(b)* by regional health authorities and *(c)* by centrally run patient services.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* Expenditure on consultancy funded from the administration vote of the Department for the national health service management executive in 1992-93 was £6,765,821. Consultancy expenditure incurred from centrally held budgets funded from the hospital and community health services vote is not separately identifiable.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Joy Gardner Case

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General when the Crown Prosecution Service will bring forward recommendations on the possible prosecutions of those officers involved in the Joy Gardner case; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service is at present considering the evidence which has been obtained as a result of the recent police investigation. I am not yet able to say when a decision will be taken.

Building Projects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General what major building projects, valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed since 1989 in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department.

The Attorney-General: None.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 31 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Child Witnesses

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many pre-recorded pre-trial interviews, in line with the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and the "Manual of Good Practice", have been made since the coming into force of the Act; how many have been presented in evidence in child abuse cases; and how many have been refused as evidence.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is estimated that between the date of implementation of the relevant provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1991—1 October 1992—and 30 September 1993, in excess of 14,000 interviews with child witnesses have been recorded on videotape. Between 1 October 1992 and 1 January 1994, there were 306 applications to submit a pre-recorded videotaped interview with a child witness under section 32A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, as amended by section 54 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. In 109 cases the tapes were shown in court. Applications to submit pre-recorded evidence have been refused in only 10 cases.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures are being taken by courts in Liverpool to protect child witnesses with particular reference to use of screens, television link equipment and pre-recorded interviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Two sets of television links and video playback equipment are in place in the Crown court sitting at Liverpool combined court centre. Arrangements can be made for screens to be available at the Crown and County court in Liverpool if required. All magistrates courts in Liverpool have access to screens and video playback equipment, and the youth court is equipped with TV links. When necessary, child witnesses appearing before the magistrates may use the television links in place at the Crown court centre.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which courts in Liverpool have child liaison officers to protect child witnesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is a designated child liaison officer for every Crown court centre, including the one at Liverpool combined court centre.

SCOTLAND

Public Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of *(a)* Asians and *(b)* black people; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Lang: Except for children's panels where ethnic origin is neither sought nor recorded, as far as I am aware, no Asian or black people were appointed in 1993 to the bodies sponsored by the Scottish Office and listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Traffic Orders

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many temporary traffic orders were made by local authorities in each year since 1985 under section 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to restrict or prohibit the use of footpaths or bridleways for which the Scottish Office gave consent under section 15(2) of that Act for an extension of the period for which the order was in force.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Temporary traffic orders affecting footpaths and bridleways are not identified separately from those affecting road traffic and the information could be supplied only at a disproportionate cost.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The number and percentage of officers in grades 1 to 7, including grade equivalents, and overall in the Scottish Office, its executive agencies and associated departments, excluding the Scottish prison service, who were *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, are shown below:

Number and percentage of officers who are women—position as at 1 April 1993

Grade (and equivalents)	*Women*	*Percentage*
1	—	—
2	—	—
3	4	16·7
4	3	16·7
5	17	12·7
6	37	18·5
7	80	17·1
All Grades (Headcount)	2,811	42·2

Notes:

At April 1993, the total number of respondents to my Department's Ethnic Monitoring Survey who described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority was 29 or 0·5 per cent. of the total number of respondents. Of that number 3 were at Grade 7 level and above.

At 1 July 1993, there were 2 registered disabled persons at Grade 6 level and one at Grade 7 level which represents 1 per cent. and 0·2 per cent. respectively of staff in these grades. There were 87 registered disabled persons (1·3 per cent.) who were recorded as employed in my Department.

Motorists (Culpable Homicide Charges)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many drivers of motor vehicles have been charged with culpable homicide in the last 20 years for which information is available; how many such charges have proceeded to trial; and how many convictions have resulted.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available. However, I understand that there are very few such prosecutions—no more than one or two per year on average.

Full-time Employment

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the definition in terms of hours of a full-time job in 1979 and what is it now; and if he will list the changes in definition with their dates and the reasons for them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

For the purposes of collecting and producing statistical information, a full-time worker is defined, in terms of hours worked, as an employee who works more than 30 hours per week, excluding overtime. For teachers and academics this is modified to 25 hours or more per week.

This definition has been used consistently since before 1979.

PRIME MINISTER

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister how many Proton cars were purchased by the Cabinet Office in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

The Prime Minister: None.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of his official entertaining in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his office's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of official hospitality by my office, for each year since 1990-91, is as follows:

Year	*Cost* £
1990-91	23,830
1991-92	40,976
1992-93	30,023

An outturn for 1993-94 is not yet available.

Former Prime Ministers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what restrictions govern the spending by former Prime Ministers of their annual allowances;

(2) if he will list the total allowances paid to each former Prime Minister in each year since 1991;

(3) what mechanisms are in place to monitor the use of allowances paid to former Prime Ministers.

The Prime Minister: On 1 April 1991, I introduced an allowance to assist former Prime Ministers with the continuing heavy burden of office and secretarial costs arising from their special position in public life. The allowance is similar in purpose and amount to the parliamentary office costs allowance but is paid in respect of public not parliamentary duties.

The total payments from the allowance are as follows:

Year	*Payments* £
1991-92	88,956
1992-93	124,981
1993-94	[1]130,000

[1] Estimate.

I do not think it right to disclose the amounts claimed by individual former Prime Ministers, any more than the House discloses details of claims by individual Members under the office costs allowance.

Payments from the allowance are subject to the same scrutiny and controls as other payments from voted monies.

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the Acts of Parliament and Consolidation Acts that affect local government which have been introduced by his Department since 1990.

The Prime Minister: None.

Injunctions

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions, and when, since January 1990 the Government have met costs of injunctions against publications; at what cost; against which publications and on behalf of which Departments or Ministers.

The Prime Minister: There are no centrally held records of such cases.

Interception of Communications Act 1985

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Prime Minister when the annual report of the commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 will be laid before the House; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of Sir Thomas Bingham's second annual report, for 1993, has been laid before the House today in accordance with section 8(7) of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The confidential annexe to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 8(8) of the 1985 Act. I am grateful to the commissioner for his report. I note in particular his observations that the Secretaries of State take great care to satisfy themselves that the warrants are necessary for the purposes stated in the Act, and that the system for the issue of warrants is working as intended by Parliament.

Sir Thomas Bingham's appointment as commissioner will end on 10 April. I am grateful to him for the work he has done in that capacity. He will be succeeded, with effect from 11 April, by Lord Nolan.

Security Service Act 1989

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Prime Minister when the annual report of the commissioner appointed under the Security Service Act 1989 will be laid before the House; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of Lord Justice Stuart-Smith's fourth annual report, for 1993, has been laid

before the House today in accordance with section 4(6) of the Security Service Act 1989. The confidential annexe to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 4(7) of the 1989 Act. I am grateful to the commissioner for his work in reviewing the issue of warrants and in providing assistance to the tribunal as provided in the Act. His report confirms that he is satisfied that the Secretaries of State have exercised their warranty powers in accordance with the provisions of the 1989 Act.

Sarajevo

Mr. Bates: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made with the initiative which he and President Clinton announced for the reconstruction of Sarajevo.

The Prime Minister: The draft report of the United Kingdom-United States civil planning mission for Sarajevo is now available. It is being circulated widely among donors, and President Clinton and I hope to transmit the final version to the United Nations Secretary-General shortly. I shall place a copy in the Library of the House.

When I was in Sarajevo, I announced a United Kingdom contribution of £5 million for the most immediately needed activities. These are under way. They include help to restore electricial power more widely in Sarajevo, immediate repairs to the gas system to enable domestic gas consumers to use their facilities again safely, the extension of the tram system, and a programme of help to the hospitals in Sarajevo to support the work which is being done there.

I am pleased to say that the United States is making available a similar immediate contribution. Discussions are now taking place with the United Nations and other donors on how best to take forward the recommendations in the report.

Union (Scotland)

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on Scotland's position in the Union.

The Prime Minister: The Government stand firmly behind Scotland's place in the Union. That is the basis on which we fought the last election and, as a result, were the only party to increase both our share of votes and number of seats in Scotland.

I intend to continue to reaffirm the Government's commitment to Scotland's position at every possible opportunity, including during future visits to Scotland.

I regret that, in answering a question from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 10 March, I stated that the data for the opinion poll to which he referred were collected before my most recent visit to Scotland. I subsequently ascertained that they were collected after the visit.

Council of Europe

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Prime Minister what changes there are to the United Kingdom delegation to the Council of Europe and the Western European Union.

The Prime Minister: Baroness Lockwood has resigned as a substitute member of the delegation, and has been replaced by Baroness Gould of Potternewton.

Iraq (Pharmaceutical Products)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *704*, what action he is taking on the document concerning pharmaceutical products required in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, and on the provision of water pumps and water filters to Baghdad.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *260*.

Institute of Irish Studies

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the hon. Members who have written to him asking for his support for the funding of a chair at the institute of Irish studies at the university of Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* I have received representations from the hon. Member. I will reply in due course.

Friendly Countries

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *259-60*, if he will list those countries and Governments presently regarded as friendly.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* These countries would include all those which share our objective of seeking a stable international order characterised by the peaceful settlement of disputes, the international rule of law, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and good government and respect for human rights.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farming Incomes

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of all farming incomes in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the EC has been made up by subsidies in each year since 1990; and what is her estimate for each of the next three years.

Mr. Jack: Total income from farming is a net figure arrived at by subtracting gross input from gross output, of which subsidy payments are a part, and then taking into account land and labour costs, depreciation and interest charges. The table below expresses CAP expenditure as a percentage of farmers' total output for both the United Kingdom and the European Union. National payments to farmers by other member states are not readily available and so, to make comparisons meaningful, such payments are not included in the United Kingdom figures. Estimates for future years are not available.

	1991 *per cent.*	*1992* *per cent.*	*1993* *per cent.*
United Kingdom[1]	12	12	18
European Union[2]	16	16	n/a

n/a=Not available.

Source: [1] Tables 6.1 (calendar years) and 9.1 (financial years) of agriculture in the United Kingdom 1993.
[2] EUROSTAT.

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information her Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons;

(2) what procedures her Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Jack: In making appointments, we look carefully at a range of criteria including merit, experience and suitability to ensure that the most appropriate people are appointed for the job. Information held by the Ministry in respect of individuals relate to these qualities.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Jack: Information about ministerial appointments, including appointments attracting salaries, to public bodies sponsored by this Ministry are given in "Public Bodies 1993". Except where otherwise stated in that publication, appointments are made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food either solely, or jointly with the Ministers of other Departments. All appointments are normally made for a three-year term and the names of appointees are generally made public by means of MAFF news releases.

Details of public bodies subject to joint appointments are given in the table and the names of the appointees to those bodies were given in the answers to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) in the *Official Report*, references as shown.

Appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales.

	Column
Agricultural Training Board—15 February 1994	752
Horticultural Development Council—16 February 1994	845
Meat and Livestock Commission—15 February 1994	752
Farm Animal Welfare Council—9 February 1994	273
Consumers' Committee for Great Britain—9 March 1994	274
Salmon Advisory Committee—10 February 1994	427

Appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretary of State for Wales.

	Column
Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales (Chairman and independent members)—14 February 1994	583
Consultative Panel on Badgers and Tuberculosis (Chairman) —9 February 1994	272
Consumers' Committee for England and Wales—9 February 1994	272
Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Members)—16 February 1994	845
Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal—17 February 1994	979
Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee—15 February 1994	752

Appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

	Column
Food From Britain—15 February 1994	752
Home Grown Cereals Authority—16 February 1994	844
Sea Fish Industry Authority—17 February 1994	979

Appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretaries of State for Health, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

	Column
Food Advisory Committee—16 February 1994	843
Veterinary Products Committee—14 February 1994	582

Appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretary of State for Health.

	Column
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes—17 February 1994	983-84
Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee—14 February 1994	582

Appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretaries of State for Employment, Environment, Health, Scotland and Wales.

	Column
Advisory Committee on Pesticides—10 February 1994	426-27

Lettuce Imports

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to assess the extent to which dumping of Spanish iceberg lettuce on the British market is undermining British growers; and what corrective action she is prepared to take.

Mr. Jack: Lettuce prices on United Kingdom markets are currently extremely low, largely as a result of over-supply within the Community. However, as I told the hon. Gentleman during the debate on the common agricultural policy on 24 March, if he can provide firm evidence to support these claims of unfair competition we will pursue the matter vigorously with the Commission and the member states concerned.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in her Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities or *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Jack: The information for MAFF and its executive agencies is as follows:

Grade equivalent	Women		From ethnic minorities		Registered disabled people	
	Number	Percentage of total staff	Number of respondents to questionnaire	Percentage total of all respondents to questionnaire	Number	Percentage of total staff
1	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	1	16·7	—	—	1	16·7
3	1	4·0	—	—	—	—
4	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	10	8·6	1	0·9	1	0·9
6	13	8·3	—	—	—	—
7	150	16·3	15	1·7	2	0·2
All staff	4,857	46·0	426	4·4	159	1·6

Notes:

1. Figures for women and ethnic minorities are on a "head-count" basis and cover non-industrial staff as at 1 April 1993. The ethnic minority figures derive from a voluntary ethnic questionnaire and the response rate on that date was 94 per cent.
2. Figures for women exclude 11 officers on loan or seconded to other Government Departments.
3. Figures for registered disabled persons are on a full-time equivalent basis and cover non-industrial and industrial staff as at 1 July 1993. The figures do not include staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register as disabled.
4. All figures exclude casuals or seasonal staff.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list by county how many applications for payment of sheep annual premium she has received in the current year; and what proportion in each county remained unpaid on 1 March.

Mr. Jack: The table shows for each county the total number of claims under the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme lodged with the Ministry. No claims have been paid as at 1 March. It is expected that the first advance payment will be made in the autumn in the usual way.

County	Number of Claims
Durham	1,032
Cleveland	117
West Yorkshire	691
South Yorkshire	203
North Yorkshire	3,793
York District	115
Humberside	483
Hereford and Worcester	2,911
Gloucestershire	1,074
Warwickshire	805
West Midlands	75
Bedfordshire	177
Cambridgeshire	180
Essex	267
Hertfordshire	141
Norfolk	422
Suffolk	330
Derbyshire	1,173
Leicestershire	895
Lincolnshire	631
Northamptonshire	765
Nottinghamshire	285
Dorset	606
Avon	405
Wiltshire	1,512
Somerset	506
Cheshire	663
Merseyside	22
Shropshire	1,955
Staffordshire	1,007
Greater Manchester	215
Cumbria	3,852
Lancashire	1,762
Tyne and Wear	30
Northumberland	1,486
Cornwall	1,762
Devon	4,635
Berkshire	144
Buckinghamshire	539
Hampshire	458
Isle of Wight	110
Kent	1,115
Greater London	23
Oxfordshire	494
Surrey	303
East Sussex	673
West Sussex	364
TOTAL	41,206

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what date she expects all applications for sheep annual premium in the current year to be paid out.

Mr. Jack: I expect payments under the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme to be completed by June 1995.

Salmon

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in the context of her consideration of a proposal to postpone the opening date of the north-east coast salmon drift net fishery, she will also consider the proposal made by netsmen that the season should be extended to the end of September.

Mr. Jack: I can confirm that my right hon. Friend has received a request from the National Federation of Fisherman's Organisations to extend the season for the north-east coast salmon drift net fishery if the opening date is postponed; this will, of course, be looked at carefully.

Central Science Laboratory

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the future of the Central Science Laboratory.

Mr. Soames: An enlarged and strengthened Central Science Laboratory agency is being launched on 1 April. This results from the merger of the CSL agency and the food science laboratories at Norwich and Aberdeen.

The new agency will be equipped to provide my Department with a range of scientific services and research and development to protect the food chain from the field to the consumer. The merger will produce significant benefits in terms of efficiency with a reduction in overheads and the more cost effective use of equipment and facilities. The enlarged agency will be better placed to respond to the challenge of competitive tendering in relation to the commissioning of research and development by my Department and the market testing of services.

A copy of the agency's framework document is being placed in the Library of the House.

Clenbuterol

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the testing of pig liver pâté for Clenbuterol.

Mr. Soames: Following the publication in October 1993 of a report by Somerset county council that traces of Clenbuterol had been found in samples of pig liver pâté manufactured in Belgium, sampling of pâté across the United Kingdom was increased under the retail animal products survey. Between September and November 1993, 71 samples of pig liver pâté, of which 48 were manufactured in Belgium, were purchased from retail outlets throughout the United Kingdom and screened for residues of Clenbuterol. The results of the first 25 samples, which showed no evidence of contamination with Clenbuterol, were announced in a written answer on 26 October 1993, *Official Report*, columns *562-63*. Analysis of the remaining samples has been completed. None has shown any evidence of contamination with Clenbuterol.

ENVIRONMENT

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: My Department operates a freephone information service which gives information on current air pollution levels. The telephone number is 0800 556677.

Costs for	*£*
1992-93	29,629
1993[1]	38,588

[1] To date.

A freephone inquiry service was operated for the duration of the rent to mortgage advertising campaign, from October 1993. The purpose of the service was to assist the public in obtaining a leaflet giving further information about the scheme. The costs of the freephone service were £16,036. A freepost facility for the same purpose cost an additional £1,995.

A freepost reply service was used for the questionnaires enclosed in the document "London: Making the Best Better" at a cost of £2,750.

My Department also operates a general freepost service which can be used for inquiries and replies to major publicity campaigns. In the financial year 1993-94 the cost of this service has been approximately £4,950.

There were no costs for freepost or freephone services in 1992-93 except for the air quality line above.

Information on the years prior to 1992-93 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department has given to companies to inform them of their charter rights in regard to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Atkins: On 22 March HMIP launched its charter in the shape of a booklet "Pollution Prevention—Our Common Concern". Some 30,000 copies have been printed.

The launch was made at the ET '94 exhibition at the national exhibition centre in Birmingham, where HMIP had a stand. By the end of the exhibition 1,200 copies had been taken by visitors, many of them from industry.

In addition, copies have been sent to every local authority, trade associations, environmental groups, and to every Member of this House. It was also the subject of a full press release to all national and regional media.

Copies are also available in every HMIP regional office, and pollution inspectors have been tasked to ensure that every company they inspect or visit receives a copy.

The HMIP charter is also referred to in the DOE Publication "Your Council and the Environment" and in the HMIP booklet "Protecting Britain's Environment".

The full tex of the charter will shortly become available to the public via the new "ECOFACTS" 24-hour a day phone-in, fax-out line, as part of a battery of HMIP information including an index to the public registers held at regional offices.

Initial reaction to the publication has been very encouraging.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the distance between each station on the proposed Lewisham extension of the docklands light railway assuming that *(a)* the planned stations at Island Gardens and Cutty Sark are constructed and *(b)* there is no intermediate station between Mudchute and Greenwich.

Sir George Young: The approximate distance in metres between stations on the proposed Lewisham extension is as follows:

	Metres
Mudchute to Island Gardens	400
Island Gardens to Cutty Sark	700
Cutty Sark to Greenwich	700
Greenwich to Deptford Bridge	700
Deptford Bridge to Elverson Road	800
Elverson Road to Lewisham	550

If there were to be no intermediate station between Mudchute and Greenwich, the distance between those stations would be 1,800 m, of which 400 m would be under the River Thames.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average distance between stations on *(a)* the original docklands light railway, *(b)* the Beckton extension of the docklands light railway and *(c)* the proposed Lewisham extension of the docklands light railway including the planned stations at Island Gardens and Cutty Sark.

Sir George Young: The average distance in metres between stations on *(a)* the original docklands light railway, including the extension to Bank, is 880; on *(b)* the Beckton extension, including Canning Town, which is under construction, is 700; on *(c)* the proposed Lewisham extension including the planned stations at Island gardens and Cutty Sark, is 640.

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the Acts of Parliament and Consolidation Acts that affect local government which have been introduced by his Department since 1990.

Mr. Baldry: The following Acts of Parliament which affect local government have been introduced by the Department of the Environment since 1990. The list also includes consolidation Acts in respect of which the Department has responsibility, and legislation introduced before 1990 but receiving Royal Assent since then.

* Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (c.8)
* Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (c.9)
* Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990 (c.10)
* Planning (Consequential Provisions) Act 1990 (c.11)

Environmental Protection Act 1990 (c.43)
Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Act 1991 (c.2)
Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Act 1991 (c.8)
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991 (c.9)
Planning and Compensation Act 1991 (c.34)
Local Government Finance and Valuation Act 1991 (c.51)

* Water Industry Act 1991 (c.56)
* Water Resources Act 1991 (c.57)
* Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Act 1991 (c.60)

Local Government Finance Act 1992 (c.14)
Local Government Act 1992 (c.19)
Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992 (c.46)

* Clean Air Act 1993 (c.11)
* Radioactive Substances Act 1993 (c.12)

Non-Domestic Rating Act 1993 (c.17)
The Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 (c.28)
Non-Domestic Rating Act 1994 (c.3)

* *Consolidation Acts*

Ombudsman Service (Housing Association Tenants)

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of establishing the housing association tenants ombudsman service; how much the operation of the service will cost; how these costs are broken down; how many staff are employed by the service; and what is its current remit.

Sir George Young: The ombudsman service for housing association tenants became operational in November 1993. The operating budget is as follows:

	1993-94 £'000	*1994-95 £'000*	*1995-96 £'000*
Staff costs	150	227	227
Non-staff costs[1]	79	145	143
Mediation/Legal, other Operational costs	103	123	110
	332	495	480

[1] In 1993-94, there was an additional sum of £24,000 to set up premises.

The total staffing complement available to the ombudsman service is seven.

The main remit of the ombudsman service is to deal fairly and effectively with complaints about maladministration by registered housing associations. The service considers complaints from housing association tenants, applicants for a housing association tenancy and people receiving housing management services from an association.

Waste Shipments Directive

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what draft circulars he has recently released to waste regulation officers on the proposed changes to United Kingdom legislation required to meet obligations under EC directive 259/93 on waste shipments by 6 May.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) on 2 March, *Official Report*, column *714*.

Asthma

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent of a link between the incidence of asthma and *(a)* air pollution in general and *(b)* oxides of nitrogen; and what steps he is taking to reduce air pollution in general and the amount of nitrogen oxide in the atmosphere.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are continuing to assess the links between air pollution and asthma, with the assistance of its advisory bodies on the health impacts of air pollution. At present it appears that while the causes of asthma remain unclear, air pollution can aggravate attacks in those already with the condition. The health effects of oxides of nitrogen were considered in a report by the Department of Health's advisory group on the medical aspects of air pollution episodes—MAAPE—published in November 1993, a copy of which has been deposited in the Library.

The systems for control of industrial emissions established in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and increasingly stringent vehicle emission controls are expected to secure significant reduction in the level of most pollutants over the next 10 years. Emissions of nitrogen oxides will be reduced in line with the United Kingdom's commitments under the Sofia protocol to the United Nations Commission for Europe convention on transboundary air pollution, signed in November 1988.

I propose shortly to publish a discussion paper as the first stage of a consultative process on measures to secure further improvement in air quality.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policy he has on subsequent applications for opencast being made for the same site after planning permission has been refused; and what period of time must elapse before a reapplication may be made.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Monday 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *493-94*.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on whether very special circumstances must be shown by the applicant before compulsory rights orders may be granted under the Opencast Coal Act 1958 for a second application to be granted for the same site.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Monday 28 March, *Official Report*, column *494*.

Biodiversity

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members of the biodiversity action plan steering group; what are its terms of reference; and when he expects it to publish costed targets for key species and habitats.

Mr. Atkins: I expect to make an announcement shortly on membership of the group. The status and remit of the group are set out in paragraph 10.40 of "Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan" (Cm 2428) a copy of which is in the Library.

The plan commits the Government to publishing costed targets to key species and habitats during 1995.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to improve the accessibility of wildlife data and encourage public awareness and involvement in conserving biodiversity.

Mr. Atkins: These are matters which are being taken forward on a broad front by the Government, the countryside agencies and non-governmental organisations, and which are among the issues to be addressed by the biodiversity action plan steering group.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many nominations he has received by organisations wishing to contribute to the European Environment Agency as (i) a topic centre or (ii) as part of a national information network.

Mr. Atkins: Some 104 organisations have expressed interest in both topic centre status and in participating in the national information network. A further 50 organisations have said they want to be considered as topic centres and another 28 are seeking to join the national information network.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received nominations from (i) English Nature, (ii) Scottish Natural Heritage, (iii) the Countryside Council for Wales or (iv) the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to contribute to the European Environment Agency as a topic centre or as part of a national information network.

Mr. Atkins: All four organisations have said they want to contribute to the work of the European Environment Agency both as information network participants and as topic centres.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what moneys are available for urban and regeneration expenditure for 1994-95; how much is available under each of the 20 targeted Government programmes contained within the single regeneration budget; what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1988-89 in cash terms and at current prices; and what is the planned expenditure for 1995-96 and 1996-97 in cash terms at current prices.

Mr. Baldry: Planned funding by my Department on urban and regeneration expenditure in 1994-95 is as follows:

	£ million
Urban Development Corporations	286
Housing Action Trusts	88
English Partnerships	181
Estate Action	373
City Challenge	[1]213
Urban Programme	83
Task Forces	16
City Action Teams	1
Safer Cities	4
Section 11 (part)	60
Ethnic Minority Grant/Business Initiative	6
Programme Development Fund	3
TEC Challenge	4
Local Initiative Fund	29
Business Start Up Scheme	70
Education Business Partnerships	2
Compacts	6
Teacher Placement Service	3
Grants for Education Support and Training	5
Regional Enterprise Grants	9
TOTAL: Single Regeneration Budget	1,442
Manchester Regeneration	23
Special Grants Programme	2
Coalfield Areas Fund	2
TOTAL:	1,469

Note: [1] Programme also supported by £19 million from the Housing Corporation.

Information on expenditure in previous years for my Department's programmes can be found in the departmental annual reports and public expenditure White Papers, copies of which are in the Library of the House. Information on previous years' expenditure for the programmes transferring to the single regeneration budget from the Home Office, the Employment Department, the Department of Education and the Department of Trade and Industry will be contained in their respective departmental annual reports.

In 1994-95, the single regeneration budget will largely operate through arrangements in place for the existing 20 programmes being brought together. Commitments under these programmes will be met for 1994-95 and later years. For 1995-96 and beyond, the non-departmental public bodies supported by the budget—English Partnerships, housing action trusts and urban development corporations—will, as now, receive specific allocations; and the rest of the budget will be combined.

On current plans, the budget will be worth some £1·3 billion in each of 1995-96 and 1996-97. The Department of the Environment's 1994 annual report provides more detailed information.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what moneys are available for local authorities to bid for and are uncommitted from the urban and regeneration expenditure for 1994-95; how much is available under each of the 20 targeted Government programmes; and what are the corresponding figures for 1995-96 and 1996-97 in cash terms and at current prices;

(2) what funds are available for all non-urban programme areas to bid for, that are uncommitted, from the single regeneration budget excluding the year 1995-96; and how much is available under each of the 20 targeted Government programmes within the single regeneration budget;

(3) what funds are available for all urban programme authorities to bid for, that are uncommitted, from the single regeneration budget, for the year 1995-96; and how much is available under each of the 20 targeted Government programmes within the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: In 1994-95 the funds available under the single regeneration budget will be taken up in meeting existing commitments from the 20 programmes which habve been brought together to form the budget.

The total budget, on current plans, will be worth some £1·3 billion in 1995-96 and it is expected that about £100 million will be available to support bids from local partnerships. The budget will be available throughout England, and we intend to issue guidance on bidding soon.

On current plans, the budget will again be worth some £1·3 billion in 1966-67. It is too early to say how much will be available for bidding after 1995-96. The availability of resources will depend on the levels of commitments from previous years and the outcome on the annual public expenditure surveys.

I provided further information about the programmes being brought together in the budget in the separate reply I gave to the hon. Member today.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year since 1981 in cash terms and at current prices the total amount of moneys made available to *(a)* urban programme authorities, *(b)* non-urban programme authorities and *(c)* urban regeneration in (i) urban development corporations, (ii) urban programme, (iii) city grant, or urban regeneration grant or urban development grant, (iv) derelict land grant, (v) city challenge, (vi) housing action trusts, (vii) estate action, (viii) safer cities, (ix) urban crime fund, (x) task forces, (xi) city action teams, (xii) single regeneration budget and (xiii) other programmes available relating to linkage between economic, social and physical regeneration.

Mr. Baldry: The information sought is not available and cannot readily be produced in the form specified. In previous years a number of Government Departments have contributed to urban regeneration through a wide range of programmes under the action for cities initiative. From 1 April 1994, 20 regeneration programmes are being brought together to form a single regeneration budget which will be administered through the unified network of Government offices for the regions.

Some information on expenditure on these programmes in previous years, including the Home Office's safer cities programme, can be found in the relevant departmental annual reports and public expenditure White Papers, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funds are available from the single regeneration budget for urban programme authorities and for non-urban programme authorities; what different criteria or rules will be adopted for the 57 urban programme areas; and how much is available for either urban programme or non-urban programme authorities and each of the 20 targeted programmes within the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: As the single regeneration budget is available throughout England, and proposals for funding will be locally driven, the existing list of 57 urban priority areas will not be used to direct budget resources and is being discontinued. In assessing proposals which aim mainly at relieving deprivation, the Government offices for the regions will take account of detailed information about local conditions based on the 1991 index of local conditions, to be published soon, and other relevant data.

I provided further information about the programmes being brought together in the budget in the separate reply I gave the hon. Member today.

Home Ownership

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the percentage of home ownership in 1979 and what it is now; and how many more home owners there are now in the United Kingdom than there were in 1979.

Sir George Young: The available figures of the proportion of dwellings which are owner-occupied is shown in the table below:

Percentage

	England	*United Kingdom*
December 1979	56·6	54·7
September 1993	67·4	[1]66·3

[1]December 1992.

The number of owner-occupier households in England was estimated at 9,170,000 households in 1977-78 and 13,460,000 in 1993. These figures are derived from the national dwelling and housing survey of 1977-78 and the labour force survey 1993 respectively, and are subject to sampling error. Comparable figures for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are not readily available to this Department.

Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for improving the accuracy of measuring fine particulate matter and benzene arising from vehicle exhaust emissions.

Mr. Atkins: The improvement of the accuracy of measurements of particulate and benzene in vehicle exhausts depends on the continuing development of measuring equipment. Contractors making these measurements for my Department will be expected to use the most up-to-date and accurate techniques practicable.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish *(a)* a list of those local authorities in England and Wales that have a designation order under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and *(b)* the names of authorities which have made an application, and where a decision is pending, his decision.

Mr. Baldry: I have arranged for an up-to-date list of English local authorities designated under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 to be placed today in the Library of the House. Nine formal applications for designation are at present before my right hon. Friend. Of these, he has decided to designate the area of Wychavon district council in Hereford and Worcester. He is not yet in a position to announce decisions on the remaining applications.

For information about designation in Wales I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Rented Accommodation

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the change in households in the private rented sector; and what percentage of households have been in private rented accommodation in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: Estimated numbers and percentages of households in private rented accommodation in England are as follows:

	number	*percentages*
1989	1,610,000	8·6
1990	1,690,000	8·9
1991	1,760,000	9·3
1992	1,790,000	9·2
1993	1,950,000	9·9

These figures are from labour force surveys and are subject to sampling error. They nevertheless provide a good indication of the trend over this period in privately renting households.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the EC decision on the proposals for enterprise zones in East Durham, East Midlands and the Dearne Valley; and when he expects to designate the new zones.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce that the EC has accepted, in full, our proposals for the three new enterprise zones. Once arrangements are in place to ensure that EC restrictions on state aids to industry are enforced on the new zones, I expect to issue a letter of invitation to local authorities to submit draft schemes. The subsequent United Kingdom procedures usually take about six months and designations are therefore expected in autumn this year.

Isle of Wight Landslip

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide financial assistance to South Wight borough council under the Bellwin scheme towards its costs of dealing with the landslips which occurred between December 1993 and February 1994.

Mr. Baldry: Yes. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that these incidents were indeed exceptional and that a scheme of assistance should be established under section 155 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Grant will be paid to South Wight borough council to cover 85 per cent. of eligible costs which it has incurred above a threshold in dealing with the emergency.

Flooding, West Sussex

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme to assist local authorities in west Sussex with the costs of dealing with the flooding which occurred in January.

Mr. Baldry: Yes. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that financial relief under the Bellwin scheme would be justified in this case. A scheme of assistance will therefore be established under section 155 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Department will pay grant to those authorities in west Sussex which have incurred an undue financial burden as a result of flooding which took place between December 1993 and January 1994. Grant will cover 85 per cent. of eligible costs which are above a threshold.

Perclorethylene

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the legal provisions governing the use of perclorethylene in proximity of food retail businesses.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 22 March 1994]:* There are no specific legal provisions, but controls can be exercised under part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Homelessness

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households were accepted as homeless in each local authority area in 1979-80; and what are the latest full-year figures.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* I have today placed in the Library a table giving for each local authority in England the numbers of households which they reported as having accepted responsibility in the years 1979 to 1993 to secure permanent accommodation, under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the 1985 Housing Act.

Rural Communities

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding in each of the last five years and for the next financial year has been allocated by the Rural Development Commission to the voluntary sector for assisting rural communities; and if he will list those organisations and how much each received.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The table shows the financial support which the Rural Development Commission has given in this period to the voluntary sector either through support for voluntary organisations themselves or through projects run by the voluntary sector. These include national organisations such as Help the Aged, Good Practice in Mental Health, National Youth

Agency, Rural Housing Trust. In addition, many grants are made to voluntary and community organisations as part of rural development programmes in the commission's priority areas. Detailed information on the sums and organisations involved could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Rural Development Commission
Allocation of funding to the voluntary sector assisting rural communities

	1989-90 Actual £	1990-91 Actual £	1991-92 Actual £	1992-93 Actual £	1993-94 To date £	1994-95 Estimate £	Total £
Support for voluntary organisations							
National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)	80,000	84,000	89,000	116,000	92,332	121,590	582,960
Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE)	73,000	43,313	85,652	60,000	61,300	70,000	393,265
National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI)	—	27,000	—	8,242	—	18,250	53,492
Rural Community Councils (RCCs)	2,181,000	2,371,177	2,493,607	2,778,169	2,818,000	2,818,000	15,459,953
Project support							
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB)	75,000	75,000	—	70,186	—	—	220,186
Rural Social Partnership Fund (RSPF)	25,031	182,043	264,098	184,685	169,931	327,000	1,152,788
Housing	432,000	387,867	312,799	277,689	307,504	340,639	2,058,498
Rural Action	—	—	—	196,672	265,367	400,000	862,039
Village Halls	—	—	—	146,169	297,279	350,000	793,448
RDP Social Projects[1]	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,966,632	2,383,000	2,450,000	6,799,632
Total	2,866,031	3,170,400	3,245,156	5,804,482	6,394,713	6,895,479	28,376,261

[1] The majority of grants under this head are for projects to the voluntary sector.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policies the Rural Development Commission has for the voluntary sector to be a vehicle for assisting rural communities.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The Rural Development Commission regards voluntary activity and community self-help as an important means of tackling economic and social problems in rural areas, especially those relating to services, such as transport or village shops, and to the disadvantage experienced by particular groups of people, for example, the elderly, which is heightened by their living in a rural area. Nationally, the commission seeks to strengthen the rural work of the voluntary sector by supporting the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Action with Communities in Rural England in their roles as national umbrella organisations as well as working in partnership with national voluntary organisations such as Help the Aged or the Rural Housing Trust on specific projects or issues. Countrywide, it supports both the work of rural community councils which provide support to voluntary organisations in each county as well as a wide range of local projects put forward by voluntary and community groups principally as part of rural development programmes in the commission's priority areas.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures are used by board members and officials of the Rural Development Commission to inform themselves of the needs of rural areas nationally and locally.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 29 March 1994]:* The Rural Development Commission uses a range of means to inform itself about the needs of rural areas nationally and locally. It draws on published research and data from a wide variety of sources and where necessary commissions its own research or surveys to fill gaps in knowledge or data. It also liaises with a broad range of organisations involved in economic and social development, including local authorities, training and enterprise councils, rural community councils, ACRE and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. In its priority areas the commission works in partnership with the rural development programme committees, which assess the economic and social needs of the areas concerned and develop a programme of action to tackle the problems identified. All these partnerships provide a valuable source of information on the needs of rural areas.

The commission also funds some demonstration projects designed to improve information on rural needs and issues, and test out solutions to rural problems.

WALES

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the 20 independent schools which currently have the highest proportions of their school rolls made up by pupils covered by the assisted places scheme; and if he will give the percentage of pupils covered by the assisted places scheme and the size of the school rolls.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Eight schools participate in the assisted places scheme in Wales. The information requested is set out in the table.

Assisted places scheme 1993-94

School	Number on roll January 1994	Total number APS pupils in scheme September 1993	Percentage APS:NOR
Monmouth Boys	544	137	25·1
Penrhos College, Colwyn Bay	332	61	18·3
Howell's, Cardiff	689	165	23·9
Rydal School, Colwyn Bay	330	46	13·9

School	Number on roll January 1994	Total number APS pupils in scheme September 1993	Percentage APS:NOR
Landovery College	239	52	21·7
Christ College, Brecon	364	87	23·9
Howell's, Denbigh	293	72	24·5
Monmouth Girls	631	71	11·2
	3,422	691	20·1

Environmental Protection

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what plans he has to reduce environmental protection measures as overseen by his Department in the Principality;

(2) what assessment he has made of the opportunities to deregulate environmental protection measures in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office is fully committed to the deregulation initiative. Proposed changes to the Clean Air Act 1993 and Control of Pollution Act 1974—to be implemented using powers contained in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill—will take effect in Wales as well as England.

The Government are also currently considering responses to the second round of consultation concerning "Amendments to the Prescribed Processes and Substances Regulations"—a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. Many of its proposals are intended to minimise the regulatory burden on industry without compromising necessary environmental standards.

Council Tax Appeals

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for *(a)* each district value listing office area and *(b)* each district council area (i) the total numbers of appeals received against banding for the council tax, (ii) the number of appeals which have been dealt with and completed and (ii) as a percentage of (i).

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The position on 28 February 1994 was as follows:

Valuation District and District Council	Number Received	Number Settled	Percentage Settled
Bangor			
Colwyn	1,286	442	34·37
Aberconwy	1,152	254	22·05
Arfon	977	182	18·63
Dwyfor	775	137	17·68
Meirionnydd	1,012	440	43·48
Ynys Mon	1,724	500	29·00
TOTAL	6,926	1,955	28·23
Cardiff			
Cardiff City	3,869	776	20·06
Vale of Glamorgan	1,875	423	22·56
TOTAL	5,744	1,199	20·87
Carmarthen			
Ceredigion	3,768	501	13·30
Preseli	2,541	764	30·07
South Pembrokeshire	1,594	623	39·08
Dinefwr	1,981	569	28·72
Carmarthen	2,338	500	21·39
TOTAL	12,222	2,957	24·19
Merthyr			
Cynon Valley	917	306	33·37
Merthyr Tydfil	665	284	42·71
Rhymney Valley	961	308	32·05
Brecknock	2,082	831	39·91
Radnor	1,155	244	21·13
TOTAL	5,780	1,973	34·13
Newport			
Blaenau Gwent	666	238	35·74
Islwyn	693	158	22·80
Monmouth	2,612	726	27·79
Newport	1,279	610	47·69
Torfaen	886	255	28·78
TOTAL	6,136	1,987	32·38
Pontypridd			
Ogwr	1,569	388	24·73
Port Talbot	671	174	25·93
Rhondda	648	423	65·28
Taff Ely	1,285	420	32·68
TOTAL	4,173	1,405	33·67
Swansea			
Llanelli	1,084	334	30·81
Lliw Valley	929	278	29·92
Neath	925	251	27·14
Swansea	3,397	955	28·11
TOTAL	6,335	1,818	28·70
Wrexham			
Alyn and Deeside	1,154	257	22·27
Delyn	1,113	314	28·21
Glyndwr	1,172	296	25·26
Montgomeryshire	1,715	635	37·03
Rhuddlan	777	227	29·21
Wrexham Maelor	1,864	668	35·84
TOTAL	7,795	2,397	30·75

Lumpy Skin Disease

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of lumpy skin disease occurred in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Health Promotion Authority for Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of his reply to Mr. David Griffiths, board member of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, and Mr. Griffith's letter to him of 29

January 1994 in relation to improving financial controls and management procedures in the authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Arrangements have been made for a copy of my letter to be placed in the Library of the House. Mr. Griffiths marked his letter as "Private and Confidential". The release of this letter is a matter for him.

Rawnsley Psychiatric Clinic

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the south Glamorgan health authority concerning the proposed closure of the Rawnsley psychiatric clinic at the University hospital of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwoood: None.

Departmental Buildings (Cleaning)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the cleaning contract for he Welsh Office Crown buildings, Cathays park.

Mr. Redwood: My Department's offices at Cathays park are currently cleaned by Mitie Cleaning (South West) Ltd. under a two-year contract, which runs until 31 December 1994.

Hip and Knee Joint Replacement

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan and Mid Glamorgan health authorities in relation to the non-completion by the former of the latter's contract for hip and knee joint replacements; what is the value of the refund required by the latter from the former for non-completion of the contract; in what form the refund will be made; and what guidelines he has issued to cover refund transactions between Welsh health authorities.

Mr. Redwood: This matter has been resolved by the Mid and South Glamorgan health authorities. I am advised that at 1 April 1994 there will be no outstanding financial issues. Guidance on the resolution of contract disputes was issued on 1991.

EMPLOYMENT

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what factors account for the fall in employment in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom since 1990; and how much of the increase over the same period in output per person employed is a reflection of the faster rate of contraction in labour intensive industries and occupations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Employment fell due to a number of factors including the cyclical downturn in the economy. Productivity growth has been strong across manufacturing, whatever the compositional changes.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total cost of official entertaining in the Department in 1992-93 was £48,702; in 1993-94 it was £33,666. Figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are stored off-line on magnetic tape and cannot be recalled until all current end-of-year accounts for the Department have been processed. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as the figures can be obtained.

Working Hours

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *433*, concerning rewards for productivity, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated number of hours worked in the whole economy and in manufacturing each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Estimates from the labour force survey—LFS—of the total number of hours worked are available since 1984 and are shown in the following table:

Total hours worked by employees and self-employed

Great Britain *Not seasonally adjusted*

Millions

Quarter	*Total hours worked in manufacturing*	*Total hours in whole economy*
Spring 1984	227	845
Spring 1985	231	863
Spring 1986	232	870
Spring 1987	223	882
Spring 1988	237	925
Spring 1989	234	951
Spring 1990	234	959
Spring 1991	222	939
Spring 1992	190	816
Spring 1993	189	815
Autumn 1993	188	829

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Note:

Methodological improvements to the LFS introduced in 1992 mean that estimates of hours worked from 1992 onwards are of better quality than figures for earlier years.

Strikes

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were *(a)* the number of strikes and *(b)* the number of working days lost through strikes in the latest year for which figures were last lower.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is provisionally estimated that there were 211 strikes in 1993, the lowest in any calendar year since records began in 1891.

The number of working days lost is provisionally estimated at 600,000, the lowest since records began in 1891, apart from 1992 where 500,000 days were lost.

Vane Tempest Colliery

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the Coalfield Communities Campaign on Vane Tempest colliery, the work force and employment prospects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am not aware of any representations being made specific to Vane Tempest colliery.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *719*, what information is collected by his Department about outdoor education centres.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive has collected information about standards of health and safety appropriate to the activities that are undertaken at outdoor education centres and about the locations of centres. The information has been gathered with the help of organisations such as the Sports Council, tourist boards and national governing bodies, and the HSE has drawn on local knowledge in the area which are participating in the proposed special programme of inspections.

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 28 March 1994, *Official Report*, columns *524-25*.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths were reported to the Health and Safety Executive in each region in each year since 1983 in *(a)* agriculture, forestry and fisheries, *(b)* energy and water supply, *(c)* manufacturing, *(d)* construction and *(e)* the service sector; and how many of these were deaths of (i) employees, (ii) self-employed and (iii) members of the public.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures for the financial years 1986-87 to 1992-93 are provided in the tables which have been placed in the Library. Fatal injuries for the years 1983 to 1985 were assigned to an earlier industrial classification and aggregation on a regional basis into the sectors specified is not possible except at disproportionate cost.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many major injuries were reported to the HSE in each region in each year since 1983 in *(a)* agriculture, forestry and fisheries, *(b)* energy and water supply, *(c)* manufacturing, *(d)* construction and *(e)* the service sectors; and how many of these were injuries of (i) employees, (ii) the self-employed and (iii) members of the public.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures for the financial years 1986-87 to 1992-93 are provided in the tables which have been placed in the Library. Due to changes in reporting legislation, major injuries reported for the years 1983 to 1985 are not directly comparable with those for later years. In addition, the 1983 and 1984 injuries were assigned to an earlier industrial classification and aggregation on a regional basis into the sectors specified is not possible except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many minor injuries involving three or more days off work were reported to the Health and Safety Executive in each region in each year since 1983 in *(a)* agriculture, forestry and fisheries, *(b)* energy and water supply, *(c)* manufacturing, *(d)* construction and *(e)* the service sector; and how many of these were injuries of (i) employees and (ii) the self-employed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures for the financial years 1986-87 to 1992-93 are provided in the tables which have been placed in the Library. There was no requirement to notify the Health and Safety Executive of injuries causing incapacity for normal work for more than three days during the years 1983 to 1985.

EDUCATION

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the Acts of Parliament and consolidation Acts that affect local government which have been introduced by his Department since 1990.

Mr. Boswell: The following Acts affect local education authorities:

School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1991—1991, chapter 49
Further and Higher Education Act 1992—1992, chapter 13
Education (Schools) Act 1992—1992, chapter 38
Education Act 1993—1993, chapter 35.

Advertising Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, columns *587-88*, what was the budgeted and actual cost of each advertising campaign listed.

Mr. Robin Squire: The costs are as follows:

	£ *Budgeted Cost*	£ *Actual Cost*
The 1993 school testing campaign	450,000	449,000
Charters for Further and Higher Education campaign	500,000	486,000
GM schools advertising campaign	200,000	207,000

	£ *Budgeted Cost*	£ *Estimated Cost*[1]
The 1994 school testing campaign	500,000	500,000

[1]This campaign is still running.

Teachers

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time school teachers there were in the state sector in each local education authority area in the three most recent years available; and how many in each category were newly appointed.

Mr. Robin Squire: The table following shows the number of full-time qualified teachers and the full-time equivalent of part-time qualified teachers in the maintained

nursery, primary and secondary sector, including self-governing schools, in each local education authority in England at January of 1991, 1992 and 1993. It is not possible to identify which of these teachers were newly appointed.

Separate information on the numbers of newly qualified teachers taking up their first full-time teaching posts by local authority in 1993 will be placed in the Library when it becomes available, although this is not expected to be before spring 1995.

	1991		1992		1993	
	Full-time	*FTE of part-time*	*Full-time*	*FTE of part-time*	*Full-time*	*FTE of part-time*
Bradford	4,720	262	4,734	322	4,539	431
Calderdale	1,683	95	1,707	88	1,732	85
Gateshead	1,681	55	1,660	53	1,615	71
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,243	93	2,190	84	2,122	81
North Tyneside	1,745	74	1,693	72	1,683	78
South Tyneside	1,373	26	1,344	34	1,288	32
Sunderland	2,609	61	2,619	65	2,588	56
Isles of Scilly	26	3	26	1	25	3
Avon	6,875	508	7,438	529	7,073	518
Bedfordshire	4,519	341	4,482	351	4,572	309
Berkshire	5,284	536	5,274	556	5,412	593
Buckinghamshire	4,708	401	4,477	468	4,721	465
Cambridge	5,037	315	5,041	336	5,298	338
Cheshire	7,548	319	7,521	406	7,606	432
Cleveland	5,305	218	5,259	263	5,268	254
Cornwall	3,547	181	3,490	192	3,284	348
Cumbria	3,878	305	3,809	331	3,864	317
Derbyshire	8,025	445	7,425	458	7,537	488
Devon	6,672	443	6,563	484	6,693	519
Dorset	4,208	257	4,241	255	4,091	272
Durham	4,661	147	4,812	155	5,032	157
East Sussex	4,073	423	4,172	473	4,441	433
Essex	11,402	666	11,287	756	11,067	714
Gloucestershire	3,868	475	3,749	283	3,729	351
Hampshire	10,492	867	10,558	945	10,890	1,065
Hereford and Worcestershire	5,064	338	5,113	322	5,081	345
Hertfordshire	7,342	797	7,193	825	7,372	775
Humberside	7,322	364	7,250	388	7,304	393
Isle of Wight	932	73	928	89	912	83
Kent	10,796	745	10,699	819	10,951	844
Lancashire	11,128	606	11,015	672	11,235	638
Leicestershire	7,174	526	7,111	662	7,095	422
Lincolnshire	4,578	268	4,395	313	4,471	291
Norfolk	5,235	296	5,203	409	5,284	420
North Yorkshire	5,343	306	5,334	456	5,436	504
Northamptonshire	4,992	264	5,075	281	5,104	274
Northumberland	2,626	107	2,654	134	2,503	171
Nottinghamshire	7,931	432	8,050	461	8,000	482
Oxfordshire	3,681	340	3,746	364	3,823	353
Shropshire	3,400	220	3,454	240	3,330	211
Somerset	3,293	275	3,252	288	3,289	284
Staffordshire	8,414	383	8,346	393	7,953	355
Suffolk	4,607	306	4,836	365	4,821	381
Surrey	5,823	756	5,747	694	5,871	751
Warwickshire	3,666	309	3,598	297	3,609	339
West Sussex	4,399	440	4,769	409	4,830	460
Wiltshire	4,081	415	4,157	377	4,242	325
ENGLAND	367,977	23,569	365,701	25,157	366,848	25,576

Source: DFE Form 618G.

Qualified teacher numbers in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary sector in England, including self-governing (GM) schools, as at January of each year.

	1991		1992		1993	
	Full-time	*FTE of part-time*	*Full-time*	*FTE of part-time*	*Full-time*	*FTE of part-time*
City	11	1	9	0	12	1
Camden	1,061	119	1,160	84	1,150	80
Greenwich	1,899	226	1,970	233	1,795	208
Hackney	1,440	97	1,399	101	1,381	88
Hammersmith	915	118	939	72	921	88
Islington	1,175	97	1,216	90	1,329	169
Kensington and Chelsea	601	64	682	66	622	41
Lambeth	1,287	137	1,355	128	1,371	129
Lewisham	1,678	91	1,222	160	1,538	221
Southwark	1,520	120	1,514	130	1,537	132

	1991		1992		1993	
	Full-time	FTE of part-time	Full-time	FTE of part-time	Full-time	FTE of part-time
Tower Hamlets	1,920	89	1,918	97	2,025	106
Wandsworth	1,545	140	1,542	161	1,561	172
Westminster	1,013	89	1,019	91	1,068	85
Barking	1,178	57	1,229	55	1,269	52
Barnet	2,106	228	2,214	284	2,237	271
Bexley	1,610	105	1,598	93	1,623	115
Brent	1,869	92	1,864	112	1,882	121
Bromley	1,795	154	1,776	134	1,904	148
Croydon	2,278	247	2,184	247	2,116	219
Ealing	2,033	139	1,955	153	1,922	163
Enfield	2,029	197	2,087	165	2,117	162
Haringey	1,501	47	1,486	87	1,473	74
Harrow	1,312	120	1,397	131	1,404	143
Havering	1,814	148	1,840	145	1,829	141
Hillingdon	1,627	106	1,634	110	1,702	121
Hounslow	1,682	168	1,615	184	1,661	150
Kingston upon Thames	934	92	879	89	927	107
Merton	1,207	95	1,171	94	1,193	93
Newham	1,979	42	1,934	40	1,871	45
Redbridge	1,544	122	1,589	150	1,644	150
Richmond upon Thames	894	109	966	151	883	126
Sutton	1,218	105	1,169	109	1,155	105
Waltham Forest	1,776	91	1,816	97	1,731	113
Birmingham	8,688	404	8,853	445	8,999	480
Coventry	2,534	167	2,558	192	2,507	201
Dudley	2,593	129	2,613	139	2,525	115
Sandwell	2,872	55	2,813	80	2,829	98
Solihull	1,703	142	1,647	130	1,717	128
Walsall	2,582	141	2,466	134	2,429	125
Wolverhampton	2,428	135	2,474	136	2,322	132
Knowsley	1,443	37	1,355	39	1,311	38
Liverpool	4,335	128	4,090	114	4,059	106
St. Helens	1,664	46	1,600	54	1,616	59
Sefton	2,315	106	2,356	110	2,383	117
Wirral	2,980	118	2,814	107	2,838	117
Bolton	2,454	78	2,390	84	2,398	93
Bury	1,412	70	1,385	74	1,387	77
Manchester	4,070	154	3,787	150	3,790	216
Oldham	2,078	109	2,135	102	2,149	98
Rochdale	1,841	93	1,936	51	1,761	78
Salford	2,109	28	1,993	49	1,965	27
Stockport	2,214	124	2,209	122	2,239	120
Tameside	1,954	87	1,968	115	1,913	93
Trafford	1,691	68	1,545	62	1,540	71
Wigan	2,849	114	2,843	162	2,891	196
Barnsley	1,731	29	1,681	33	1,659	37
Doncaster	2,649	95	2,573	107	2,646	102
Rotherham	2,429	78	2,377	78	2,285	39
Sheffield	3,666	329	3,512	338	3,456	331

Assisted Places

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the 20 independent schools which currently have the highest proportions of their school rolls made up by pupils covered by the assisted places scheme; and if he will give the percentage of pupils covered by the assisted places scheme and the size of the school rolls.

Mr. Forth: Information for the 1992-93 academic year, the latest for which complete data are available, is given in the following table:

Assisted places scheme 1992-93 academic year

School name	Total roll	Percentage of assisted pupils
Wisbech Grammar	628	52
Batley Grammar	595	43
St. Edward's College	937	42
Hereford Cathedral	587	40
Wolverhampton Grammar	646	40
Emanuel, London SW11	763	38
Denstone College	273	38
King Edward VII Lytham	597	38
Queen Mary, Lytham	622	37
Ursuline High, Ilford	383	36
Queen Elizabeth Hospital	503	34
La Sagesse Convent	493	33
St. Mary's College, Crosby	789	32
Belvedere GPDST	567	31
Friends, Saffron Walden	272	31
St. Joseph's Convent	422	31
Royal Grammar, Worcester	916	31
Colston's Girls	555	31
Carmel College	236	31
Red Maids, Bristol	573	30

Further and Higher Education

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of school leavers went on to further or higher education in 1979; and what is the percentage now.

Mr. Boswell: The percentage of school leavers in England intending to go on to further or higher education in 1978-79 was 21 per cent. The percentage for 1991-92, the latest academic year for which the information is available, is 52 per cent.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students were in *(a)* higher and *(b)* further education in 1979; and how many there are in each sector currently.

Mr. Boswell: The number of students on higher and further education courses in England in 1979 and 1992, the latest year for which statistics were available, are shown in the following table:

The number of students as of 1 November of the appropriate year on higher and further education courses in England

Academic year	*Number of HE[1] students (thousands)*	*Number of FE[2] students (thousands)*
1979-80	585	1,439
1992-93	1,070	1,761

[1] The HE figures do not include students of the Open University.
[2] The FE student numbers do not include students on further education courses in LEA maintained adult education centres or run by the Workers' Educational Association. Figures for 1979 and 1992 do not exist on a comparable basis for such students. Nor do they include students in sixth form colleges. From 1 April 1993 sixth form colleges transferred to the new FE sector. In 1992-93 there were 94,000 students in sixth form colleges in England.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *517*, if he will list the courses and private institutions of higher education listed under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations.

Mr. Boswell: No list is maintained by the Department of the courses in private institutions that are subject to automatic designation by class under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations. The following courses at private institutions have been designated individually by my right hon. Friend under regulations 10(1)(b)(iii) and 10(1)(e)(ii) of the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations:

Anglo-European College of Chiropractic
BSc (Hons) in Human Sciences (Chiropractic)

Architectural Association School of Architecture
Diploma of the Architectural Association School of Architecture

British College of Naturopathy & Osteopathy
BSc (Hons) in Osteopathic Medicine

British School of Osteopathy
BSc in Osteopathy

Buckland University College
LLB

City of London College
BSc in Economics

Elim Bible College
BA/BA (Hons) in Theology and Christian Ministry

European Business School
BA (Hons) in European Administration
BA (Hons) in International Business Administration
BA (Hons) in International Business Studies
BA (Hons) in Business Administration and Language Studies

Evangelical Theological College of Wales
BA/BA (Hons) in Theological Studies

Glasgow Bible College
BA/BA (Hons) in Theology

Greenwich College
BSc (Hons) in Business Management

Guildhall School of Music and Drama
BA in Acting

Diploma of Associate of the Guildhall School of Music
Bachelor of Music
BA (Hons) in Stage Management and Technical Theatre

Gyosei International College in the UK
BA (Hons) in Business Studies
BA (Hons) in Business with Culture Studies
BA (Hons) in Business with Language Studies

Holborn College
LLB (Hons)

Jew's College London
BA in Jewish Studies

Leo Baeck College
BA (Hons) in Jewish Studies

London Bible College
BA in Theology

Nazarene Theological College
BA in Theology
BA (Hons) in Theology

Newbold College
BA/BA (Hons in Biblical and Pastoral Studies

Oak Hill College
BA in Theological and Pastoral Studies

Ripon College
Bachelor of Theology (Hons)

Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester
BSc in Crop Production Ecology and Management
BSc in Agriculture and Land Management
BSc in Rural Land Management
BSc in International Agribusiness Management
BSc Agriculture and Equine Business Management

Spurgeon's College
Bachelor of Divinity

St. Stephen's House
Bachelor of Theology (Hons)

Trinity College, Bristol
BA in Theological Studies

Wycliffe Hall
Bachelor of Theology

Methodist Church

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent representations he has had from the Methodist Church about its reservations in regard to the Education Bill *[Lords]*; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend received a letter last week from the Methodist Church about the role of higher education in initial teacher training. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of my reply.

Colleges (Legal Disputes)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if the costs of legal action taken by the National Employers Organisation on behalf of a college in dispute with the National Association of Teachers of Further and Higher Education are paid by the employers' national body or wholly or partly by the college.

Mr. Boswell: This is a matter for the parties involved, not for my right hon. Friend.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes were initiated in each year since 1989.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The year-on-year increases in the number of neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales in the years since 1989 have been 11,000 in 1990, 8,000 in 1991, 15,000 in 1992 and 15,000 in 1993.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes there are in operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At the end of December 1993 there were estimated to be over 130,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales covering over 5 million households. These schemes are an excellent way in which the public can assist the police in the fight against crime.

Immigration Controls

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions have been given to immigration officials when dealing with travellers from other European economic area countries who refuse to submit to examination under powers granted by the Immigration Acts, citing instead a right to enter without being checked under the provision of article 7A of the European Community treaty.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Immigration officers are instructed to admit freely passengers who satisfy them that they are nationals of European economic area countries.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people, by nationality, were refused leave to enter and removed at United Kingdom airports in 1993 whose travel was wholly internal to the European Community;

(2) how many people whose journey was internal to the European Community were refused entry and returned abroad by immigration officials at United Kingdom airports during the course of 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people, by nationality, were refused leave to enter and removed at United Kingdom channel ports in 1993 whose travel was wholly internal to the European Community.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following table shows the numbers and nationalities of passengers refused entry and removed at the ports of Dover, Folkestone, Newhaven, Portsmouth and Ramsgate in 1993.

	Number
Commonwealth citizens	
Australia	21
Bangladesh	5
Canada	8
Cyprus	6
Ghana	45
Hong Kong	11
India	39
Jamaica	3
Kenya	4
Malaysia	66
Malta	1
Mauritius	8
New Zealand	19
Nigeria	23
Pakistan	25
Sierra Leone	45
Singapore	5
Sri Lanka	33
Tanzania	7
Trinidad and Tobago	5
Uganda	1
Zimbabwe	3
British overseas citizens	2
Other Commonwealth	15
Other nationals	
Algeria	87
Angola	13
Argentina	7
Austria	10
Brazil	65
Bulgaria	6
Chile	8
China	4
Colombia	19
Czechoslovakia	295
Egypt	1
Ethiopia	8
Finland	6
Hungary	82
Indonesia	2
Iran	2
Israel	22
Japan	13
Libya	1
Mexico	6
Morocco	17
Norway	1
Peru	9
Philippines	3
Poland	1,254
Rumania	32
Somalia	10
South Africa	85

	Number
South Korea	13
Sudan	1
Sweden	11
Switzerland	8
Thailand	1
Tunisia	2
Turkey	30
United States of America	110
USSR	8
Venezuela	3
Yugoslavia	20
Zaire	24
Others	270
Stateless Hong Kong	2
Stateless others	757
European Community[1]	
Belgium	7
France	74
Greece	1
Italy	22
Netherlands	29
Portugal	20
Spain	3

[1] Most of these would have been non-EC nationals presenting documents to which they were not entitled but whose nationality is not otherwise recorded.

Dog Attacks

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is available from his Department's recent questionnaire sent to police authorities about the number of dog attacks for each of the last five years in each police authority area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Statistics on dog attacks are not routinely collected by all police forces. Recent inquiries of a number of forces by the Home Office, however, have revealed the following information:

Numbers of reported cases involving attacks by dogs of all types on humans

Police force	*Year* 1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Kent	n/a	n/a	1,002	1,150	853
Merseyside	347	351	371	271	243
Northumbria	n/a	n/a	n/a	246	175

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received on the review of the operation of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 17 March, column *763*, which gave information about the representations received about the reform of the criminal injuries compensation scheme. The new tariff scheme comes into force on 1 April.

Prisoner Escapes

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have escaped from each United Kingdom prison and in total since the introduction of "fresh start".

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given. Escapes from prisons in Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Gerry Steinberg, dated 3 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners who have escaped from within each prison in the United Kingdom since the introduction of Fresh Start.

Fresh Start was introduced into prisons in England and Wales from 3 April 1987 as a rolling programme. Central recording of escapes did not start until 20 June 1988. For these reasons the information requested cannot be provided centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The attached table lists the number of prisoners who have escaped from prisons in England and Wales from 20 June 1988 to 24 March 1994.

There were during this period 30 establishments, not included in the table below, from which no prisoner escaped. The figures exclude escapes from escorts.

Establishment	*Escapers*
Acklington	30
Aldington	45
Ashwell	24
Bedford	4
Belmarsh	1
Birmingham	1
Blakenhurst	2
Blantyre House	4
Blundeston	1
Brinsford	1
Bristol	1
Brixton	2
Brockhill	4
Buckley Hall	1
Bullwood Hall	3
Camp Hill	11
Campsfield House	1
Canterbury	5
Cardiff	8
Castington	2
Channings Wood	29
Chelmsford	1
Coldingley	1
Dartmoor	3
Deerbolt	28
Dorchester	2
Dover	11
Downview	14
Durham	5
Eastwood Park	8
Elmley	2
Erlestoke	20
Everthorpe	20
Exeter	3
Featherstone	33

Establishment	Escapers
Feltham	58
Frankland	1
Glen Parva	21
Gloucester	19
Guys Marsh	22
Haslar	18
Haverigg	25
Hewell Grange	1
Highdown	1
Highpoint	87
Hindley	16
Holloway	2
Huntercombe	14
Hull	2
Kingston	1
Kirklevington	7
Latchmere House	2
Lancaster	1
Lancaster Farms	1
Leeds	2
Leicester	1
Lewes	2
Leyhill	1
Lincoln	1
Lindholme	69
Littlehey	20
Maidstone	5
Manchester	1
Moorland	1
The Mount	22
New Hall	11
Northeye	12
Norwich	30
Nottingham	1
Onley	15
Oxford	8
Parkhurst	1
Pentonville	7
Portland	63
Preston	7
Pucklechurch	4
Ranby	89
Risley	8
Rochester	7
Rollestone	1
Send	14
Shepton Mallet	9
Stafford	10
Stocken	9
Stoke Heath	11
Styal	1
Sudbury	4
Swaleside	1
Swansea	2
Thorn Cross	1
Thorp Arch	7
Usk	1
The Verne	26
Wandsworth	3
Wayland	19
Wellingborough	18
Werrington	19
Wetherby	16
Whatton	3
Winchester	5
The Wolds	2
Wormwood Scrubs	1
Wymott	38
Total	1,239

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners from *(a)* Durham, *(b)* Frankland and *(c)* Low Newton prisons have escaped while on hospital visits in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Gerry Steinberg, dated 31 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners from Durham, Frankland and Low Newton prisons who have escaped whilst on hospital visits in each year since 1979.

The following table shows escapes from hospital visits from 20 June 1988 which is the earliest date at which this information was recorded centrally.

Year	Durham	Frankland	Low Newton
[1]1988	0	0	0
1989	1	0	0
1990	0	0	0
1991	2	1	0
1992	1	0	1
1993	1	0	0
[2]1994	0	1	0

[1]from 20 June.
[2]to 25 March.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Howard: The cost of official entertaining in the years from 1 April 1990 is included in the running cost expenditure for my Department which is published each year in the annual report; figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. The entertainment budget is used for a variety of functions including receptions. Separate figures are not kept for individual functions.

Prison Accommodation

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about capacity limits for prison accommodation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Win Griffiths, dated 31 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about capacity limits for prison accommodation.

All accommodation used for inmates is certified to meet the requirements of section 14 of The Prison Act 1952 and of Rule 23 of the Prison Rules 1964. An officer of the Secretary of State is required, inter alia, to certify that each unit of accommodation is adequate for health in respect of its size, lighting, heating, ventilation and fittings, and that prisoners are able to communicate at any time with a prison officer. This duty is undertaken by the Prison Service's 15 Area Managers for establishments in their own areas.

Each unit of accommodation (cell, double cell, cubicle or room) is assessed for the number of prisoners that can be accommodated in conditions satisfactory for both health and supervision. This number is the certified normal accommodation (CNA) of the unit and represents its uncrowded capacity. The CNA of an establishment is the sum of the CNA figures for all units of accommodation which are not set apart for special purposes. This number represents the uncrowded capacity of the establishment.

Each establishment also has an operational capacity, which is determined by the Area Manager. This takes account of any authorised overcrowding, staffing and other operational constraints. In many establishments CNA and operational capacity are the same. In the majority of local prisons, remand centres and some older training prisons, a certain degree of overcrowding has been authorised, so that operational capacity can be higher than CNA. In some circumstances, where specialist use is being made of accommodation, operational capacity can be lower than CNA.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities or *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Howard: On 28 March 1994, 249 staff in grades 1 to 7, including their departmental specialist equivalents, were women, representing some 17 per cent. of staff in those grades. Within the grades: nine—23 per cent. of staff at grade 3; two—13 per cent.—at grade 4; 28—19 per cent.—at grade 5; 31—9 per cent.—at grade 6; and 179—20 per cent.—at grade 7 were women. There are no women in grades 1 and 2.

On the most recent figures derived from ethnic origins surveys carried out by the Department, in grades 1 to 7 and their equivalents, 142 staff in grades 1 to 7 and their equivalent are classified as being of ethnic minority origin, representing 12 per cent. of the total—16, or 12 per cent. at grade 5; 43 or 14 per cent., at grade 6; and 83, 12 per cent., at grade 7.

As at November 1993 the latest date for which figures are available, 302 members of staff in the Home Office were known to be disabled, including a number who were not registered as such. This represented 0·6 per cent. of all staff. At grades 1-7 and their equivalents there were four registered and three unregistered disabled members of staff, representing 0·5 per cent. of all staff in those grades.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total numbers of *(a)* asylum seekers and refugees, *(b)* children of asylum seekers and refugees, *(c)* unaccompanied children admitted as asylum seekers or refugees and *(d)* children admitted for family reunion reasons, admitted to the United Kingdom in each year since 1990-91, including estimates up to 1993-94.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for the period 1 January 1990 to 28 February 1994 on the number of principal asylum seekers, the number of cases granted asylum, the available information on the estimated number of dependants associated with these two groups, and unaccompanied child applicants is given in the table.

Information for the period 1 January 1990—30 June 1993 on the total number of children accepted for settlement is published in table 6.3 of the Home Office Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1992", Cm 2368, and in table 3 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 33/93 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—First and Second Quarters of 1993". Information for the second half of 1993 will be published around the end of April. Information for the first part of 1994 is not yet available. Copies of both publications are available in the Library. These figures include children accepted in line with one or both parents being accepted for settlement at the same time, and acceptances of children where both parents were already settled in the United Kingdom.

Table A

Numbers[1] of applications for asylum and grants [1-2] of asylum, and dependant children, 1990 to 1993 and January to February 1994

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994[12]*
Total principal applications for asylum[3]	26,205	44,840	24,605	22,370	4,355
children[5] under 18 accompanying or subsequently joining[4] principal asylum applicants by year of principal application	—[13]	18,045[6]	5,020	3,850	—[13]
Cases recognised as a refugee and granted asylum[3]	920	505	1,115	1,590	125
children[5] under 18 accompanying cases granted asylum[4] by year of grant of asylum	—[13]	140[6]	435	770	—[13]
Acceptances for settlement of South East Asian refugees on arrival (including dependants)[7]	645	485	615	510	—[13]
Principal applications for asylum by unaccompanied children[8-9]					
port	—[13]	130[10]	185[10]	245[10]	—[13]
in-country	—[13]	—[13]	5[10-11]	30[10]	—[13]

[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest five.
[2] Grants of asylum do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same year.
[3] Exclude dependants.
[4] Information on children is of those applying with the principal applicant or arriving subsequently, before the principal application was decided. Information excludes children who arrive after the principal decision.
[5] Estimated figures.
[6] May be underrecorded.
[7] Figures for children are not separately identifiable.
[8] Included in the total for principal applications for asylum.
[9] Unaccompanied at the point of their arrival, and not known to be joining a close relative in the United Kingdom.
[10] The information for 1991 is for children aged 16 or under, and for the years 1992 and 1993 for children aged 17 and under.

[11] Information for 1992 is only available for the period October to December.
[12] January to February 1994.
[13] Not available.

Obscene Publications Branch

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions have taken place with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the proposed closure of the obscene publications branch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Metropolitan police headquarters functions and specialist units, such as the obscene publications branch, fall within the scope of the commissioner's restructuring exercise, which aims to make the best possible use of resources and to place functions where they are most appropriate. No proposals about the future of the branch have yet been made.

Central European Time

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *285*, (1) whether his Department will re-examine the British crime surveys of 1988 and 1992 to determine what impact an increase in evening daylight would have on the incidence of crime; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he had made of recent research on the link between daylight and crime; and what conclusions he has drawn.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office research and planning unit has re-examined the results from the 1988 and 1992 British crime surveys from the point of view of determining how an increase in evening daylight would affect the incidence of crime. These results are summarised in "Time for Change", October 1993, a publication by the Policy Studies Institute. This concludes that "darkness facilitates many criminal acts". Our own assessment however is that, although more crimes are committed when it is dark, definite conclusions are difficult to draw as regards the effect of darkness on overall levels of crime. Increasing evening daylight may for example have different effects for different crimes.

This assessment does not differ from earlier analyses done on the basis of the 1988 data alone, which formed the basis of the discussion in the 1989 Green Paper, paragraphs 46 to 48.

Police

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the ratio of police officers per head of the local population for each of the police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ratios of population per police officer for forces in England and Wales as at 31 December 1993 are given in the table.

Police force	*Population per officer*[1]
Avon and Somerset	467
Bedfordshire	456
Cambridgeshire	546
Cheshire	504
City of London	5
Cleveland	373
Cumbria	413
Derbyshire	512
Devon and Cornwall	519
Dorset	510
Durham	437
Dyfed Powys	485
Essex	503
Gloucestershire	457
Gwent	445
Hampshire	524
Hertfordshire	502
Humberside	433
Kent	490
Lancashire	438
Leicestershire	487
Lincolnshire	495
Merseyside	307
Metropolitan	265
Norfolk	528
Northamptonshire	496
Northumbria	399
North Wales	478
North Yorkshire	510
Nottinghamshire	437
South Wales	418
South Yorkshire	430
Staffordshire	475
Suffolk	526
Surrey	460
Sussex	475
Thames Valley	522
Warwickshire	482
West Mercia	537
West Midlands	377
West Yorkshire	395
Wiltshire	490

[1] Ratios are based on approved establishments.

Prison Assaults

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults by prisoners on other inmates and on prison officers took place in each of the last 10 years; what assessment he has made of the extent to which these assaults are influenced by drug and alcohol intoxication; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Frank Field, dated 31 March 1994:

Assaults in prisons

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent question about the numbers of assaults by prisoners on other inmates and on prison officers during the last ten years.

The available information is for the number of assaults proved at adjudication hearings and these are published each year in 'Statistics of Offences against Prison Discipline and Punishments England and Wales'. For convenience, the figures are on the attached table.

I regret that no information is available centrally on the influence, if any, of drug and alcohol intoxication on these assaults.

Assaults[1] on staff, prisoners and others in Prison Service establishments 1984 to 1993

	Number
1984	3,273
1985	3,473
1986	3,443
1987	3,548
1988	3,512
1989	3,636
1990	3,801
1991	4,062
1992	4,458
[2]1993	5,320

[1] Proved at adjudication, includes attempt, incite or assist an assault.
[2] Provisional.

Campsfield House

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those establishments to which detainees, formerly detained at Campsfield House detention centre, have been sent; how many of those detainees are currently refusing to eat; how regularly such detainees are seen by a doctor; how many detainees have been moved more than once, to date, after leaving Campsfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since 18 February detainees at Campsfield house have been transferred to the following establishments:

Harmondsworth Detention Centre
Queens Building, Heathrow
Stockton Hall Hospital
HM Prison Birmingham
HM Prison Blakenhurst
HM Prison Bullingdon
HM Prison Holloway

One detainee only, in Birmingham prison, continues to refuse meals.

All detainees have daily access to a doctor. Those who claim to have refused meals for four days or more are closely monitored by a doctor at least once a day.

Information on the number of detainees moved more than once, after leaving Campsfield, is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Data Protection (Universities)

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the data protection legislation to enable universities to provide a list of students resident in their accommodation to the electoral registration officer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Personal data are exempt from the non-disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 in any case in which the disclosure is required by or under any enactment. Electoral registration officers have a power under the Representation of the People Regulations 1986 to require any owner of premises within the area for which they act to provide information which they need to compile the register of electors. They are therefore entitled to ask for the names of eligible students living in universities accommodation.

William Harper

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to investigate the background to the gaoling of William Harper in 1988 for the falsification of an insurance certificate to cover the sale of anti-tank missiles to Iran.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations about this case, but he is ready to consider in the light of any such representations which might be made whether there are grounds for exercising his power to refer a case to the Court of Appeal under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 or whether any other action might be appropriate.

Asylum Seekers

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of applicants for political asylum in 1993; and how many of them were refused permission to stay in this country;

(2) how many people are currently seeking political asylum.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1993 on the number of applications for asylum, and on decisions made, is given in the table. At the end of February 1994 the estimated number of applications for asylum outstanding was 47,100.

Decisions[1] on applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, 1993

	Number of principal applicants
Asylum applications[2]	22,370
Decisions[2,3]	23,400
Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum[4]	1,590
Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave to remain[5]	11,125
Refused asylum and ELR— after full consideration	4,705
Refused under para 180F[6]	5,240
Refused on safe third country grounds[7]	745

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5.
[2] Figures exclude information on applications made overseas.
[3] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in 1993.
[4] Excluding South East Asian refugees.
[5] Usually granted for a year in the first instance, subject then to further review.
[6] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to invitation to interview to establish identity (para. 101 prior to 26 July 1993).
[7] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

Special Constables

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates are available of the hours worked by special constables in each constabulary in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not centrally available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates he has of the hours worked each week and each month by a typical special constable in each constabulary in 1985, 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not centrally available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Executed Prisoners

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many exhumations to allow reburial of executed prisoners have taken place since the abolition of capital punishment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not centrally available.

Capital Convictions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people reprieved from a capital conviction are now at large in the community on licence; and what is the rate of recall of such people.

Mr. Maclean: I regret that we do not have the information which would enable us to reply to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Justice and Home Affairs Council held on 23 March.

Mr. Howard: The meeting on 23 March was the second Justice and Home Affairs Council held under the provisions of the Treaty on European Union. The main points dealt with were as follows.

The European Commission gave a presentation on its communication on immigration and asylum policies. The Council agreed to consider how best to take forward this communication, and will discuss it again at its informal meeting in May.

The council noted progress on the draft European information system convention. It called for further work on the convention, in particular on the question of what provisions it should include on police and judicial co-operation, with a view to agreement being reached at the June Council.

The Council noted progress on the Europol convention and urged member states to work towards meeting the previously agreed deadline of October 1994. It remitted to a future Council a final decision on senior appointments to the Europol drugs unit.

The Council decided to ask the Telecommunications Council to ensure that developments in telecommunications took account of the need for legally authorised interception of telecommunications.

It approved a report on operational co-operation in combating terrorism.

It discussed a report on progress in simplifying and improving co-operation in the field of extradition.

The Council heard a presentation from the United Kingdom on its proposal for a legally binding joint action under title VI of the treaty on European Union to combat fraud against the Community budget, and expressed the hope that an interim report on fraud, to include consideration of the United Kingdom initiative, would be ready for discussion at the June Council.

Gas Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on proposals for gas weapons for use by the police; what research has been done in this area and in respect of which chemicals; what controls exist on the use of existing gas weapons; and what plans he has to change them.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Association of Chief Police Officers is considering the possible use of products containing the incapacitating inflammatory agent, oleo-resin capsicum. My right hon. and learned Friend will consider this matter carefully, taking full account of extensive technical information provided by the Home Office police scientific development branch and advice from other Government departments, before any decisions are reached.

The only chemical agent which police forces are currently permitted to use is CS irritant. The considerable research which has been undertaken into this agent was evaluated by the 1969-1971 inquiry into the medical and toxicological aspects of CS, reported in cmnds. 4173 and 4775. Police forces are permitted to use CS in extreme public order incidents where the chief officer of police judges such action to be necessary because of risk of loss of life or serious injury or widespread destruction of property; or against armed besieged criminals or violently insane persons where a senior officer judges that not to use it would endanger lives. There are no current proposals to change arrangements relating to CS.

Drugs-related Offences (Nigerians)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Nigerians are currently in prison in Britain for drugs-related offences; how many are men and how many are women; and what percentage of Nigerian women make up of the total female prison population in Britain.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director-General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 31 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many Nigerians are currently in prison in Britain for drugs related offences; how many are men and how many are women; and what percentage of Nigerian women make up the total female prison population in Britain.

The latest available provisional information is for 31 December 1993. On that date 103 Nigerians (of whom 63 were male and 40 were female) were recorded centrally as being held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales under sentence for a drugs offence which was the principal offence. On the same date 71 or 4·5 per cent. of the total female prison population in England and Wales were Nigerian women. Within the total prison population the type of offence was not recorded for about 6 per cent. of sentenced prisoners.

Harold Martinez

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the application for asylum by Harold Martinez, a Colombian national.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mr. Martinez's application was refused and his appeal against this decision was dismissed by both the special adjudicator and the Immigration Appeals Tribunal. In its determination of 4 March this year, the tribunal found that Mr. Martinez did not qualify for asylum as a refugee under the terms of the 1951 United Nations convention on the status of refugees, and that it would not therefore be a breach of that convention to return him to Colombia. However, the tribunal made an extra-statutory recommendation that Mr. Martinez be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom exceptionally. Although such recommendations are not binding on the Secretary of State, the tribunal's comments are being considered and a decision will be made shortly.

Illegal Drugs

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he makes of the effectiveness of his strategy to control illegal drugs; and if he will make a statement on that strategy.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* The Government's strategic framework for tackling drug misuse involves simultaneous action on the following fronts.

Educating our children on the dangers of drug misuse is a vital element. The national curriculum requires schools to teach aspects of health education, including aspects of drug misuse, and the National Curriculum Council has issued detailed guidance on health education to help schools plan comprehensive programmes for all pupils aged five to 16.

The Government are committed to ensuring that, both through the national curriculum and otherwise, schools will continue to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to promote their immediate and long-term good health.

Education is being backed up by anti-drugs publicity. Since 1985 the Department of Health has spent increasing amounts on national drug prevention, information and public education campaigns. Some £5 million is being spent in 1993-94 and independent evaluation has shown that the campaigns have succeeded in raising awareness of the problem.

There have also been innovative developments in the drugs prevention field. The drugs prevention initiative was launched in 1989 as a partnership between Government and the community to promote the prevention of drug misuse. Teams are now operating in 20 locations to mobilise local communities to stop young people and others at risk from drug taking and help them realise the harmful consequences. Many successful schemes are in place—the initiative has been involved in the funding of over 900 projects.

All this project work is being evaluated—some by independent researchers—and the impact of the initiative as a whole is being assessed to determine the effectiveness of its approach and to encourage the widespread adoption of good practice.

The collective experience of the work of the 20 teams in their local community is being pulled together. This will provide valuable information about the kinds of approaches which can be effective in drugs prevention, and the factors which influence their effectiveness, on which future action can be based.

Effective treatment and rehabilitation facilities for drug misusers are in place with £31 million allocated for drugs services in England and Wales in 1993-94.

In addition to all these measures for reducing the *demand* for drugs considerable effort is also being put in to reducing the supply through effective enforcement action. Police and customs continue to work hard to reduce the supply of drugs into the country with notable successes —recent seizures include 260 kg of cocaine in December and a consignment of 100 kg of cannabis in the London area.

We have made tough penalties available to the courts for use against drug traffickers—including up to life imprisonment for dealing in drugs such as heroin and cocaine.

United Kingdom laws for getting at the profits of drugs smugglers are among the toughest in the world. Legislation introduced in 1986 enables the courts to deprive drug traffickers of their profits and makes laundering of drugs money a criminal offence. Legislation has been strengthened, most recently in the Criminal Justice Act 1993. By the end of 1992 it is estimated that the courts had ordered the confiscation of drug trafficking proceeds totalling some £42·5 million.

All this comes together in a comprehensive anti-drugs strategy involving 10 Government Departments spending over £500 million a year. We have recognised the need, however, to review our strategy to ensure that the policies we are pursuing are correctly identified and are co-ordinated effectively. To this end, the establishment of the central drugs co-ordination unit was announced last December. One of the unit's main tasks is to work closely with Government Departments to ensure that drugs policies are planned, developed and implemented within a clear strategic framework. The unit's immediate task is to review our strategy on drugs and make recommendations for its improvement.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Brian Charrington Case

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he has been invited to make submissions to the Thames Valley police officers investigating the conduct of the Brian Charrington case by Cleveland police force.

The Attorney-General: In the event of my being asked to assist such an investigation I would of course do so, but it is not my practice to comment on the operational aspects of a police investigation.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General how many Proton cars were purchased by the Law Officers' Departments in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

The Attorney-General: None.

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the Acts of Parliament and Consolidation Acts that affect local government which have been introduced by his Department since 1990.

The Attorney-General: No Acts of Parliament, including consolidation Acts, affecting local government have been introduced by my Department since 1990.

Consultants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will provide a table showing the contracts currently being worked on for his Department by Coopers and Lybrand, Ernst and Young, Price Waterhouse, KPMG Peat Marwick, Grant Thornton, Robson Rhodes, Levy Gee, BDO Binder Hamlyn, Hacker Young, Pannell Kerr Forster and Stoy Hayward.

The Attorney-General: In respect of the Departments for which I have responsibility, the legal secretariat to the Law Officers and the headquarters office of the Crown Prosecution Service have no contracts with the named firms. CPS areas have devolved budgets and may occasionally engage firms of accountants, but the details of any contracts are not held centrally. The following table lists contracts entered into by the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the Serious Fraud Office.

Department	*Consultant*	*Task/case*
Treasury Solicitor's	BDO Binder Hamlyn	Design, development and installation of new accounting system
Serious Fraud Office	Cooper and Lybrand	BCCI
		Letap Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
	Ernst and Young	Brent Walker
	Price Waterhouse	Blackspur plc
	KPMG Peat Marwick	Polly Peck
		Maxwell
	Grant Thornton	Extra Special Vehicles
		Castlegate

Photocopies (Charges)

Mr. Bates: To ask the Attorney-General what is the current practice of prosecuting authorities in relation to charging for the provision of photocopies of unused material.

The Attorney-General: Different practices have developed among the prosecuting authorities as to the extent to which charges are levied, if at all, in respect of the supply of unused material in compliance with requests made by defence solicitors under paragraph 5 of the "Guidelines on Disclosure of Unused Material" issued by my predecessor in December 1981. Following recent developments in the case law relating to the nature and extent of the obligations on the prosecution to make disclosure, the position has been reviewed with the benefit of advice of Treasury Counsel. Counsel has advised that, where the prosecution is under a duty to provide copies of unused material as an integral part of its duty of disclosure, no charge can be made for such copies. That advice has been accepted and no further charges will therefore be levied by the prosecuting authorities; this advice is also being drawn to the attention of those police forces which levy charges.

Prosecuting authorities will reimburse all charges which have been levied which can be substantiated if the costs involved have not already been the subject of reimbursement by either the legal aid fund or central funds. Announcements are to be made in professional journals inviting individuals and their legal advisers to register claims for reimbursement. The prosecuting authorities themselves are seeking to identify cases where a charge in excess of £100 was paid and will, in such cases, contact the solicitor concerned directly if no claim has already been submitted. The prosecuting authorities will make prompt repayment as soon as the claim is properly substantiated.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Attorney-General what was the total cost of official entertaining in the Law Officers' Departments in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at the Departments' expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

The Solicitor-General: The total cost of official entertainment in the departments for which I am responsible in each year since 1990-91 is set out in the table below. Those figures are included in the running costs expenditure for each department and are published in the annual report. The entertainment budget is used for a variety of functions including receptions. Separate figures are not kept for individual functions.

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £	*[2]1993-94* £
Department				
Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers	Not available	7,000	3,900	4,700
Treasury Solicitor's Department	Not available	2,700	1,700	2,100
Government Property Lawyers Agency	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	3,600
Crown Prosecution Service	14,700	19,500	20,700	11,500
Serious Fraud Office	7,500	2,900	3,700	4,800

[1]Figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred. The Government Property Lawyers Agency came into existence on 1 April 1993.

[2]To date.

TREASURY

PAYE and National Insurance

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the amounts of PAYE and national insurance written off in each year since 1975 at current values and the cash figures for 1993 in the form of his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *260*.

Mr. Dorrell: The amounts of PAYE and national insurance written off between 1975 and 1992 at current values are set out in the following table. The figure for the amount written off for 1993 is not yet available.

Year	*PAYE amount in £ thousands at current values*	*Class I and IA NIC amount in £ thousands at current levels*
1975	n/a	n/a
1976	n/a	n/a
1977	n/a	n/a
1978	n/a	n/a
1979	n/a	n/a
1980	23,295	2,481
1981	23,080	2,338
1982	27,677	2,284
1983	38,281	2,631
1984	53,880	3,188
1985	71,850	3,405
1986	88,540	6,362
1987	130,315	11,987
1988	177,057	21,527
1989	156,970	19,322
1990	126,886	20,425
1991	146,188	23,393
1992	393,039	33,584

Note: Separate figures for PAYE and National Insurance for the years 1975-1979 are no longer available in the form requested.

Tax is written off when it cannot be collected—for example, because the taxpayer is insolvent. Similarly, it is on occasion necessary to remit tax which it would be unconscionable to collect—for example, because payment would cause gross hardship.

Inland Revenue Prosecution

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of prosecutions by the Inland Revenue in the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 by nature of offence, the number of convictions, the number of custodial or other sentences and the financial penalities levied.

Mr. Dorrell: Numbers of prosecutions and convictions, categorised by nature of offence, are given in the annual report of the board of Inland Revenue for 1992-93—appendix 1, table 6. Sentencing details are not recorded on the same basis. Financial penalties, chargeable under tax law, are not levied in respect of offences where convictions are secured.

Public Sector Debt

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures for *(a)* total United Kingdom public sector debt, *(b)* United Kingdom total public sector debt per head of population, *(c)* total United Kingdom public sector debt less that attributed to local authorities, *(d)* the current annual cost of servicing the debt in *(c)* and *(e)* the current annual cost per head of population of servicing the debt in *(c)*.

Mr. Nelson: The following table gives the information.

	£ billion
Gross public sector debt (end-March 1993)	
Per head of population (£4,300)	249·6
Gross debt of central government and public corporations (end-March 1993)	243·1
Annual cost of servicing gross debt of central government and public corporations (1992-93)	17·4
Per head of population (£300)	

Capital Transfer Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the value of revenue from capital transfer taxes as a proportion of gross domestic product in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each other OECD country for the latest year for which information is available.

Mr. Dorrell: United Kingdom capital transfer tax was replaced by inheritance tax for transfers on or after 18 March 1986. The table gives OECD data for all OECD countries for estate, inheritance and gift taxes, which broadly covers inheritance taxes, expressed as a proportion of GDP. The latest year for which complete information is available is 1991.

Country	*Estate, inheritance and gift taxes as a percentage of GDP*
Australia	0·0
Austria	0·1
Belgium	0·0
Canada	0·0
Denmark	0·3
Finland	0·2
France	0·6
Germany	0·1
Greece	0·4
Iceland	0·1
Ireland	0·2
Italy	0·0
Japan	0·6
Luxembourg	0·2
Netherlands	0·2
New Zealand	0·1
Norway	0·1
Portugal	0·2
Spain	0·1
Sweden	0·1
Switzerland	0·3
Turkey	0·0
United Kingdom	0·2
United States	0·3

Source: Revenue Statistics for OECD countries 1965-1992.

VAT

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total yield from VAT in 1978-79; and what is the total estimated yield for 1994-95.

Sir John Cope: Published figures show £4·8 billion and £43·1 billion respectively.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that mainland European flower growers who sell direct to British florist outlets pay the appropriate levels of value added tax;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that British flower growers do not face unfair competition from growers on the mainland of Europe who sell in British outlets and evade payment of value added tax.

Sir John Cope: Supplies of flowers made by businesses from another member state are subject to VAT under the usual conditions, either in this country or in the country of origin if the total is below the threshold, depending on the circumstances, and the normal controls apply.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate what the nation's tax burden as a percentage of gross domestic product will be in 1998-99; and what this figure was in 1978-79.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 23 February, *Official Report*, Column. *274.*

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much he estimates will be raised by the Treasury in *(a)* 1994-95, *(b)* 1995-96 and *(c)* 1996-97 from the freezing of personal income tax allowances.

Mr. Dorrell: The information was given in table 4.1 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95" published on 30 November 1993.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people will be affected by his decision, announced in the last Budget, to reduce the married couple's income tax allowance to 15 per cent. in 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 14 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *579-80.*

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the reduction in tax payable resulting from full indexation of the additional personal allowance applied at the standard or higher rate for *(a)* a lower-rate taxpayer, *(b)* a basic-rate taxpayer and *(c)* a higher-rate taxpayer in (i) 1994-95 and (ii) 1995-96; and what would be the gross revenue cost of these measures;

(2) what would be the reduction in tax payable resulting from full indexation of the widow's bereavement allowance applied at the standard or higher rate of relief for *(a)* a lower-rate taxpayer, *(b)* a basic-rate taxpayer and *(c)* a higher-rate taxpayer in (i) 1994-95 and (ii) 1995-96; and what would be the gross revenue cost of these measures.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* The table shows the typical gain for each type of taxpayer if the 1993-94 levels of the allowances had been indexed and they remained available at the taxpayer's marginal rate.

Difference in tax between 1993-94 indexed regime and proposed regimes in 1994-95 and 1995-96

	£ per year	
	Additional personal allowance	*Widow's bereavement allowance*
1994-95		
Lower rate taxpayer	+8	+8
Basic rate taxpayer	+96	+96
Higher rate taxpayer	+360	+360
1995-96		
Lower rate taxpayer	+106	+106
Basic rate taxpayer	+197	+197
Higher rate taxpayer	+470	+470

Revenue cost in a full year of 1993-94 indexed regime compared with proposed regimes

	£ million	
	1994-95	*1995-96*
Additional personal allowance	60	130
Widow's bereavement allowance	10	20

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the reduction in tax payable resulting from full indexation of relief on the married couple's allowance at the standard or higher rate for those aged over 65 years to pensioner couples paying tax at *(a)* the lower rate, *(b)* the basic rate and *(c)* the higher rate if they are (i) 65 to 74 years and (ii) 75 years and over; and what would be the gross revenue cost of these measures;

(2) what would be the reduction in tax payable resulting from full indexation of relief on the married couple's allowance at standard and higher rate for taxpayers aged over 65 years at *(a)* the basic rate and *(b)* the higher rate if they are (i) 65 to 74 years and (ii) 75 years and over; and what would be the gross revenue costs of these changes.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* The table shows the typical gain or loss for taxpayers in each age group if the 1993-94 levels of the allowances had been indexed and they remained available at the taxpayer's marginal rate. The gain or loss depends on the marginal tax rate of the spouse receiving the allowance, so the effect for a couple will be the same regardless of the tax liability of the spouse without the allowance.

Difference in tax between 1993-94 indexed regime and proposed regime for 1994-95

	Lower rate taxpayer £ per year	*Basic rate taxpayer £ per year*	*Higher rate taxpayer £ per year*
Married couple's allowance for those aged 65 to 74	−30	+96	+473
Married couple's allowance for those aged 75 or over	−30	+98	+481

The Exchequer effect would be broadly revenue neutral for the full year 1994-95.

Governor of the Bank of England

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the views expressed by the Governor of the Bank of England at meetings of EEC central bankers on

fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policy represent the views of Her Majesty's Government; and to what extent they are recognised as such by other central bankers and their Governments.

Mr. Nelson: In accordance with article 8 of the statute of the European Monetary Institute, the Governor, representing the Bank of England at meetings of the EMI council, acts according to his own responsibilities. Fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policy in the United Kingdom are decided by Ministers. The extent, if any, to which other central banks and their Governments recognise the views of the Governor as representing those of the United Kingdom Government is a matter for them.

Capital Losses

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the reasons underlying the indexation of capital losses for capital gains tax purposes and the Government's purposes in abolishing it.

Mr. Dorrell: Indexation of losses has given rise to widespread tax avoidance, including the creation of artificial schemes which have created substantial allowable losses when no economic loss has been incurred. Unchecked, this abuse would have led to the loss of some £3 billion a year by the end of the decade. The current Finance Bill contains provisions which restrict indexation relief for capital losses.

Tax Yield

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the tax yield from denying tax relief to pension scheme surpluses.

Mr. Dorrell: The amount of tax liable on refunds of surplus funds to employers is provisionally estimated to be £70 million in 1993-94.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total number of people in receipt of occupational pensions and the average value of these pensions by decile group together with the average value of tax liability of each decile.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest available estimates using the 1991-92 survey of personal incomes are given in the table. The information is based on administrative records and excludes some individuals whose income is below the tax threshold.

Decile group of people in receipt of an occupational pension ranged by amount of occupational pension	*Number of people in each decile (thousands)*	*Average amount of occupational pension* £	*Average income tax liability*[1] £
Bottom 10 per cent.	530	270	20
10—20 per cent.	530	620	50
20—30 per cent.	530	1,000	80
30—40 per cent.	530	1,410	140
40—50 per cent.	530	1,880	210
50—60 per cent.	530	2,500	290
60—70 per cent.	530	3,450	510
70—80 per cent.	530	4,820	730
80—90 per cent.	530	6,950	1,320
Top 10 per cent.	530	13,600	3,270
Total	5,300	3,650	660

[1] The figures are the tax liability on occupational pensions assuming that they represent the top slice of taxable income.

Tax Increases

Ms Jowell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to compensate typical families, with two children and one spouse working on average male earnings, following the increases in income tax and national insurance which come into effect in April.

Mr. Dorrell: Average earnings have increased by over 40 per cent. since 1978-79. This is worth £83 a week in 1993-94 prices.

Income Tax

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the rules for the introduction of the current year basis of assessment for income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue has today published, in a press release, details of the rules that the Government intend to introduce in the next Finance Bill concerning the anti-avoidance provisions for the transition from the preceding year basis to the current year basis.

The transitional rules are set out in schedule 19 to the 1994 Finance Bill. They apply to businesses that commence before 6 April 1994 and to other sources from which income first arises before that date. Broadly, for the year 1996-97 they allow a catching-up process by averaging the profits for the two years ending in that year. Income in that period is therefore effectively taxed, in most cases, at half of the normal marginal rate for that year, and business profits arising in the period from the latest accounting date in 1996-97 to 5 April 1997 ultimately drop out of account altogether.

The purpose of the transitional rules is broadly to ensure that there is no double taxation of business profits and other income, presently taxed on the preceding year basis under schedule D, which the change to the current year basis of assessment might otherwise cause. But, because of the way that the rules work, and the certainty that profits or income arising in a particular period will be taxed at a reduced rate, and in some cases will drop out of account altogether, it is necessary to counteract the effect of artificially moving profits or income into these periods. The Government's intention is to deter such avoidance.

The proposals also deal with the treatment of other income, including interest, assessed on the preceding year basis, and with the treatment of interest paid on borrowings to finance trades, professions and businesses carried on in partnership.

The proposed legislation will have effect in respect of all periods which affect the amount of income assessed in 1996-97. For businesses taxed under cases I or II of schedule D this could commence as early as 7 April 1994.

The legislation will also affect the period before 6 April 1997 which is taxed in 1997-98. The new rules do not affect limited companies.

The Inland Revenue has consulted on the proposals and will publish draft legislation later this year.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer of 18 February to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), *Official Report*, column *1032*, if he will give estimates for each year from 1978-79 of the number of individuals paying tax and the size of the work force in each region of the United Kingdom; and if he will give estimates for each year up to and including 1996-97.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* Regional estimates are not readily available for all the past years requested. Information based on the survey of personal incomes for 1981-82, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 is given in the table. No information is available below the United Kingdom level after 1991-92.

	1981-82		*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
	Individuals paying tax[1]	*Civilian labour force population of working age*[2]	*Individuals paying tax*[1]	*Civilian labour force population of working age*[2]	*Individuals paying tax*[1]	*Civilian labour force population of working age*[2]	*Individuals paying tax*[1]	*Civilian labour force population of working age*[2]
North	1,260	1,450	1,240	1,460	1,240	1,440	1,270	1,430
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,070	2,270	2,120	2,360	2,160	2,390	2,140	2,390
North West	2,760	3,010	2,630	3,090	2,840	3,080	2,740	3,060
East Midlands	1,530	1,810	1,760	2,020	1,910	2,020	1,840	2,020
West Midlands	2,280	2,450	2,250	2,580	2,340	2,610	2,260	2,590
East Anglia	800	850	970	990	990	1,020	1,030	1,010
South East	8,050	8,040	8,180	8,750	8,850	8,810	8,610	8,750
South West	1,850	1,910	1,980	2,240	2,350	2,240	2,270	2,270
Wales	1,090	1,210	1,130	1,300	1,220	1,320	1,240	1,310
Scotland	2,190	2,380	2,480	2,450	2,340	2,470	2,320	2,430
Northern Ireland	530	620	570	660	540	670	510	670

[1] Including taxpayers above and below working age.
[2] Men aged 16-64 years, women aged 16-59 years.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what procedures his Departments have to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) what information the Northern Ireland Office holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons.

Sir John Wheeler: Individuals are appointed to public bodies on merit and potential to contribute to the work of the particular body, taking account of the need of each body to have the experience and skills necessary to carry out its functions. The Secretary of State and Ministers consider all relevant factors known to them before making an appointment.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by county how many applications for payment of sheep annual premium he has received in the current year; and what proportion in each county remained unpaid on 1 March.

Mr. Ancram: The number of applications received under the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme is as follows:

County	*Number of Applications*
Antrim	2,652
Armagh	1,219
Down	2,659
Fermanagh	608
Londonderry	2,154
Tyrone	2,761

All applications are unpaid. The first advance of premium cannot be paid until authorised by the EC Commission.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by what date he expects all applications for sheep annual premium in the current year to be paid out.

Mr. Ancram: Payments under the 1994 sheep annual scheme are expected to be completed by June 1995.

The Commission normally authorises two advance payments which are expected to be made in September-October 1994 and December 1994-January 1995.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Sir John Wheeler: The total cost of official entertainment in the years since 1990-91 is included in the running cost expenditure for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments which is published every year in the departmental annual report, a copy of which is held in the Library. The entertainment budget is used for a variety of functions including receptions. Separate figures are not kept for individual functions.

Area Health Boards

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when each of the four area health boards last advertised job vacancies in *(a)* southern Irish newspapers and *(b)* Scottish newspapers; and if he will make a statement on their advertising policies.

Sir John Wheeler: All four area health boards advertised in some southern Irish newspapers in March 1994. None of the boards uses Scottish newspapers for recruitment purposes.

Health and personal social services employing authorities apply standard selection and appointments procedures which were developed by the management executive of the Department of Health and Social Services. These procedures place responsibility for advertising job vacancies on individual employing authorities.

Decisions on how best to bring a vacancy to the notice of prospective applicants are based on personal judgment.

Cross-border Co-operation

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds exist to encourage *(a)* cross-border co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* co-operation between Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Sir John Wheeler: Under the EC structural funds, the Interreg initiative is especially designed to encourage cross-border co-operation and to develop border areas. Northern Ireland submitted a programme jointly with the Republic of Ireland for 1991 to 1993 and it is proposed to submit a follow-on programme. Approximately £60 million has been made available under the joint Interreg programme for Northern Ireland and Ireland for 1991-93. In addition, in preparing new development plans for 1994-99, both the British and Irish Governments have paid close attention to the opportunities for expanding economic collaboration in the context of the next round of assistance from the structural funds.

Since 1990 the Department of Education has made available funding of £2,000 per annum to facilitate short-term teacher exchanges between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; in addition some £150,000 per annum is made available for the promotion of international networks, mainly European, including schools in the Republic of Ireland and Scotland.

Funding is also available from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for ad hoc projects where cross-border co-operation would be mutually beneficial.

In addition the Department of Economic Development in collaboration with Republic of Ireland has organised two energy efficiency conferences at a cost of £6,200 and a cross-border trade conference at a cost of £10,000.

Finally, the International Fund for Ireland, which was established jointly by the United Kingdom and Irish Governments in 1986, operates under an independent board with the objectives of

(a) promoting economic and social advance;
(b) encouraging contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland.

Geographical Data

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the shortest distance between Belfast and *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: From City hall, Belfast to Portpatrick lighthouse in Scotland is 58·2 km and to the middle of Newry river west of Narrow Water castle in the Republic of Ireland is 58·8 km. The accuracy of the measurements is assessed to be to the nearest 200 m.

Security Co-operation

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary met *(a)* the head of the Southern Irish police and *(b)* chief constables in Scotland to discuss security co-operation; and if he will make a statement on the level of co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the police forces in the Republic of Ireland and Scotland.

Sir John Wheeler: The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary meets the Commissioner of An Garda Siochana on a regular basis and the level of security co-operation between the two forces is extremely high.

In relation to chief police officers in Great Britain, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, dependent upon subject matter, liaises personally or through officers of appropriate rank with the requisite expertise. These arrangements have proved satisfactory in maintaining full security co-operation within the United Kingdom.

Business and Industry Promotion

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last promoted Northern Ireland business and industry in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland assisted 40 local companies to take part in a Europartenariat business-to-business event at the Scottish exhibition and conference centre in Glasgow on 13 and 14 December 1993.

The most recent business promotion event in the Republic of Ireland was a joint IDB—Irish Trade Board sub-contract exhibition aimed at promoting products sourced in Ireland, north and south; this was held on 17 November 1993 in Dublin.

Energy

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met Ministers from *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Republic of Ireland to discuss co-operation in the provision and distribution of energy; and if he will make a statement about energy co-operation between Northern Ireland and both Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Regular discussions take place with Scottish Ministers on a wide range of issues including energy. Energy matters, particularly electricity, have been discussed with Ministers from the Republic of Ireland from time to time. I continue to support any co-operation in energy matters that may bring benefit to Northern Ireland.

Tourism Promotion

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last promoted the Northern Ireland tourist industry in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: A television advertising campaign promoting Northern Ireland is currently under way in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. I also attended the opening on 15 March 1994 of the Northern Ireland tourist board's Scottish office in Glasgow.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Northern Ireland tourist board last discussed co-operation with *(a)* the Scottish tourist board and *(b)* Bord Failte in the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on co-operation in the promotion of tourism by the Northern Ireland tourist board with both Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Both the Northern Ireland tourist board and the Scottish tourist board are represented at regular meetings with United Kingdom tourist board counterparts. The last meeting was held on 6 January 1994.

There is frequent contact between the Northern Ireland tourist board and Bord Failte in the Republic of Ireland. The chief executives last met on 8 October 1993.

I fully support the Northern Ireland tourist board in seeking to promote tourism in Northern Ireland through co-operation with other tourist boards.

Culture (Financial Support)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the extent of financial support for *(a)* Irish culture and *(b)* Scottish culture in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement about the development of both these cultures in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: In 1993-94 Government funds have contributed nearly £1·5 million, and EC structural funds £711,000, specifically towards activities promoting the appreciation of, and respect for, the diverse traditions which make up the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland. The complexity of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage makes it difficult to disaggregate this expenditure between those aspects which are of Irish, Scottish or other origin. More generally, education, arts and other departmental expenditure will contribute to the cultural life of Northern Ireland on many levels. Government aims to promote wider understanding and respect for all aspects of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage and to show that differences do not have to lead to division.

Industrial Development

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Industrial Development Board last participated in a joint venture with *(a)* the Scottish Development Agency and *(b)* the Southern Irish Development Authority; and if he will make a statement about co-operation by the Industrial Development Board with equivalent organisations in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Since 1992 the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland and the Irish Trade Board have participated in a series of joint programmes aimed at stimulating cross-border trade. The programmes have included a series of joint exhibitions to promote sub-contracting opportunities for local companies and joint product promotions outside the island of Ireland. The most recent event was a joint sub-contract exhibition organised in Londonderry in March 1994.

No joint ventures have been entered into with the Irish Development Authority or the Scottish Development Agency.

Student Benefits

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what benefits students who are incapacitated due to accident or ill health and are thereby unable to attend their studies are entitled; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: In general, financial support for students is given through the educational programme and not the social security system. However, the following benefits may be available to students during periods of incapacity:

Sickness Benefit may be paid to a student who is incapable of work whilst undergoing a course of study subject to the satisfaction of certain National Insurance contribution conditions.

Invalidity Benefit will become payable where the incapacity continues and sickness benefit has been in payment for 28 weeks.

Disability Living Allowance is a non-contributory benefit which is payable where the "care" and "mobility" requirements and other enabling conditions are met.

Severe Disablement Allowance is a non-contributory benefit available to students (aged 19 or over) who are unable to work for at least 28 weeks because of sickness or disablement. If they first become incapable after their 20th birthday, they must also be assessed as, at least, 80 per cent disabled.

Income Support is available to disabled students who:
—are receiving Disability Living Allowance or Severe Disablement Allowance, or
—who have an invalid vehicle, or
—who are registered blind, or
—who qualify for an Education and Library Board disabled student's allowance because of deafness, or
—whose illness continues beyond 28 weeks.

Housing Benefit

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to increase awareness about the housing benefit system and to ensure that eligible tenants are fully appraised; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: Poster and leaflets on housing benefit are displayed at all Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Rate Collection Agency and social security offices. In addition, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in conjunction with the Rate Collection Agency has recently launched a Province-wide advertising campaign. The campaign includes three weeks of advertising on television and in the national and local press.

Income Support

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent attending a lecture tour or conference abroad disqualifies an unemployed person from claiming income support.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Ken Maginnis, dated 30 March 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question on the extent to which attending a lecture tour or conference abroad disqualifies an unemployed person from claiming Income Support.

Unemployed people claiming Income Support, who are required to be available for employment, do not qualify for Income Support for periods of absences abroad.

I hope this explains the position to you.

Fishing Industry

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial amounts were approved and have been allocated from European structural funds to the fishing industry in each year from 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: The following amounts have been allocated in each year:

	£
1990-91	88,404
1991-92	1,095,785
1992-93	302,133
1993-94	1,290,996[1]

[1] To 30 March.

Lumpy Skin Disease

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of lumpy skin disease occurred in each year since 1985.

Sir John Wheeler: No instance of lumpy skin disease has ever been recorded in Northern Ireland.

Fishing Industry

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial amounts will be allocated from European structural funds to the fishing industry from 1 April to 31 March 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: Two million ecu will be allocated to the fishing industry in each year, which, at the current exchange rate of 1·25 ecu to the pound sterling, equates to £1·6 million per year.

Social Fund

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the Northern Ireland social fund discretionary budget will be for 1994-95.

Mr. Ancram: I am glad to be able to announce that the social fund discretionary budget for 1994-95 will be £29·8 million. This is an increase of £1·3 million over the amount allocated to districts for 1993-94.

Details of the allocations will be placed in the Library together with a note explaining the basis on which they have been made.

Recorded Offences

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide tables giving the total number of recorded offences, the number for each category of offence and the number scheduled for hearing under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in Northern Ireland in each year since 1983; and how many and what percentage in each case were *(a)* recorded by police as having been cleared up and *(b)* recorded as results in a conviction.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 29 March]:* The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Table A gives details of the total number of recorded offences, the number for each category of offence, the number cleared and the clearance rate. It is not possible to link directly recorded offences to persons proceeded against in court and subsequent convictions.

Table B gives the total number of persons proceeded against for scheduled offences under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts. Classification of offences into scheduled and non-scheduled offences under emergency legislation takes place at the prosecution stage and is therefore not available for recorded offences, where there is no prosecution. The table does not include scheduled offences tried at magistrates courts. These are subject to the approval of the Director of Public Prosecutions and figures could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Crimes known, and detected, by class—Northern Ireland total 1983-87
Table A

	1983 Known	1983 [1]Detected	1983 Per cent.
1. Offences against the person	2,934	1,647	56
2. Sexual offences	396	292	74
3. Burglary	21,327	5,105	24
4. Robbery	1,870	561	30
5. Theft and TADA	27,750	6,647	24
6. Fraud and forgery	2,855	1,728	61
7. Criminal damage	4,577	767	17
8. Offences against the state	1,680	525	31
9. Other offences	595	503	85
Total	63,984	17,775	28

[1] (Cleared).

	1984 Known	1984 [1]Detected	1984 Per cent.
1. Offences Against the Person	3,389	1,929	57
2. Sexual Offences	496	334	67
3. Burglary	22,364	5,484	25
4. Robbery	2,009	530	26
5. Theft and TADA	28,746	8,139	28
6. Fraud and Forgery	3,117	2,101	67
7. Criminal Damage	4,419	955	22
8. Offences Against the State	1,566	492	31
9. Other Offences	673	527	78
Total	66,779	20,491	31

[1] (Cleared).

	1985 Known	1985 [1]Detected	1985 Per cent.
1. Offences Against the Person	3,458	2,012	58
2. Sexual Offences	653	506	77
3. Burglary	20,275	5,110	25
4. Robbery	1,800	419	23
5. Theft and TADA	29,490	10,145	34
6. Fraud and Forgery	3,697	2,681	73
7. Criminal Damage	3,194	870	27
8. Offences Against the State	1,410	341	24
9. Other Offences	607	497	82
Total	64,584	22,581	35

[1] (Cleared).

	1986 Known	1986 [1]Detected	1986 Per cent.
1. Offences Against the Person	4,205	2,411	57
2. Sexual Offences	834	659	79
3. Burglary	19,973	5,196	26
4. Robbery	2,204	409	19
5. Theft and TDA	30,819	11,585	38
6. Fraud and Forgery	4,209	2,968	71
7. Criminal Damage	4,055	1,259	31
8. Offences Against the State	1,537	486	32
9. Other Offences	419	363	87
Total	68,255	25,336	37

[1](Cleared).

	1987 Known	1987 [1]Detected	1987 Per cent.
1. Offences against the person	4,198	2,976	71
2. Sexual offences	817	746	91
3. Burglary	17,294	5,238	30
4. Robbery	2,504	464	19
5. Theft and TADA	30,136	12,990	43
6. Fraud and forgery	4,150	3,296	79
7. Criminal damage	2,592	1,125	43
8. Offences against the state	1,780	616	35
9. Other offences	389	292	75
Total	63,860	27,743	43

[1] (Cleared).

Crimes known, and detected, by class—NI total 1988-1992

	1988[1] Known	1988[1] [2]Detected	1988[1] Per cent.
1. Offences against the person	3,469	2,366	68
2. Sexual offences	779	657	84
3. Burglary	14,353	4,106	29
4. Robbery	2,130	488	23
5. Theft and TADA	27,994	12,539	45
6. Fraud and forgery	3,881	3,276	84
7. Criminal damage	2,254	927	41
8. Offences against the state	644	557	86
9. Other offences	386	310	80
Total	55,890	25,226	45

[1] In 1988 two offences ('assault on police' and 'communicating false information regarding a bomb hoax' ceased to be recorded.
[2] Cleared.

	1989 Known	1989 [1]Detected	1989 Per cent.
1. Offences Against the Person	3,338	1,938	58
2. Sexual Offences	935	799	85
3. Burglary	14,680	4,011	27
4. Robbery	1,738	391	22
5. Theft and TADA	27,057	11,716	43

	1989 Known	[1] Detected	Per cent.
6. Fraud and Forgery	4,395	3,483	79
7. Criminal Damage	2,013	687	34
8. Offences Against the State	626	507	81
9. Other Offences	365	276	76
Total	55,147	23,808	43

[1] (Cleared).

	1990 Known	[1] Detected	Per cent.
1. Offences Against the Person	3,374	2,088	62
2. Sexual Offences	790	725	92
3. Burglary	14,817	3,330	22
4. Robbery	1,630	289	18
5. Theft and TADA	29,267	10,420	36
6. Fraud and Forgery	4,177	3,082	74
7. Criminal Damage	2,191	789	36
8. Offences Against the State	585	489	84
9. Other Offences	367	263	72
Total	57,198	21,475	38

[1] (Cleared).

	1991 Known	Detected[1]	Per cent.
1. Offences Against the Person	3,955	2,450	62
2. Sexual Offences	877	762	87
3. Burglary	16,563	3,620	22
4. Robbery	1,848	308	17
5. Theft and TADA	32,033	10,751	34
6. Fraud and Forgery	4,811	3,220	67
7. Criminal Damage	2,394	765	32
8. Offences Against the State	592	454	77
9. Other Offences	419	345	82
Total	63,492	22,675	36

[1] Cleared.

	1992 Known	[1] Detected	[1] Per cent.
1. Offences against the person	4,102	2,630	64
2. Sexual offences	973	781	80
3. Burglary	17,117	3,270	19
4. Robbery	1,851	349	19
5. Theft and TADA	34,256	11,008	32
6. Fraud and forgery	5,486	3,342	61
7. Criminal damage	2,502	837	33
8. Offences against the state	478	383	80
9. Other offences	767	653	85
Total	67,532	23,253	34

[1] (Cleared).

Table B

Scheduled Offences: Persons proceeded against[1]

Year	Total	Found Guilty	per cent.
1983	638	577	90
1984	507	464	92
1985	698	625	90
1986	596	567	95
1987	713	680	95
1988	515	487	95
1989	456	414	91
1990	470	440	94
1991	423	388	92
1992	413	354	86

[1] At Crown Court only.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons;

(2) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Sproat: In making appointments to the public bodies for which my right hon. Friend is responsible a number of factors are carefully considered. Information about public appointments made is available in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment;

(3) if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post.

Mr. Sproat: Information about appointments made to public bodies which are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for National Heritage is available in "Public Bodies 1993". I also refer to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) on the following dates, *Official Report*, written answers:

Columns	
924-926	4 March
101-104	22 February
23-24	21 February
1049-1050	18 February
916	17 February
790	16 February
673-674	15 February
575-576	14 February
514-515	11 February
349-351	9 February
125-126	8 February
136-137	25 January

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since April 1992; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Sproat: The total cost of official entertainment in the year from 1 April 1992 is included in the running cost expenditure for my Department which is published every year in the annual report; figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. The entertainment budget is used for a variety of functions including receptions. Separate figures are not kept for individual functions.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many Proton cars have been purchased by his Department in the years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has not purchased any Proton cars.

Cross-media Ownership

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the full terms of reference for the review of cross-media ownership.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend announced on 3 January that the review will examine the rules which restrict ownership between newspapers, television companies and radio stations, in the context of fundamental changes taking place in the media industries throughout the world. The review will see whether those rules strike a satisfactory balance. In doing so they will be looking at the need for diversity and choice for audiences, while encouraging United Kingdom interests to play an active part in national and international markets.

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what studies his Department has made of the differing cross-media ownership regulations within the EU; and what conclusions those studies have reached.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has made no formal studies, but closely follows cross-media ownership issues elsewhere. It is taking part in discussions within the EU on the Commission's Green Paper on "Pluralism and Media Concentration in the Internal Market", a copy of which is available in the Library. This contains detailed information about the regulations which apply in all member states.

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 4 March to the hon. Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall), *Official Report,* column *924,* if he will place the representations made to the cross-media ownership review team in the Library.

Mr. Sproat: I have no plans to do so, as this raises issues of commercial confidentiality. It remains open to the originators to make their representations public if they choose.

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will complete his review of cross-media ownership by the end of July; and when he will make an announcement on the way forward.

Mr. Sproat: I would like to see this review concluded as rapidly as possible. An interdepartmental group of officials is due to make recommendations to Ministers in the summer. The timing of an announcement will, however, depend on many factors, including the nature of those recommendations and any legislative implications.

Royal Opera House

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what provisions have been made for Government funding for the Royal Opera house if its application to the millennium fund is not successful; and what assessment he has made of the ability in this event of the Royal Opera house to refund the money it has borrowed.

Mr. Sproat: I have made no such provision or assessment. However, borrowings by the Royal Opera House Development Land Trust in connection with the Royal Opera house development are subject to my right hon. Friend's consent. Such borrowings cannot exceed a specified proportion of the value of the marketable assets available to the trust.

Commercial Broadcasting

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what limits the Independent Television Commission and Radio Authority already impose on the programme content operated by the relevant commercial franchisees.

Mr. Sproat: All licensed programme services have to comply with the programme codes of the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority. Copies of the codes have been placed in the Library.

For Channel 3 licence holders and Channel 4, there are other programme requirements, set out in their licenses. National and local radio licence holders have to adhere to promises of performance, which are based on the proposals in the applications for licences.

UNESCO

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what activities his Department has undertaken or is about to undertake in the context of UNESCO's convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has reviewed possible candidates for inclusion in the world heritage list and is currently considering revised criteria published by UNESCO on the nomination of cultural landscapes. My Department is also funding a three-year programme by the International Council on Monuments and Sites United Kingdom to produce monitoring reports for the English world heritage sites and to encourage the production of comprehensive management plans for these sites. Guidance on the world heritage convention was included in draft "Planning Policy Guidance Note 15", which was issued for consultation last year and will be published in final form later this year.

Protected Wrecks

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what practical issues relating to the transfer of responsibility for protected wrecks in English

waters remain to be resolved; in what way these differ from those already resolved by Scottish and Welsh Offices in relation to the transfer of their responsibilities to Historic Scotland and CADW respectively; and when he now expects the transfer to English Heritage to proceed.

Mr. Brooke: The issues which remain to be resolved relate to the legal and resource implications of transferring to English Heritage the functions currently undertaken by my Department. Assuming early resolution of these issues, I expect a transfer to take place later this year.

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps his Department has taken to ensure the publication of information derived from the fieldwork undertaken by licensees on protected wreck sites, over and above what is listed in his Department's booklet "Guide to Historic Wreck Sites" designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973.

Mr. Brooke: Licensees are encouraged to publish fieldwork information in appropriate archaeological journals and depost copies of their reports with the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. Applicants' intentions as regards publication are taken into account by the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites when assessing applications for licences to carry out investigations of designated sites.

World Heritage Committee

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage why no United Kingdom representative stood as a candidate for the World Heritage Committee last year.

Mr. Sproat: While the Government fully support the world heritage convention, and have played an active part in nominating sites for inclusion in the world heritage list —there are 10 English world heritage sites—we do not at present consider it necessary to seek election to the World Heritage Committee.

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many World Heritage Committee meetings have been *(a)* held and *(b)* attended by his Department in the past 10 years.

Mr. Sproat: The World Heritage Committee meets annually. My Department, and the Department of the Environment before April 1992, has not attended any of the Committee's meetings in the past five years. The Department of the Environment may have attended earlier meetings, but neither my Department nor the DoE has a record of attendances prior to 1989.

Bletchley Park

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received concerning Bletchley park and the future of a national intelligence museum.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage has received a number of letters about the proposal to create a museum at Bletchley park associated with intelligence work once carried out there. The future of the site at Bletchley part in a matter for the Secretary of State for the Environment and British Telecom plc, the joint owners of the site. Both have given their support for establishing a lasting reminder of the work carried out by Bletchley park during the second world war.

National Lottery

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which of the bids for the licence to operate the national lottery received by the Director-General of Oflot undertake to pay off the start-up costs within the first few months.

Mr. Sproat: It is not appropriate for me to comment on any of the details contained in the applications for the licence to operate the national lottery.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what restrictions can be placed on the sale of national lottery tickets by *(a)* hospital shops where the sale of tickets might detract from the hospital's own charities and *(b)* landlords on whose premises ticket outlets are sited where the landlord disagrees with such sales.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* Restrictions can be placed on the place of sale of national lottery tickets by regulations under section 12 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993. The National Lottery Regulations 1994 (SI 1994 No. 189) were laid before Parliament on 9 February and will come into force on 1 April 1994. Sales by *(a)* and *(b)* are not prohibited under the regulations.

Longford Hall

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on English Heritage's decision not to attend the public inquiry on the future status of Longford hall, Stretford as a listed building.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* Any decision whether or not to attend a public inquiry is one for English Heritage to take in the light of the circumstances, including whether the case for preservation is likely to be made effectively by other parties. In this case, English Heritage has undertaken to submit a written statement to the inquiry.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what work was defined as in need of urgent attention by English Heritage when their officers visited Longford hall, Stretford on 12 May 1993; what was the value of that work; when the work was completed; and what discussions have taken place since that time between English Heritage and Trafford council.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* English Heritage's report included a schedule of repairs to the whole building totalling £62,500. Some £5,000 of this related to the most urgent works to the original part of the hall, and those works were completed by Trafford metropolitan borough council in January this year. English Heritage has had no discussions with the council since it inspected the works on 21 January, and advised that certain further minor works were necessary. All the works carried out were designed to ensure that there would be no further deterioration pending a decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on the future of the hall.

Tourism

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the effects of the electricity at work regulations on the tourism industry.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* In my inquiry, begun last summer, into which regulations were most damaging to the tourism industry, the damage caused by the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, in the opinion of the tourism industry itself, ranked high. In fact, it was one of the seven most worrying regulatory problems identified by the industry. The core of the problem was perceived to be requirements for every movable piece of electrical equipment—for example, in hotel bedrooms—to be inspected, at three-month, six-month or 12-month intervals, tested by a qualified electrician, at a cost of some £3·50 per item, and for a sticker to be put on the movable electrical items, saying it had passed inspection on the date in question. One hotel chain had spent £350,000 on paying for such inspections in 1992.

I therefore asked the Department of Employment, which has responsibility for the Electricity at Work Regulations to look into the problem. This it did. It is now clear that the relevant requirements of the Electricity at Work Regulations are vastly different from what the tourism industry, through no fault of its own, had understood those requirements to be. The most relevant requirement is simply that electricial equipment used at work must be maintained in a safe condition, so far as is reasonably practicable. There is no requirement whatsoever to have every movable electrical item checked by a qualified electrician every three or six months. There is no requirement for such equipment to have stickers on it giving details of the inspection. There is therefore no requirement for a fee to be paid for every movable piece of electrical equipment so inspected. Much of what is required can be achieved by a simple visual inspection carried out from time to time by a responsible person such as a proprietor. In higher-risk areas such as kitchens or workshops it is likely that there will also be a need for some limited testing. However, the frequency of this would be far less than for a visual examination.

The Health and Safety Executive has recently produced a clearly written booklet, specially designed for accommodation providers, setting out the facts. I am glad to say also that the HSE is currently consulting members of the tourism industry about the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, as part of a wider review of health and safety at w[illegible] legislation, prompted by the deregulation initiative.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the objects and property accepted in satisfaction of inheritance tax during the financial year ended 31 March; and if, in listing these, he will specify *(a)* the amount of tax satisfied in each case, *(b)* whether any offers of objects carried conditions as to destination, *(c)* the dates in each case of the recommendations received by him from the Museums and Galleries Commission for the acceptance of objects, *(d)* the total for the financial year of the tax this satisfied and *(e)* how much of this total was covered in the public accounts by means of resort to the reserve in accordance with Government policy as announced on 26 July 1985, *Official Report,* column *779.*

Mr. Sproat *[pursuant to his reply, 29 March 1994, Official Report, c. 622-23]:* The information requested is as follows:

Item	*Tax satisfied (£)*	*Conditions or wishes*	*Date of MGC recommendation*
Painting by Agar	7,000·00	Unconditional	9 November 1992
Brogyntyn manuscript	50,505·00	Conditional	11 June 1993
Collection of glass	172,150·00	Conditional	21 July 1992
Gomm library furniture	152,257·64	Wish	11 October 1993
Haydn manuscripts	66,656·00	Conditional	30 March 1993
Painting by Herring	10,500·00	Unconditional	21 July 1993
Miniature portrait by Hilliard	140,000·00	Unconditional	1 July 1993
Wrest Park Papers and two albums	266,000·00	Wish	3 June 1993
Richmond Race Cup	15,400·00	Conditional	14 July 1993
Portrait by Romney	105,000·00	Unconditional	16 November 1992
Schudi Harpsichord	10,500·00	Conditional	30 March 1993
Two hats by Agar	3,500·00	Conditional	16 September 1992
Two paintings by Vuillard	280,000·00	Unconditional	22 April 1993
Sketchbooks by Ardizzonne	51,046·00	Unconditional	8 April 1993
Painting by Constable	196,000·00	Conditional	11 November 1993
Portrait by Lawrence	96,320·00	Unconditional	22 October 1993
Land at Sheringham	97,560·00	Conditional	n/a
Portrait by Gainsborough	1,114,600·00	Conditional	5 February 1992

The total expenditure for the 1993-94 financial year was £3,114,600. This includes a further payment of £316,605·36 for a painting "Weeping Woman" by Picasso which was accepted in 1986-87. Acceptance of the Gainsborough portrait was made possible by a call on the reserve of £1,114,600, being the total amount from the reserve this financial year.

A press notice has been issued today announcing the most recent acceptances of the Ardizzonne sketchbooks, the paintings by Constable and Lawrence, the land at Sheringham and the additional Picasso payment.

DEFENCE

Appointments

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals outside his Department who are sent information on, or consulted about, individuals who are, or may be, proposed to the Minister for appointment to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person appointed or the shortlist for the appointment;

(2) if he will list each appointment for which a Minister has to approve the appointment or shortlist for the appointment, showing for each appointment *(a)* which

Minister exercises the responsibility, *(b)* the salary, if any, attached to the post, *(c)* the term of the appointment and *(d)* the person currently appointed to the post;

(3) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have been asked, since June 1992, to submit names of individuals to be considered for appointments to paid and unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment;

(4) what information his Department holds or obtains relating to individuals who have been appointed, or may be considered for appointment, to paid or unpaid posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment, in particular relating to active involvement in *(a)* extreme left-wing organisations, *(b)* extreme right-wing organisations and *(c)* involvement in any of the political parties represented in the House of Commons;

(5) what procedures his Department has to prevent the possible appointment of individuals with extreme political views to posts for which a Minister has to approve the person or shortlist for the appointment.

Mr. Hanley: The appointments to public bodies for which MOD Ministers are responsible are as follows. Where appointees have already given their agreements to their names being publicised these are shown below. I will write to the hon. Member once all other appointees have indicated whether or not they are content also to give such agreement.

Name of body	*Appointment*	*Names of current board incumbents*
The RAF Museum	Chairman and Trustees	Sir Michael Beetham, GCB, CBE, DFC, AFC, FRAeS *(Chairman)* Sir Thomas N. Risk Mr. Barry Pinson, QC Gp. Capt. Sir Gordon Pirie, CVO, CBE, JP, DL, (Retd.) Dr. Basil Greenhill, CB, CMG, FRHists, FSA Sir John Cuckney Sir Ralph Robins, FENG, FRAeS Sir Colin Marshall Sir Hector Monro, AE, JP, DL, MP Sir Colin Chandler Sir John Blelloch, KCB
Oil and Pipelines Agency	Chairman and Board Members	Geoffrey Richards *(Chairman)* Christopher Finch
Advisory Council for the RN Engineering College Manadon	Chairman	
Anglo/Scottish/Welsh-American Community Relations Committees	Chairman	
Defence Scientific Advisory Council and Committees	Chairman	
National Employer Liaison Committee	Chairman	
Nuclear Powered Warships Safety Committee	Chairman	
Nuclear Weapons Safety Committee	Chairman	
Meteorological Committees	Chairman and Board Members	Professor R. L. Bell Mr. D. A. Davies Mr. D. Filkin Ms A. Gammidge Professor B. J. Hoskins Dr. H. Hughes Baroness Jay Professor M. H. Pesaran Baroness Platt Mr. C. M. Stuart Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer
Independent Board of Visitors for the Corrective Training Centre and RN Detention Quarters	Chairman and Board Members	
United Kingdom Polar Medal Assessment Committee	Chairman and Board Members	

In general, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is responsible for these appointments, but this may be delegated in practice to other Ministers on an ad hoc basis. Remuneration is detailed in "Public Bodies", a copy of which is held in the Library of the House. Appointments are generally for a three-year term.

My Department consults widely in seeking the most appropriate candidates for public appointments. We find

the views of current chairmen of the organisations concerned particularly valuable and also consult the lists of willing potential appointees held by the public appointments unit when appropriate.

My Department also takes full account of background and experience when considering individuals for public appointments, and consults as widely as is considered necessary. We seek to appoint the most suitable available candidates in each case.

AIDS

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he is giving to amending the existing Government policy on no compulsory HIV/AIDS testing of service personnel; what factors have led him to maintain the current position; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has no plans to change the policy of voluntary HIV/AIDS testing of service personnel.

Drug Testing

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects a decision to be made on whether random drug tests will be made compulsory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department is currently working on plans for the introduction of compulsory random drug tests in the armed forces. There is still detailed work to be carried out and it is therefore too early to say when further announcements will be made.

Service Personnel

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel are employed on the *(a)* Eurofighter 2000, *(b)* Trident, *(c)* Rapier, *(d)* Field Standard C and *(e)* Warrior projects.

Mr. Aitken: The number of service personnel in the Procurement Executive employed directly in the management of these projects is as follows:

Project	*Service personnel*
Eurofighter 2000	103
Trident	39
Rapier Field Standard C	3
Warrior	1

It is not possible without disproportionate cost to identify all service personnel involved in supporting these projects throughout the Department.

Hawk Trainer Aircraft

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether an agreement with India for the purchase of the Hawk trainer aircraft has now been finalised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The Indian air force has a requirement for an advanced jet trainer for which the British Aerospace Hawk is one of the competitors. We are not aware that the Indian Government have yet decided which aircraft to purchase to meet the requirement.

Reserve Forces

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of state for Defence what is the established strength of the Territorial Army, the Royal Naval Reserve including the Royal Marine Reserve and the Royal Air Force Reserve; and what are their actual strengths.

Mr. Hanley: As at 1 January 1994, the established and actual strengths of the volunteer reserve forces were as follows:

	Established	*Actual*
Royal Naval Reserve[1]	4,700	4,103
Royal Marines Reserve	1,220	1,049
Royal Naval Auxiliary Service[2]	2,199	2,200
Territorial Army[3]	63,950	63,819
Royal Air Force Reserve[4]	2,209	1,768

[1] Excludes University Royal Naval Units.
[2] Due to disband on 31 March 1994.
[3] Includes the Officer Training Corps. Excludes the Home Service Part Time element of the Royal Irish Regiment and Non Regular Permanent Staff.
[4] Excludes the University Air Squadrons.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost, and likely future costs of *(a)* the Territorial Army, *(b)* the Royal Naval Reserve, *(c)* the Royal Marine Reserve, *(d)* the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and *(e)* the Territorial and Volunteer Reserve Association.

Mr. Hanley: The full cost of maintaining the reserve forces—including such things as equipment development, fuel, ammunition, accommodation and utilities, food or transport—could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The figures for pay, allowances, earnings-related national insurance contributions and training bounties are as follows:

	1992-93 actual £ million	*1993-94 forecast £ million*	*1994-95 estimate £ million*
Territorial Army[1]	134·2	128·0	114·2
Royal Naval Reserve[2]	9·5	8·7	9·0
Royal Marine Reserve	2·4	2·2	2·2
Royal Auxiliary Air Force and RAF Volunteer Reserve	4·6	4·2	4·4
TAVRA[3]	15·8	15·6	15·3

[1] Excludes the Home Service Part Time element of the Royal Irish Regiment, and Non Regular Permanent Staff.
[2] Excludes the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service, which is due to disband on 31 March 1994.
[3] The Territorial Auxiliary Volunteer Reserve Associations (TARVAs) costs include salaries, heating, lighting and consumables, and vehicles.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the command structure, and who is in charge, of the regular reserve.

Mr. Hanley: The services do not have command structures dealing solely with members of the regular reserve forces. In peacetime, all personal documentation is held by the appropriate service personnel authority. On mobilisation, a reservist would become subject to the command structure of the unit to which he was assigned.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of S4State for Defence what Territorial Army units are under two thirds recruited; and what proposals exist to improve their recruitment or disband the units.

Mr. Hanley: The following Territorial Army units are under two thirds recruited:

202 Field Hospital
203 Field Hospital
204 Field Hospital

When the future of the TA is announced later this year, and the prospects for the above units are known, appropriate action will be taken.

Additional funding may be made to units two thirds below strength for national and regional recruiting campaigns. There are no current plans to disband units which are two thirds below strength.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the strength of *(a)* the Regular Army Reserve, *(b)* the Royal Naval Reserve and *(c)* the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Reserve.

Mr. Hanley: On 1 January 1994, the strengths of the regular reserve forces[1] of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force were as follows:

	Strength
Royal Fleet Reserve	3,476
Army Reserve	44,882
Air Force Reserve[2]	15,560

[1] The regular reserve forces do not include service pensioners with a recall liability, who are governed separately. The Army's long-term reserve is also separate. Neither category is included in the figures given in the answer.

[2] The Royal Air Force Reserve includes ex-regular officers; Royal Fleet Reserve and Regular Army Reserve do not.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of those reservists of the regular reserve receiving a call-out over the past five years have reported to their operational base.

Mr. Hanley: The only time in the past five years that members of the regular reserve have been called out was during the Gulf conflict. On that occasion my Department sent letters to appropriate ex-regulars seeking volunteers for service. Following this, some 770 individuals were taken into service. Additionally, a limited compulsory call-out resulted in a further 133 individuals being taken into service. Only two of those individuals to whom call-out papers were sent failed to respond without an immediately acceptable reason. It is not possible to break down any of these figures between regular reserves and other former regular personnel.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role of the eight Territorial Army battalions in the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps and their likely deployment times.

Mr. Hanley: The role of the eight Territorial Army battalions in the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps is to conduct security tasks in the rear area of the battle zone as required by ARRC headquarters. These will include such tasks as the defending key logistic installations and supply routes. The likely deployment time is 90 days from mobilisation.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the operational role of the Territorial Army battalions other than those in the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

Mr. Hanley: The 28 Territorial Army battalions which do not have an operational role in the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps have a national defence role. In terms of the three defence roles, this can be considered as:

(a) *Defence Role 1.* To carry out a wide range of tasks including Military Alliance operations and Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) in peace, tension and war. To provide the framework for the reconsitution, regeneration and expansion of forces.
(b) *Defence Roles 2 and 3.* To be prepared to augment or reinforce national, United Nations or Alliance operations.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the conditions of call-up and service of the regular reserves.

Mr. Hanley: The principal conditions of call-out of those former members of the regular services who have a reserve liability as a consequence of their service in the regular forces, including service pensioners who are liable to recall, are laid down in the different authorities according to service and rank as follows:

(i) For former officers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, in two Orders in Council made in 1962 and 1982;
(ii) For former officers of the Army, in the Pay Warrant 1964;
(iii) For former officers of the Royal Air Force, in the Reserve Forces Act 1980.
(iv) For former other ranks of all three Services, in the Reserve Forces Act 1980.

These provisions are summarised in the tables below. The first column lists the category of personnel; the second records the authority for the call-out; the third describes the circumstances in which call-out is permitted; and the fourth indicates the maximum duration of service once called out.

The Ministry of Defence is preparing legislation on the reserve forces, which we hope to be able to introduce in the 1994-95 session. This will include measures to simplify the present arrangements for the call-out or recall of former regular service personnel.

Former members of the Royal Air Force, other than officers

Force	*Authority for call-out*	*Description of call-out*	*Duration of Service once called-out*
1. Men of the Air Force Reserve	RFA 80, s.10(1) RFA 80, s.10(4)	If it appears to Her Majesty that National Danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen	Up to the earlier of: "Until Her Majesty no longer requires his services" (RFA 80, (s.21(1) or "The remainder unexpired of his term of service in the Air Force Reserve" (RFA 80, s.21(2))
	RFA 80, s.11(1)	When warlike operations are in preparation or in progress	Up to twelve months in aggregate (RFA 80, s.13(1))— "but not more than the remainder unexpired of his term of service in the Air Force Reserve" (RFA 80, s.21(2))
	RFA 80, s.20(1)	For home defence service. (i.e. service in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands or Isle of Man in the event of an actual or apprehended attack on the United Kingdom—RFA 80 s.156(1))	Up to the earlier of the following: "Until Her Majesty no longer requires his services", (RFA 80, s.21(1)); or "the remainder unexpired of his term in the Air Force Reserve" (RFA 80, s.21(2))
	RFA 80, s.23(1)	To aid the civil power in the preservation of the public peace	Until no longer required
	RFA 80, s.38	For training	"For one period not exceeding 15 days" (RFA 80, s.38(b)); and "For such other periods as may be prescribed, none of which shall exceed 36 hours without the consent of the person in question" (RFA 80, s.38(6))
2. Air Force Pensioners	RFA 80, ss.31; 32; 33	Whenever men of the Air Force Reserve have been called-out for permanent service under s.10 or s.20(1)	Until "such date which Her Majesty may by Order in Council declare to be the end of the emergency which was the occasion of the calling-out permanent service of persons of the reserve in question." (RFA 80, s.32(4)(b))

Former officers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines

Force	*Authority for call-out*	*Description of call-out*	*Duration of Service once called-out*
1. Royal Navy officers—Emergency and retired lists	Order in Council of 27 June 1962 (NL(R)838.61)	"In the event of actual or apprehended attack on the United Kingdom"	As for ratings (i.e. up to three years, which can be extended to up to five years)
	Order in Council of 18 May 1982 (D/NMT/133/1/33)	"Whenever warlike operations are in preparation or in progress"	For such period as the Admiralty Board sees fit
2. Royal Marines officers—Emergency and retired lists	Order in Council of 27 June 1962 (NL(R)838.61)	"In the event of actual or apprehended attack on the United Kingdom"	As for ratings (i.e. up to three years, which can be extended to up to five years)
	Order in Council of 18 May 1982 (D/NMT/133/1/33)	"Whenever warlike operations are in preparation or in progress"	For such period as the Admiralty Board sees fit

Former members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, other than officers

Force	*Authority for call-out*	*Description of call-out*	*Duration of Service once called-out*
1. Royal Fleet Reserve (Special Class)	RFA 80, s.10(1) RFA 80, s.10(4)	If it appears to Her Majesty that national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen	Up to three years (RFA 80, s.17(1)); extendable to up to five years (RFA 80, s.17(2))
	RFA 80, s.11(1)	When warlike operations are in preparation or in progress	Up to twelve months in aggregate (RFA 80, s.13(3))
	RFA 80, s.37	For training	Up to 92 days in any one year. (RFA 80, s.37(3))
2. Royal Fleet Reserve (Ordinary class)	RFA 80, s.10(1) RFA 80, s.10(4)	If it appears to Her Majesty that national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen	Up to three years (RFA 80, s.17(1)); extendable to up to five years (RFA 80, s.17(2))

Force	Authority for call-out	Description of call-out	Duration of Service once called-out
	RFA 80, s.16(1)	In the event of actual or apprehended attack on the United Kingdom	Up to three years (RFA 80, s.17(1)); extendable to up to five years (RFA 80, s.17(2))
	RFA 80, s.37	For training	Up to 92 days in any one year. (RFA 80, s.37(3))
3. Naval Pensioners	RFA 80, s.30	In any emergency	The duration of the emergency which occasions the call-out

Former members of the Regular Army, other than officers

Force	Authority for call-out	Description of call-out	Duration of Service once called-out
1. Men of the Army Reserve	RFA 80, s.10(1) RFA 80, s.10(4)	If it appears to Her Majesty that national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen	Up to the earlier of: "Until Her Majesty no longer requires his services" (RFA 80, s.19(1)) or Remainder of time due in Reserves (RFA 80, s.19(2))
	RFA 80, s.11(1)	"Whenever warlike operations are in preparation or in progress"	Up to twelve months in aggregate (RFA 80, s.13(3))— but not more than "the remainder unexpired of his term in the Army Reserve". (RFA 80, s.19(2))
	RFA 80, s.18(1)	For home defence service (i.e. service in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands or Isle of Man in the event of an actual or apprehended attack on the United Kingdom—RFA 80, s.156(1))	Up to the earlier of the following: "Until Her Majesty no longer requires his services", (RFA 80, s.19(1)); or "the remainder unexpired of his term in the Army Reserve" (RFA 80, s.19(2))
	RFA 80, s.23(1)	To aid the civil power in the preservation of the public peace	Until no longer required
	RFA 80, s.38	For training	"For one period not exceeding 15 days" (RFA 80, s.38(a)); and "For such other periods as may be prescribed, none of which shall exceed 36 hours without the consent of the person in question" (RFA 80, s.38(b))
2. Army Pensioners	RFA 80, ss.31; 32; 33	Whenever men of the Army Reserve are called out for permanent service under s.10 or s.18(1)	Until "such date which Her Majesty may by Order in Council declare to be the end of the emergency which was the occasion of the calling-out for permanent service of persons of the reserve in question." (RFA 80, s.32(4)(b))
3. Army Long Term Reserve	RFA 80, s.34	Whenever men of the Army Reserve are called out for permanent service under s.10 or s.18(1)	Unless previously discharged, until "such date which Her Majesty may by Order in Council declare to be the end of the emergency which was the occasion of the calling-out of the Army Reserve." (RFA 80, s.34(3)(b))

Former Army officers

Force	Authority for call-out	Description of call-out	Duration of Service once called-out
1. Class 1 of Regular Army Reserve of officers (Most ex-Regular officers)	Pay Warrant 1964, AC 14173, Amendment 60 Article 285a	(i) For service in any part of the world when warlike operations are in preparation or in progress	Until no longer required
		(ii) For service in any part of the world if the Queen orders the call-out of Army Reservists when it appears to Her that national danger is imminent or that a great emergency has arisen	Until no longer required
		(iii) For service in the United Kingdom in defence of the United Kingdom in the event of an actual or apprehended attack	Until no longer required

Former officers of the Royal Air Force

Force	*Authority for call-out*	*Description of call-out*	*Duration of Service once called-out*
1. RAF Reserve of Officers (RAFRO)	RFA 80, s.10(1) RFA 80, s.10(4)	If it appears to Her Majesty that national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen	Until no longer required
	RFA 80, s.11(1)	When warlike operations are in preparation or in progress	Until no longer required

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information is held about the location, availability and suitability for military service of the regular reserve.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the location, availability and suitability for military service of the regular reserves is held centrally by each service on computer. The information is regularly updated and includes details of home address, contact number, current employment, service history, medical history and specialist qualifications.

Yugoslavia

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces personnel are currently deployed *(a)* offshore and *(b)* on shore in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently some 3,000 British armed forces personnel deployed offshore and some 3,300 onshore in the former Yugoslavia. The first figure includes some 600 RAF personnel, based in Italy, in support of operations in theatre.

Indonesia (Military Advisers)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military advisers are currently stationed in Indonesia; and how many serving officers are attached to the British embassy there.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom has no military advisers in Indonesia. A colonel is attached to the British Embassy in Jakarta as defence attaché, and has one warrant officer in support.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the director of the Atomic Weapons Establishment sought permission to present evidence to the Atomic Weapons Establishment community inquiry held by Reading borough council on Aldermaston on 23 and 24 March; and if he will arrange for a copy of the Atomic Weapons Establishment evidence to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: Hunting-BRAE, the contractor operating the AWE Aldermaston site on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, was invited to take part in the community inquiry held by Reading borough council on 23 and 24 March 1994; MOD agreed that the company should participate.

I shall arrange for a copy of the Hunting-BRAE submission to the inquiry to be placed in the Library shortly.

Trident

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reply he has made to the representations on the safety of Trident by Scottish CND; and if he will commission an evaluation of them.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend has been sent copies of CND's document dated February 1994 entitled "The Safety of Trident". The document contains no new information of real significance, but includes many speculative assumptions and presents a misleading picture of the safety of the United Kingdom Trident programme.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration his Department has given to reducing the number of crews planned for the Trident submarines.

Mr. Hanley: Consideration is being given to the consequences of establishing a crewing level for the Trident force below the two crews per boat allocated to the Polaris force. No final decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the differences between the Polaris and Trident systems in terms of their operational nature.

Mr. Hanley: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to comment on the operational or technical capabilities of our nuclear weapons.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional contribution to the United Kingdom's deterrent posture air-delivered bombs provide over and above that provided by Trident ballistic missiles.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the sub-strategic warhead intended for the Trident submarines is the same as its planned strategic warhead.

Mr. Aitken: It is not in the interest of national security to disclose details of the configuration of nuclear weapons.

Eurofighter 2000

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made regarding Eurofighter 2000.

Mr. Aitken: The first Eurofighter 2000 development aircraft, DA1, made a successful first flight from the Deutsche Aerospace flight test centre in Manching, Germany, on 27 March 1994. The flight of approximately 40 minutes duration incorporated system handling checks; and the sophisticated quadruplex digital fly-by-wire control system, necessary for this unstable configured aircraft, performed exactly as expected. This achievement represents a significant milestone in the development programme.

The second development aircraft, DA2, is expected to fly very soon at British Aerospace, Warton.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the costs of the Eurofighter 2000 are within budget.

Mr. Aitken: I can confirm that there is sufficient provision within the Ministry of Defence's forward programme for the currently estimated cost of EF2000.

Missile Systems

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the latest position is regarding Trident, Rapier, Field Standard C and the Warrior.

Mr. Aitken: The Trident programme continues to progress to time and within budget, with the first submarine due to enter service around the turn of the year. The development of Rapier Field Standard C is substantially complete and deliveries of production equipments are under way. Deliveries of Warrior vehicles are due to be completed by the end of the year.

Joint Projects, Europe

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what new joint defence projects are being developed with the United Kingdom's allies in Europe.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993" table 12. This lists collaborative projects in which the United Kingdom is involved with our allies. This list will be updated in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994", which will be published shortly.

Residential Properties

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current average weekly rent for his Department's residential properties, how many of them are empty; how many empty properties are awaiting sale; and what is the average period for which those empty properties awaiting sale have lain empty.

Mr. Hanley: Married quarter charges vary according to the type and grade of the property and level of furnishing, while rent for Ministry of Defence civilian houses depends on the size of the property and the terms of occupation. The current overall average weekly rent for my Department's residential properties could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, I can give the following information on the various married quarter charges which are effective from 1 April 1994:

MQ Type		Daily Rates £ Grade 1	2	3	4
I	(Officers)	8·83	8·02	5·61	3·54
II		7·97	7·24	5·07	3·23
III		6·99	6·37	4·48	2·87
IV		6·14	5·59	4·07	2·59
V		5·38	4·92	3·53	2·33
D	(Other Ranks)	4·28	3·92	2·86	1·85
C		3·95	3·60	2·63	1·72
B		3·63	3·32	2·42	1·60
A		2·78	2·54	1·89	1·29

These figures are for fully furnished quarters and therefore represent the highest level of charges. Quarters are also avaialble on an unfurnished or part furnished basis.

As at 31 December 1993 there were 10,108 vacant married quarters and 151 vacant MOD civilian houses. Of the married quarters, 2,450 were uninhabitable because they were undergoing or awaiting major works, 1,466 were held against future deployments, 1,973 were already allocated to service families who were due to move in shortly and the remainder were available for allocation or under consideration for disposal. In addition, 1,468 vacant married quarters and 25 vacant civilian houses were in the process of being sold. The calculation of the average time for which those empty properties awaiting sale have lain empty could only be carried out at disproportionate cost due to the frequency of service moves and the number of individual records involved.

War Museums

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ex-service men are employed in each war museum.

Mr. Hanley: Because of the large number of military museums, many of which independently manage and recruit their own staff, the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The number of curatorial officers employed directly by my Department in military museums is 30, nine of whom are ex-service men.

Field Marshall Sir Richard Vincent

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the NATO post being taken up by Field Marshal Sir Richard Vincent was last held by a British officer; what is the cost of the accommodation in Belgium purchased for his use while holding this post; what is the scale of the accommodation and what is its intended use; what alternative accommodation was considered; and what is the normal period of occupancy of this post.

Mr. Hanley: Prior to Field Marshal Sir Richard Vincent the last British officer to hold the post of CMC NATO was Admiral of the Fleet Sir Peter Hill-Norton from 1974 to 1977. The fully furnished house for Field Marshal Vincent was purchased for BFr 120,000,000—approximately £2,200,000 at the then rate of exchange. It was not available for leasing unless accompanied by an obligation to purchase at a later date. There is no fixed scale of accommodation for this post which is considered to be an ambassadorial equivalent. The house was selected against the requirement to meet the high profile representational and social duties associated with the post and the security necessary for the most senior NATO and British officer in Brussels. In the process of finding suitable accommodation, 200 houses, either for rent or purchase, were identified and considered, of which 80 were inspected. An investment appraisal conducted at the time demonstrated that purchase of this property represented best value for money. The normal period of occupancy of the post is three years after which the property will be sold.

Kentigern House

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much it will cost to decant all the staff from Kentigern house, Glasgow, while refurbishment takes place in order to accommodate the Army Personnel Centre in 1996.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of decanting staff out of Kentigern house will depend on the cost of the alternative accommodation, the options for which are under construction.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. Aitken: Information is available readily only from 1991 onwards. The following purchases of Proton cars have been made:

1991—Quantity three at an approximate cost of £20,000.
1992—Quantity five at an approximate cost of £40,000.
1993—Quantity five at an approximate cost of £35,000.
1994—None to date.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost of official entertainment for the years in question is included within the running cost expenditure for my Department which is published every year in the departmental report; figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. The entertainment budget is used for a variety of functions including receptions. Separate figures are not kept for individual functions.

Asbestos

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what regulations pertain to the employment of 16-year-old naval ratings on removing asbestos from the boilers of ships; and when they were introduced.

Mr. Hanley: The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1969 referred specifically to young persons under the age of 18 and stated that they should not be employed in work connected with asbestos. These were revised in 1987. In the revision, young persons were no longer treated as a special case but the provision of specialist training was required and the use of specialist, licensed contractors recommended. It is my Department's practice to use such contractors, and the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 apply.

Defence Staff

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *517*, if he will place in the Library a list of the further service attaché and dedicated support staff posts cut since February; what plans he has to make further reductions in the Attaché Corps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A table showing the number, location, service and rank of service attachés, defence advisers and support staff cut since 1 February 1994 is being placed in the Library of the House. The size and shape of the Attaché Corps is kept under review by my Department and further reductions will be made should it be necessary to do so.

Truck Cargo Vehicles

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the mechanical problems with, and alterations made to, the truck cargo heavy duty mark 2 vehicles over the last two years;

(2) how many unscheduled stops there have been involving truck cargo heavy duty mark 2 vehicles over the last two years; and if he will provide a breakdown of the circumstances which resulted in these unscheduled stops.

Mr. Hanley: Since they entered service and up to 30 March 1994, there were 20 occasions on which the truck cargo heavy duty mark 2 vehicles were obliged to make unscheduled stops to deal with technical problems. This resulted in some delays in the completion of a few journeys, the circumstances of which are described in the table. Modifications have been fitted, or will be fitted shortly, to rectify a small number of recurring faults on the vehicles. We are confident that the work in hand will improve in-service reliability.

TCHD Mk 2—unscheduled stops since entering service
Faults and rectification

Service Number	*Date*	*Location*	*Fault*	*Cause*		*Rectification*	*Delay time*
				Quality	*Design*		
1	8 November 1992	A68 south of Consett	Overheating brakes	—	X	Modify valve design to balance brake pressure Modification completed on all vehicles (warranty)	1 hour 51 minutes
2	2 December 1992	A602 north of Tonwell	Fumes in cab	—	—	Cold start fluid overfill (Operator error)	25 minutes
3	11 December 1992	A1 Diddington	Alternator light suppressor	—	—	Alternator replaced but no fault found	25 minutes
4	17 December 1992	Honington	False reading in electrical system	—	—	No fault found	46 minutes
5	12 February 1993	A404 south of J4 M4	ABS warning light	X	—	ABS module replaced (warranty)	27 minutes
6	18 February 1993	Wittering	Air leak cab filter	X	—	Filter replaced	10 minutes
7	18 February 1993	Near Burghfield	Electrical system fault	—	—	No fault found	20 minutes
8	16 March 1993	A1(M)—J8	Engine stop spring broken	X	—	Spring replaced	20 minutes
9	18 March 1993	B6318 north east of Corbridge	Temporary warning light fuse blown	—	—	No fault found, fuse replaced	28 minutes
10	5 April 1993	A1 near Stilton	ABS warning light fuse blown	—	—	No fault found, fuse replaced	28 minutes
11	18 May 1993	M6—south of J18	Fuel pump shaft sheared	X	—	Fuel pumps replaced all vehicles (warranty)	3 hours 20 minutes
12	18 May 1993	A898(T) just north of Erskine Bridge	Exhaust brake sticking	X	—	Foot switch replaced. Stripped and cleaned by Foden	2 hours 1 minute
13	25 June 1993	A43 near Stamford	Exhaust brake sticking	X	—	Foot switch replaced. Stripped and cleaned by Foden	4 hours 14 minutes
14	14 August 1993	A74 near Moffat	Compressor oil pipe leaking	—	X	Improved design fitted to all vehicles	1 hour 30 minutes
15	9 September 1993	A45 east of Cambridge	Wiper arm loose	X	—	Arm re-tightened	10 minutes
16	6 October 1993	M1 north of J28	Throttle spring broken	X	—	Spring replaced	20 minutes
17	15 October 1993	Near Burghfield	Brakes pulling left	—	—	Due to driving through water, operator error	20 minutes
18	25 November 1993	A1(M) south of Durham	Fuel pump drive failure	X	—	Fuel pump replaced	1 hour 32 minutes
19	9 December 1993	M25 south of J18	Secondary alternator failure	—	—	Tractor unit replaced. Alternator replaced. Failure under investigation	2 hours 13 minutes

Service Number	Date	Location	Fault	Cause: Quality	Cause: Design	Rectification	Delay time
20	29 January 1994	M1 north of J23	Fan belt shredded due to two detached alternator cooling fan blades	—	—	Tractor unit replaced. Failure under investigation	1 hour
			Pressurisation failures: (Replacement tractor unit)				
			1. Damaged plastic stub pipe in umbilical connector			1. Umbilical connector replaced. Improved design to be fitted to all vehicles	42 minutes
			2. Air leak from valve in cab			2. Leak sealed	

Nuclear Warheads (Transportation)

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to investigate the possibility of transport nuclear warheads currently transported by road convoys by *(a)* sea and *(b)* other forms of transport.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *633*, to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Air Training Corps

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been *(a)* the total spending on the Air Training Corps and *(b)* spending on the Air Training Corps as a percentage of the overall defence budget in each of the last five years, at constant prices.

Mr. Hanley: Total expenditure by my Department on the Air Training Corps is available only for the last three financial years. The figures, at financial year 1993-94 prices, are as follows:

Financial year	£ million
1991-92	29·2
1992-93	30·0
1993-94	29·1

As a percentage of the overall defence budget this represents the following percentages:

Financial year	Per cent.
1991-92	0·117
1992-93	0·123
1993-94	0·124

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Acts of Parliament and consolidation Acts that affect local government which have been introduced by his Department since 1990.

Mr. Aitken: Since 1990 my Department has sponsored the following Acts, none of which have a direct effect on local government:

Atomic Weapons Establishment Act 1991
Armed Forces Act 1991
Army Act 1992
Representation of the People Act 1993

Swan Hunter

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has regarding the relationship of the French company, Constructions Mechaniques de Normandie bidding for Swan Hunter, and the Triacorp International Company and the financial property of the latter's owners and action taken in respect of them by the Bank of France; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: As a company new to United Kingdom defence contracting, the owners of CMN have been asked to provide my Department with details of the proposed company structure, lines of finance, company background and other information on their financial and other status in respect of their prospective bid for Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd., in administrative receivership. I await their response.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of the assurances his Department has been asked to give in the context of Constructions Mecaniques de Normandie's prospective bid for Swan Hunter.

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of all the assurances his Department has given in the context of Constructions Mecaniques de Normandie's prospective bid for Swan Hunter.

Mr. Aitken: In respect of the owners of CMN's constructive bid for Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd., in administrative receivership, I have been asked for assurances and have given the following response:

We have no objection, in principle, to foreign ownership of Swan Hunter and that, in the event that CMN should purchase Swan Hunters, we would require CMN to guarantee that all MOD designated build, outfit and refit work would have to be carried out in the United Kingdom; that we would expect CMN to form a properly constituted and adequately managed United Kingdom subsidiary to operate the business; that this company should be adequately funded and provided with acceptable parental company or bank guarantees of performance to match the level of work bid for and that the company would need to satisfy our national security procedures and MOD quality assurance requirements and provide information on their financial status.

Subject to the above, the new company would be eligible to bid on equal terms with other United Kingdom companies for future MOD warshipbuilding and refit work but that MOD could only place orders with Swan Hunter if the company is on a sound financial footing and is able to offer acceptable terms and conditions and guarantees of performance. MOD orders will only be placed on the basis of competition and that they therefore need to make competitive, fully compliant bids if they are to win orders.

We are prepared, in principle, to novate the Type 23 frigate contract subject to our company ownership conditions being satisfied and the agreement of satisfactory contractual terms and conditions.

We will continue to support Swan Hunter's efforts to win export orders for warships of United Kingdom origin.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made as to whether Constructions Mecaniques de Normandie can meet each of the conditions required of companies seeking to be allowed to compete for his Department's contracts.

Mr. Aitken: The prospective purchasers of Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd., in administrative receivership, have been asked to provide the information which we would normally seek from a company wishing to contract with my Department for the first time. I await their response.

RAF Benson

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost to his Department, including value added tax, of refurbishing McKee house at RAF Benson.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost, including value added tax, of refurbishing and extending McKee house at RAF Benson was £265,739.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the costs incurred by his Department during the refurbishment of McKee house at RAF Benson, including value added tax, were allocated to *(a)* the construction of an extension, *(b)* soft furnishings, *(c)* light fittings, *(d)* alterations to bathrooms and *(e)* alterations to the kitchen.

Mr. Hanley: The proportion of costs, including value added tax, incurred during the refurbishment of McKee house at RAF Benson for each criteria is as follows:

	£	*per cent.*
Construction of extension	66,593	25·6
Soft Furnishings	21,519	8·1
Light Fittings	2,536	1·0
Alterations to Bathrooms and Kitchens (including rewiring, replacement of Central heating and new boilers)	150,414	56·6
The remaining expenditure was as follows:		
Contractor Fees	20,959	7·9
External Works	3,718	1·4

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the size of the original budget approved by his Department for the refurbishment of McKee house at RAF Benson.

Mr. Hanley: As there was no existing official service residence at RAF Benson, it was necessary to convert and extend married quarters for the purpose. There was no specific budget for this work but the original estimate of costs in March 1993, including value added tax and fees, was £117,800. The project was financed from the property management allocation for RAF Benson, which included funds to cover the additional property management costs, including the refurbishment of McKee house, incurred as a result of the move of Headquarters 1 Group RAF to RAF Benson.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the conditions which industrial companies must satisfy before they are allowed to compete for his Department's contracts.

Mr. Aitken: Officials in my Department would aim to invite tenders only from companies considered competent to carry out the resulting contract. The criteria that they would use would vary depending on the nature and value of the work to be performed but would usually include the need for a proper quality management system—for example BS5750—and, for larger-value contracts, some check on the company's financial standing.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what period his Department requires between the closing date for the submission of tenders for his Department's contracts and the notification to all competing contractors of the outcome of the competition.

Mr. Aitken: There is no standard period: it is dependent on the circumstances of individual procurements.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department takes to establish that, in cases where a non-United Kingdom-owned company is bidding for his Department's contracts, national security is adequately protected.

Mr. Aitken: A foreign-owned company based in the United Kingdom which is interested in bidding for an MOD clasified contract will be subject to specific security checks prior to the release of any classified information. It will also be required to comply with or implement such additional security procedures as may be required by my Department. This ensures that the classified information is protected from access by foreign nationals.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances his Department will place a contract on a basis other than for its normal value-for-money criteria.

Mr. Aitken: My Department places virtually all its contracts in accordance with our assessment of value for money in the broad sense. Possible exceptions to this would include the need to meet an urgent operational requirement and national security considerations.

Trident

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration his Department has given to maintaining the fourth Trident submarine in a state of extended readiness; and what would be the likely cost implications.

Mr. Aitken: The Government remain committed to operating a four-boat Trident force. Estimates of the cost implications of placing a boat at extended readiness are therefore not available.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what strategic rationale exists, during peacetime, to maintain more than (i) one Trident submarine at sea at any one time or (ii) two Trident submarines at sea at any one time.

Mr. Hanley: It has been the policy of successive Governments to maintain at least one ballistic missile submarine on deterrent patrol at all times while not commenting on actual numbers at sea.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will retain the capability to deploy more than its currently planned number of warheads on Trident should future circumstances require it.

Mr. Aitken: Our announcement of a revised ceiling on the maximum number of warheads to be deployed on our Trident submarines does not affect the technical capabilities of the system.

Sir Bedivere

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to announce the outcome of the competition to carry out the ship life extension programme for the landing ship Sir Bedivere.

Mr. Aitken: I hope to be able to make an announcement during the summer.

Polaris

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the decommissioning of HMS Revenge involved the removal of Polaris missiles or nuclear warheads from operational service;

(2) what work his Department has undertaken to dismantle Polaris missiles and warheads that have been withdrawn from operational service.

Mr. Aitken: No Polaris missiles or nuclear warheads have yet been withdrawn from operational service, although work on the disposal of surplus components has commenced. Preparatory work on the withdrawal of missiles and warheads is progressing.

WE177 Warheads

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department expects to complete the dismantlement of those WE177 warheads that have been withdrawn from operational service; what is the cost incurred to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The dismantlement of those WE177 warheads that have been withdrawn from operational service is due to be completed by the end of next year. It is not our practice to disclose costs of nuclear warhead programmes.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the continuing strategic rationale for maintaining the WE177 alongside the Trident submarines until 2007.

Mr. Aitken: Trident will have the capacity to contribute to the sub-strategic role on entering service, but we judge that in current circumstances WE177 will continue to make a worthwhile contribution to our overall deterrent posture for a number of years.

Nuclear Warheads

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the transfer of the United Kingdom's sub-strategic nuclear capability from air-delivered bombs to ballistic missiles will allow a reduction in the overall number of nuclear warheads deployed operationally by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to comment on the number of nuclear warheads deployed by the United Kingdom.

Defence Accounts Agency

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has begun his review of the Defence Accounts Agency.

Mr. Aitken: A review of the agency status of the Defence Accounts Agency—DAA is now under way. As a "next steps" agency the performance of DAA will be elevated and DAA activities will be subjected to the normal "prior options" tests set out in the 1993 "next steps review, Cm 2430.

Comments and contributions from those with an interest in DAA and its work would be welcome and should be sent by 3 June 1994 to Mr. Pat Fitzgibbon, DAA Review Project, Ministry of Defence, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BP.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *473*, if he will make a statement on the leasing of the Tornado F3 aircraft to Italy.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to inform the House that the Government have signed a memorandum of understanding with Italy providing for the lease of 24 RAF Tornado F3 air defence aircraft to the Italian air force for a period of up to 10 years. These aircraft will enable the Italian air force to supplement its existing air defence assets with two squadrons of this highly capable air defence aircraft in the period pending the planned introduction into service of Eurofighter 2000. At the same time, it will enhance the collective security of the Atlantic Alliance by ensuring that these aircraft, for which there is currently no United Kingdom requirement, continue to be used operationally. The memorandum of understanding also represents a vivid demonstration of the extent of our bilateral defence relationships with Italy.

RAF Training Group

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about defence agency status for the Royal Air Force training group.

Mr. Hanley: The Royal Air Force Training Group is to be established as a defence agency of the Ministry of Defence on 1 April 1994. The training group is at present part of Royal Air Force Support Command but will become an integral part of Royal Air Force Personnel and Training Command with effect from 1 April 1994. It comprises a headquarters element at Royal Air Force Innsworth and various flying and ground training stations throughout the country. Together they employ some 6,000 service men and 2,500 civilians.

The primary role of the training group is to provide trained service men and civilians to meet the requirements of the Royal Air Force in peace, crisis and war.

As the first chief executive, Air Vice-Marshal C. C. C. Colville will be offered new opportunities to build on the current organisation's professional expertise and high performance standards. Through a more commercial approach, the chief executive will actively seek to improve the efficiency and value for money of his organisation and thereby fulfil the agency's aim of providing its customers with an efficient service which offers the best value for money possible.

The chief executive has been set the following targets for financial year 1994-95:

Key Target 1: By 31 March 1995 to evaluate quality control mechanisms across all areas of training, including systems of measurement and targeting, and make recommendations for implementation during Financial Year 1995-96.

Key Target 2: By 31 March 1995 to have achieved the planned Training Group elements of the rationalisation programme and to have identified, and set in hand plans to meet the Training Group capacity requirements called for in 2nd Order Assumptions.
Key Target 3: By 31 March 1995 to deliver a 2·5 per cent. reduction in Training Group running costs by delivering the Financial Year 1994-95 programme of efficiency measures.
Key Target 4: By 31 March 1995 to undertake, the initial work required, for each measure, to market test £45,000,000 of business by 31 March 1996, as the Training Group's planned contribution to the Defence Market Testing Initiative.
Key Target 5: By 31 March 1995 to identify and value the Training Group's fixed assets base and introduce an interim asset recording system as a first step towards an asset management system.
Key Target 6: By 31 March 1995 to install, develop and test the Training Group Financial and Management Accounting System at 2 pilot sites: Headquarters Training Group and Royal Air Force Finningley.
Key Target 7: By 31 March 1995 to implement an interim accounting system at all Training Group units to produce Agency Accounts for mock audit by the National Audit Office at the end of Financial Year 1994-95.

I have arranged for copies of the agency's framework document to be placed in the Library of the House.

Departmental Properties

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the number and location of *(a)* dwellings and *(b)* vacant dwellings owned by his Department in each county council area in England and Wales, and in each regional council area in Scotland;

(2) what is the number and location of *(a)* dwellings and *(b)* vacant dwellings owned by his Department in (i) Manchester, (ii) Liverpool, (iii) Leeds, (iv) Newcastle upon Tyne, (v) Southampton, (vi) Glasgow, (vii) Edinburgh and (viii) Bristol.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 22 March]:* Statistics are not maintained in a form which enables properties in particular cities or county council areas to be readily identified. I can, however, give the information requested on the numbers of dwellings and vacant dwellings owned by my Department in each county of England and Wales and regional council area in Scotland as at 31 December 1993. This is as follows:

	Total stock	*Vacant*
MARRIED QUARTERS		
England		
Avon	369	76
Bedfordshire	539	77
Berkshire	1,245	71
Buckinghamshire	1,365	113
Cambridgeshire	2,216	199
Cheshire	398	87
Cleveland	35	8
Cornwall	968	247
Cumbria	140	27
Derbyshire	0	0
Devon	3,199	371
Dorset	1,875	417
Durham	17	1
East Sussex	108	24
Essex	1,932	434
Gloucestershire	561	54
Greater London	3,697	567
Greater Manchester	89	16
Hampshire	8,248	1,042
Hereford and Worcester	503	84
Hertfordshire	1,172	296
Humberside	572	56
Isle of Wight	0	0
Kent	2,360	414
Lancashire	425	46
Leicestershire	925	95
Lincolnshire	2,255	488
Merseyside	54	11
Norfolk	1,922	272
Northamptonshire	51	41
Northumberland	401	80
North Yorkshire	4,364	324
Nottinghamshire	420	67
Oxfordshire	3,452	325
Salop	736	127
Somerset	538	70
South Yorkshire	402	57
Staffordshire	496	73
Suffolk	1,355	549
Surrey	1,798	258
Tyne and Wear	116	3
Warwickshire	546	96
West Midlands	441	68
West Sussex	88	17
West Yorkshire	58	6
Wiltshire	7,100	865
	59,551	8,619
Wales		
Clwyd	294	80
Dyfed	440	224
Gwent	175	41
Gwynedd	391	14
Mid Glamorgan	6	1
Powys	193	18
South Glamorgan	967	92
West Glamorgan	16	2
	2,482	472
Scotland		
Borders	3	0
Central	44	14
Dumfries and Galloway	4	1
Fife	1,273	93
Grampian	1,862	46
Highlands	323	76
Lothian	876	186
Orkney	1	0
Shetland	96	6
Strathclyde	1,563	201
Tayside	221	52
Western Isles	207	46
	6,473	721
Total Married Quarters	68,506	9,812
CIVILIAN HOUSES		
England		
Berkshire	219	44
Cumbria	1	0
Devon	11	5
Gloucestershire	8	7
Hampshire	40	10
Kent	43	5
Wiltshire	85	9
	407	80
Wales		
Dyfed	25	6
Scotland		
Fife	8	6
Highlands	3	1
Strathclyde	227	58

	Total stock	Vacant
	238	65
Total Civilian Houses	670	151
Total MOD Dwellings	69,176	9,963

Many of the vacant married quarters were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work, held for future developments or already allocated to service families who were due to move in shortly.

In addition 2,142 surplus married quarters were in the process of being sold, of which 1,398 were vacant. These were broken down by county as follows:

Surplus married quarters	Total disposals	Vacant
England		
Bedfordshire	2	2
Cheshire	1	1
Devon	74	48
Dorset	48	48
Essex	48	48
Greater London	156	156
Greater Manchester	7	7
Hampshire	859	141
Kent	79	79
Lincolnshire	159	159
Merseyside	33	33
North Yorkshire	54	54
Salop	24	24
South Yorkshire	184	184
Staffordshire	3	3
Suffolk	243	243
Surrey	2	2
Sussex	2	2
Warwickshire	1	1
Wiltshire	9	9
	1,988	1,244
Wales		
Dyfed	38	38
Gwent	4	4
	42	42
Scotland		
Dumfries and Galloway	1	1
Fife	42	42
Highlands	26	26
Lothian	2	2
Shetland	2	2
Tayside	22	22
Western Isles	17	17
	112	112
Surplus civilian houses England		
Bedfordshire	1	0
Berkshire	206	0
Cumbria	19	9
Devon	2	0
Dorset	1	0
Essex	1	0
Greater London	2	1
Hampshire	131	7
Hereford and Worcester	2	1
Kent	4	3
Staffordshire	2	0
Wiltshire	43	4
	414	25
Wales		
Dyfed	1	0
Scotland		
Highland	16	3
Strathclyde	25	16
	41	19

Note: This represents 456 civilian houses, 412 of which were tenanted, in the process of being sold, broken down by county.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

APEC Forum

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what decisions were taken at the meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum in Honolulu on 18 March that will affect United Kingdom trade with the APEC Forum nations.

Mr. Heseltine: The meeting in Honolulu was a gathering, for the first time, of Finance Ministers from the 17 APEC member countries. Neither the United Kingdom nor the EU has observer status. We understand that discussions focused on closer economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region but that no specific decisions were taken.

Regional Preferential Assistance

Ms Armstrong: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the amounts of regional preferential assistance of each type invested in each region in each year since 1978-79 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details of regional preferential assistance from 1978-79 to 1991-92 at current prices and at 1991-92 prices can be found in my reply to the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill), *Official Report*, 21 October 1992, columns *325-28*.

A regional breakdown of regional preferential assistance at cash and constant prices for 1992-93 is given in the table below together with revised figures for Scotland and Great Britain for 1989-90 and 1991-92.

More detailed analysis of regional preferential assistance could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

£ million

	1989-90 Current Prices	1991-92 Prices	1991-92 Current Prices	1991-92 Prices	1992-93 Current Prices	1991-92 Prices
Northern	—	—	—	—	48·3	46·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	—	—	—	13·7	13·2
East Midlands	—	—	—	—	1·2	1·2
South West	—	—	—	—	8·2	7·9

	1989-90 Current Prices	1991-92 Prices	1991-92 Current Prices	1991-92 Prices	1992-93 Current Prices	1991-92 Prices
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	10·8	10·4
North West	—	—	—	—	36·8	35·5
England	—	—	—	—	119·0	114·9
Wales	—	—	—	—	104·4	100·9
Scotland	143·8	166·4	122·8	122·8	140·6	135·8
Great Britain	539·3	624·1	427·8	427·8	364·0	351·6

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost of official entertaining in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Heseltine: The total cost of official entertainment in the years from 1 April 1990 is included in the running cost expenditure for my Department which is published every year in the annual report; figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. The entertainment budget is used for a variety of functions including receptions. To list the receptions held in each year at my Department's expense and to provide an accurate costing for each one would entail disproportionate cost.

Thurnton Spoil Heap

Mr. Cummings: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when work will commence on the reclamation of the Thurnton spoil heap; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the spoil heaps at Murton colliery. This is a matter for British Coal.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities or *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: The figures for the Department, including its executive agencies, as at 4 January 1994 are:

Grade Level	(a) Women Number	(a) Women Per cent. staff	(b)[1] Ethnic Minorities Number respondents	(b)[1] Ethnic Minorities Per cent. staff	(c)[2] Registered Disabled Number	(c)[2] Registered Disabled Per cent. staff
Grade 1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grade 2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grade 3	6	11·8	—	—	—	—
Grade 4	2	14·3	—	—	—	—
Grade 5	38	13·2	3	1·0	—	—
Grade 6	47	12·2	9	2·3	2	0·5
Grade 7	171	14·8	22	1·9	2	0·2
All Staff excluding industrials and casuals	5,548	43·9	1,195	9·4	117	0·9

[1]Ethnic minority figures are based on 90·5 per cent. positive response rate to the ethnic origin survey.
[2]The Department also employs a number of disabled staff who are not registered.

Rover

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the current ability of Rover to design and produce a car, including engine and gearbox, with no outside help and the effect on this ability of its transfer to German ownership.

Mr. Sainsbury: Rover is now profitably designing and producing cars. The Government expect that this will continue, with a very high proportion of the value being added in the United Kingdom. The extent to which Rover draws on outside help to achieve this is a commercial matter for the company. But BMW has confirmed that Rover will retain and strengthen its own design and engineering facilities. The acquisition by BMW enhances rather than impairs Rover's technical capability.

Consultants

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what access to financial records is afforded to consultants appointed by his Department to evaluate the financial soundness of companies chosen to fulfil contracts, pursuant to aid and trade financial support *(a)* before the final award of the contract, *(b)* during the fulfilment of the contract and *(c)* on completion of the contract.

Mr. Heseltine: If the DTI has concerns about the financial standing of an applicant for aid and trade provision support a check is carried out on the company's financial capability to undertake the project. This check would normally be carried out by DTI accountants when the application is still being considered, although a check could in principle be undertaken at any stage in the life of a contract if concerns arose.

Most ATP projects involve export credit support. ECGD carries out separate checks into the financial standing of companies.

Japan and United States (Inward Investment)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of total *(a)* Japanese and *(b)* United States inward investment in the European Community has come to the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Inward investment capital flows in any one year can be erratic because of the varying treatment of profits and dividends.

In addition, much investment is financed in the country in which it takes place. The tables below show the annual capital flow for each year and also the book value of the assets, the stock of investment, which gives a more reliable indication of the amount of actual investment. Stock increases will not always match annual flows for the reason given above.

The figures are those issued by the investing country.

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Japan					
Capital flows ($ millions)	3,956	5,239	6,806	3,588	2,948
Percentage of EC	46·5	37·4	51·2	40·1	44·4
Book value of assets held in the United Kingdom ($ millions)	10,554	15,793	22,599	26,186	29,134
Percentage of EC	38	37·7	40·5	40·9	41·2
United States					
Capital flows ($ millions)	4,170	10,427	–606	1,723	n/a
Percentage of EC	49	60	[1]—	12·2	—
Book value of assets held in the United Kingdom ($ millions)	49,459	61,159	68,224	78,072	[2]77,842
Percentage of EC	38	40·9	38·4	39·5	38·8

[1] Negative.
[2] Provisional.

Offshore Oil and Gas Licensing

Mr. Brazier: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans for a further round of offshore oil and gas licensing on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Eggar: I am currently considering this matter and will make an announcement in due course.

Ferrous Scrap Imports

Mr. Brazier: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on state aids available to Turkish companies for the import of ferrous scrap from the European Union.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government recognise the problems caused by high scrap prices and have been closely monitoring developments in consultation with the United Kingdom steel and foundry industries. Through this we became aware of concerns regarding the existence of subsidies available in Turkey for the import of scrap from the EC and elsewhere. The matter was discussed between the European Commission and EU member states and a mandate was agreed whereby the Commission would raise the issue in bilateral contacts with Turkey. As a result, an undertaking has been secured from the Turkish Government to eliminate state aids, in the form of transport subsidies, for the import of ferrous scrap from the European Union. These aids currently stand at $15 for every tonne of this material imported from the Community.

The Turkish authorities will phase out the subsidy in three stages, commencing with a cut of one third as from 1 April 1994. A further reduction of one third will follow on 1 June leading up to final abolition on 1 October this year. We look forward to seeing formal written confirmation of this undertaking and will continue to watch developments closely.

The Government welcome these steps as significant progress towards eliminating those practices which interfere with the proper operation of market forces in determining the level of world scrap prices.

Energy Policy

Mr. Brazier: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now publish his strategy on new and renewable energy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have today published a report outlining the future strategy for new and renewable energy in the United Kingdom, and placed a copy in the Libraries of both Houses. The report, energy paper 62, entitled "New and Renewable Energy; Future Prospects in the UK", is in response to the findings of the renewable energy advisory group, which were published in December 1992.

Government policy is to stimulate the development of new and renewable energy sources wherever they have prospects of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable in order to contribute to:

—diverse, secure and sustainable energy supplies;
—reduction in the emission of pollutants;
—encouragement of internationally competitive industries.

In doing this, it will take account of what influences business competitiveness; and it will work towards 1,500 MW declared net capacity of new electricity generating capacity from renewable sources for the United Kingdom by 2000.

Energy paper 62 sets out a market enablement strategy where, following assessment and technical development, the promising electricity generating technologies are included in an initial protected market via the non-fossil fuel obligation, NFFO, and the Scottish renewables obligation, SRO, to help them become competitive and establish an industry. Those which become viable can then compete equitably within the open market for electricity supply. That initial market under NFFO arrangements is crucial to the development of some of the key technologies, and NFFO is becoming the prime

mechanism for support of those technologies. However, a purpose of NFFO is to stimulate a commercial market for renewable technologies, and it is anticipated that the resultant investment by industry could rise to £3 billion within the time frame being considered.

An outline of the 10-year forward research, development, demonstration and dissemination programme is also presented. This work will assess and develop technologies, remove inappropriate market barriers, ensure the market is fully informed and encourage internationally competive industries to develop.

Funding for RDD and D, as provided by Government, industry and other sources is significant both in its size and in enabling technologies to enter the market. Resources will be concentrated on key technologies with good prospects of commercial application in the coming decades —such as solar, energy from coppice and waste, wind and fuel cells. Existing work on passive solar design will be completed over the next few years and DTI involvement then reduced as the technology matures. The Government's geothermal research and development and tidal programmes will be closed when current commitments end. The existing work on wave energy will be completed, but no further commitments undertaken, as this technology has limited potential to contribute commercially to energy supplies in the next few decades. The emphasis on technology transfer will be maintained, in line with the White Paper on Science, Engineering and Technology. The programme will also be closely integrated with complementary work supported by the European Community. The programme budget for new and renewable energy for financial year 1994-95 is £19·78 million.

Also published today is "An Assessment of Renewable Energy for the UK". This report, ETSU-R-82, which has been prepared by the energy technology support unit, provides a technical basis for the future strategy and summarises information gathered by the Government's programme since its inception. Copies of this report have also been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

New Product Development

Mr. Brazier: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what support is available for small and medium-sized firms to develop new products.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am pleased to announce that the successful support for products under research programme, which was due to close at the end of March 1994, has been extended for a further 12 months. A budget of £10 million is available for the financial year 1994-95.

SPUR provides help to small and medium-sized companies for the development of new products or processes that can demonstrate a significant technological advance. The scheme provides a fixed grant of 30 per cent. of eligible costs where the need for Government support is established, up to a maximum of £150,000.

In my address to the House on 26 May last year covering my Department's re-focused innovation policy I proposed to limit SPUR to companies with up to 250 employees in order to concentrate on the smaller firms which have the greatest difficulty in raising research and development capital. This will come into effect in the new extension to SPUR.

Yorkshire Rider (Takeover)

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has received advice from the Director General of Fair Trading recommending the proposed takeover of the Yorkshire Rider bus company by Badgerline be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The proposed acquisition by Badgerline of Yorkshire Rider is being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade may, in due course, need to take a decision on whether to refer the acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, taking account of advice from the Director General.

Patent Office

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what primary legislation is required for the privatisation of the Patent Office; and which Government Department is preparing it.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* No decision has yet been taken on the future of the Patent Office. In the event that a decision was taken to privatise primary legislation would be required for which my Department has a lead responsibility.

Ferranti International

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made by the administrative receivers to Ferranti International toward the choice of a preferred bidder; when he expects the choice to be announced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 28 March 1994]:* The administrative receivers to Ferranti International announced yesterday that they had reached an agreement in principle with the General Electric Company plc for the acquisition of Ferranti's defence, simulation and training businesses. Separate negotiations covering the remaining businesses are continuing with other interested parties.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* One: the Securities and Investments Board Ltd., a private-sector body, had regulatory functions transferred to it under the provisions of the Financial Services Act 1986 and in consequence is a self-financing regulatory body. Responsibility for this legislation passed to the Treasury in 1992. The SIB makes an annual report to the Treasury, which places a copy of it in the Library of the House.

Newspaper Publishing plc

Mr. Benn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what inquiries his Department conducted into the financial position of Newspaper Publishing plc, owner of

The Independent and *The Independent on Sunday*; what representations were received during the consultation phase, and from whom, which led him to conclude that the newspapers were not economic as going concerns; and if he will place in the Library copies of the documentation considered;

(2) what inquiries his Department conducted into the financial position of Newspaper Publishing plc, owner of *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*; what representations were received during the consultation phase, and from whom; which led him to conclude that, if the papers were to continue, the case was one of urgency; and if he will place in the Library copies of the documentation considered;

(3) if he will list and place in the Library the documentation considered in relation to inquiries made and representations received by him and his Department which led him to conclude that the public interest did not require him to stipulate conditions, including in relation to editorial independence, on his consent to the MGN-led consortium's bid for a controlling interest in Newspaper Publishing plc.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answers 30 March 1994]:* In assessing whether *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday* were not economic as going concerns, the case for urgency, and the public interest issues which were raised by the applications for my consent, I sought views from all interested parties. As part of that process my Department received representations from, held meetings with, or sought information from the following:

Newspaper Publishing plc;
Lloyds Bank plc;
The founders of Newspaper Publishing, Mr. Whittam Smith, Mr. Symonds, Mr. O'Neill;
Espresso International Holding SA;
Promotora de Informaciones SA;
Mirror Group Newspaper plc;
Independent Newspapers plc;
The Department of National Heritage;
The National Union of Journalists;
The National Union of Journalists, Independent Newspapers Chapel;
The International Federation of Journalists;
Newspaper Publishing Employee Council;
The Editorial Council of *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*;
United Newspapers;
The *Today* Newspaper;
Nine advertising companies; and
54 individual, including Members of Parliament.

Representations and information were given to the Department in confidence and I shall not therefore be placing copies of the documentation considered in the Library of the House.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* No central record is held of public interest immunity certificates signed by the DTI.

Since I became President of the Board of Trade, I have signed three PII certificates, two in 1992 and one in 1993.

Clean Technology

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the 10 countries which rank highest in terms of their share of the world-wide market in clean technologies;

(2) what is his estimate of the United Kingdom's share of the world-wide market for clean technology; and what is the lowest OECD figure for the total value of this market.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answers 30 March 1994]:* There is no world-wide agreement on the definition of cleaner technology. Reliable statistics of this type are not therefore available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research Reports

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *767-68*, if he will place in the Library copies of each research report referred to.

Mr. Waldegrave: Copies of the report on attitudes to the 1993 charter mark scheme will be placed in the Library of the House shortly. We are evaluating the pilot charterline service which ends on 31 March. Market research and tracking research will be made available when the evaluation is complete and decisions are announced. I have no plans to publish HMSO's market research report, which is commercially confidential.

Research and Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what decisions have been taken by the European Commission recently on the new initiatives under the fourth research and development framework programme; and how these affect the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 21 March the conciliation committee consisting of members of the Research Council of Ministers and of the European Parliament reached political agreement on a joint text for the fourth framework programme on European Community research and development—FP4. This now awaits formal adoption by both institutions. The European Commission will shortly bring forward the specific programmes of FP4 which implement the framework programme decision and these will be negotiated during the remainder of 1994.

Public Appointments

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish an annual directory of all those appointed to public bodies as listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993", to include the names, addresses, remuneration, period of office and political and pecuniary interests of all those so appointed.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Information on the 42,606 public appointments listed in "Public Bodies" is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many copies of his "Citizen's Charter Second Report: 1994" have been published; at what cost;

to whom it has been distributed; what criteria were used in the choice of persons or organisations to which the report was distributed; and what is the equivalent information in respect of the first report.

Mr. Waldegrave: Some 8,000 copies of the "Citizen's Charter Second Report: 1994" were printed and published by HMSO. The costs of printing and publishing were borne by HMSO which aims to recover these from sales revenue. Some 14,000 copies of the first report were printed and published by HMSO on the same basis.

Some 300 copies of the second report were sent to Ministers and their permanent secretaries, departmental citizens charter liaison staff, agency chief executives, the citizens charter advisory panel and complaints task force, and a variety of others, including the Parliamentary and Local Government Ombudsmen, the secretaries of the local authority associations and the heads of the regulatory bodies. We have not kept records of those to whom the first report was distributed.

Magistrates

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many magistrates have been appointed in the Duchy for each year since 1989; how many expressed a political affiliation; and if he will break down the figure by party.

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer is:

	Number
1989	276
1990	303
1991	330
1992	295
1993	281

To provide details of political affiliation of appointees for the past five years would involve disproportionate cost. However, figures for 1993 are as follows:

	Number
Labour	76
Conservative	120
Liberal/Democrat	46
Not declared/Independent	39

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many, and what percentage of officers in each of grades 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled, respectively.

Mr. David Davis: In respect of the departments and agencies for which my right hon. Friend is responsible, and other areas which fall to the Cabinet Office vote, the information is set out in the tables below.

Ethnic monitoring in the civil service is carried out on a voluntary basis. The figures in table B below relate to those people who have chosen to register as non-white.

The figures at table C relate to registered disabled people. The departments and agencies employ other staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

Table A
Women

	Grade 1	*Grade 2*	*Grade 3*	*Grade 4*	*Grade 5*	*Grade 6*	*Grade 7*	*Overall*
Cabinet Office[1]								
Women	0	2	2	0	16	8	37	642
Total	3	18	21	1	50	40	173	1,386
Per cent. of women	0	11	10	0	32	20	21	46
CS College								
Women	0	0	0	0	1	6	19	157
Total	0	0	1	0	3	20	70	275
Per cent. of women	0	0	0	0	33	30	27	57
OHS								
Women	0	0	1	0	2	4	3	105
Total	0	0	1	1	8	8	4	127
Per cent. of women	0	0	100	0	25	50	75	83
RAS								
Women	0	0	1	0	0	1	5	100
Total	0	0	2	0	1	3	17	150
Per cent. of women	0	0	50	0	0	33	29	67
Chessington								
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	240
Total	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	449
Per cent. of women	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	53
COI								
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	222
Total	0	0	1	0	2	10	33	507
Per cent. of women	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	44
HMSO								
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	835
Total	0	1	0	2	8	15	54	1,965
Per cent. of women	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	42

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Overall
Total								
Women	0	2	4	0	19	19	77	2,301
Total	3	19	25	4	73	96	357	4,859
Per cent. of women	0	10	16	0	26	20	22	47

[1] Including OPSS.

Table B
Ethnic minorities

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Overall
Cabinet Office[1]								
Ethnic minorities	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	96
Total	3	18	21	1	50	40	173	1,386
Percentage of ethnic minorities	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	3·0	0·5	7·0
CS College								
Ethnic minorities	nil	nil	0	nil	0	0	2	9
Total	nil	nil	1	nil	3	20	70	275
Percentage of ethnic minorities	nil	nil	0	nil	0	0	3	3
OHS								
Ethnic minorities	nil	nil	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total	nil	nil	1	1	8	8	4	127
Percentage of ethnic minorities	nil	nil	0	0	0	0	0	4
RAS								
Ethnic minorities	nil	nil	0	nil	0	0	1	5
Total	nil	nil	2	nil	1	3	17	150
Percentage of ethnic minorities	nil	nil	0	nil	0	0	6	3
Chessington								
Ethnic minorities	nil	nil	nil	nil	0	nil	0	16
Total	nil	nil	nil	nil	1	nil	6	449
Percentage of ethnic minorities	nil	nil	nil	nil	0	nil	0	4
COI								
Ethnic minorities	nil	nil	0	nil	0	0	0	22
Total	nil	nil	1	nil	2	10	33	507
Percentage of ethnic minorities	nil	nil	0	nil	0	0	0	4
HMSO								
Ethnic minorities	nil	0	nil	0	0	0	0	32
Total	nil	1	nil	2	8	15	54	1,965
Percentage of ethnic minorities	nil	0	nil	0	0	0	0	2
Total								
Ethnic minorities	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	185
Total	3	19	25	4	73	96	357	4,859
Percentage of ethnic minorities	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4

[1]Including OPSS.

Table C
Registered disabled people March 1994

	Registered disabled people	Total	Per cent. of registered disabled people
Overall			
Cabinet Office[1]	16	1,386	1
CS College	0	275	0
OHS	1	127	1
RAS	4	150	3
Chessington	3	449	1
COI	5	507	1
HMSO	52	1,965	3
Total	81	4,859	2

[1] Including OPSS.
One grade 7 in HMSO is registered disabled.

Proton Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many Proton cars were purchased by his Department in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and at what cost.

Mr. David Davis: None.

Disabled People

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps are currently taken by his Department to encourage and recruit disabled people into the civil service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The civil service is an equal opportunities employer, with recruitment to the service through selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. My Department, the Office of Public Service and Science, takes the lead in developing, monitoring and

reviewing implementation of this policy throughout the service, but each department and agency is responsible for implementing policy within its own organisation.

A civil service code of practice on employment of people with disabilities has been in use since 1985. This lays down advice and examples of best practice on all aspects of the employment of disabled people from recruitment to retention and career development. In line with steps already taken in respect of women and people of ethnic minority origin, this code of practice is shortly to be upgraded to a programme for action. In addition to general guidance, this will contain action checklists which will enable departments and agencies to address specific areas of disability policy and to draw up their own action plans.

While there is no room for complacency, the civil service position on the employment of registered disabled people—1·5 per cent.—compares well with that of other employers in both the public sector more generally and the private sector—both 0·8 per cent. In common with other employers, the civil service also employs many more disabled people who choose not to register.

I am confident that the upgrading of the code of practice to a programme for action will represent a significant step forward.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many contracts his Department has had with consultants; and what has been the total cost in each of the past five years.

Mr. David Davis: The cost of contracts let by the Cabinet Office, its agencies, COI and HMSO is not held centrally in the form requested. The full information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The costs of consultancy contracts let by the Cabinet Office and its agencies in 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date are as follows:

	£
1992-93	4,054,273
1993-94	7,472,097

The cost of consultancy contracts awarded by COI and HMSO in 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date are as follows:

	£
COI	
1992-93	136,460
[1]1993-94	55,189
HMSO[1]	
1992	410,075
1993	1,061,025

[1] To date.

Public Bodies

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all non-departmental public bodies set up since the most recent publication of "Public Bodies".

Mr. Waldegrave: "Public Bodies 1993", published in December 1993, lists non-departmental public bodies in existence at 1 April 1993.

The following non-departmental public bodies have been established since then:

Executive bodies
- Birmingham Castle Vale Housing Action Trust
- Commissioner for Protection Against Unlawful Industrial Action
- English Partnerships (Urban Regeneration Agency)
- Investors in People (UK) Ltd.
- Millennium Commission
- School Curriculum and Assessment Authority
- Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust

Advisory bodies
- Advisory Committee on Coal Research
- Complaints Task Force
- Council for Science and Technology
- Energy Advisory Panel
- Joint Environmental Markets Unit Advisory Committee
- Local Government Staff Commission
- Local Government Reorganisation Staff Advisory Committee (Wales)
- National Board on Crime Prevention
- Technology Foresight Steering Group
- Welsh Economic Council

Tribunals
- Child Support Appeal Tribunals (Northern Ireland)
- Meat Hygiene Appeals Tribunals

Since 1 April 1993, 38 executive bodies and 10 advisory bodies have been abolished or declassified.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Official Entertainment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total cost of official entertainment in his Department in each year since 1990-91; if he will list the receptions held in each year at his Department's expense; and what was the cost of each reception.

Mr. Goodlad: The following has been spent on official entertainment by the FCO—incorporating both the diplomatic wing and the ODA:

Year	*Amount £*
1990-91	5,178,849
1991-92	5,700,606
1992-93	6,946,298
[1]1993-94	6,641,945

[1] To date.

This is included in the running cost expenditure for my Department which is published every year in the annual report. The vast majority of this is spent overseas, at numerous official functions of various types. There is no central record of these.

East Timor

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of human rights the British Government carry out in East Timor; how many political prisoners are currently held in East Timor; and how many people have been killed in East Timor since the start of the Indonesian occupation.

Mr. Goodlad: Her Majesty's embassy staff in Jakarta visit East Timor. So, too, do numerous non-governmental organisations, human rights groups and other western

diplomats with whom we keep in close touch. There is no agreed definition of a "political prisoner". Nor is there any reliable source of information about the number of people killed in East Timor.

Luxembourg Compromise

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the application of the Luxembourg compromise to the introduction of a maximum working week.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have no plans to introduce legislation to implement a maximum working week. The Government secured significant improvements to the working time directive which met Britain's main concerns. It is challenging the legal base on which the directive was adopted. The Government reserve the right to invoke the Luxembourg compromise where it considers that very important national issues are at stake.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the scope of the Luxembourg compromise following ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Luxembourg compromise was not affected by the Maastricht treaty.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to reply to the letters dated 13 December 1993, 24 January 1994 and 24 February 1994 sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Lin Qi Qun, wife of Mr. Chiu Hung Ing of 1 Princess parade, Manchester.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not received the hon. Member's letters of the dates quoted. If he will re-send them, he will reply as soon as possible.

Peacekeeping

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the international peacekeeping operations carried out under United Nations or other international auspices in which British forces have taken part since May 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Kingdom forces have taken part in the following peacekeeping operations:

UN Advance Mission in Cambodia.
UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UN Transitional Assistance Group—Namibia
UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
UN Iraq/Kuwait Observer Mission
UN Force in Cyprus
UN Protection Force—former Yugoslavia
Multinational Peacekeeping Force in Lebanon
Military Observer Force in Sinai
Operation Safe Haven—Iraq

European Union Council

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the forthcoming business in the Council of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information is as follows:

MONTHLY FORECAST OF BUSINESS FOR APRIL 1994

The following meetings are planned:

12 April—Fisheries Council
18 April—Transport Council
18 and 19 April—Foreign Affairs Council
19 April—Social Affairs Council
21 April—Civil Protection Council
21 April—Interior Council
22 April—Industry Council
25 and 26 April—Agriculturale Council

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

A. 12 April—Fisheries Council
Spain and Portugal
Direct landings from third countries
Blue fin tuna certification
Mediterranean technical measures
Community expenditure on pilot projects
15th amendment to technical conservation measures regulations —possible
Tariff quotas—possible

Any Other Business:
Compensation for fishermen affected by bad weather—possible

B. 18 April—Transport Council
Aviation "crisis"
Transport infrastructure—TENS
Road transport external relations mandate
Switzerland
Railways—licensing and access—(possible)
Dangerous goods—ADR—(possible)
Air accident investigation (possible)
Negiotations with third countries on inland waterways

Any Other Business:
—Presidency presentation on Crete transport conference
—Commission information on contacts with the United States on transport
—Report on Community road safety

C. 18 and 19 April—Foreign Affairs Council
White Paper: follow-up
Cohesion Funds
CFSP Financing
Relations with Cyprus: position for Association Council
Ukraine
EEA: Fish quotas
South Africa
Ex-Yugoslavia
Dual use Goods (possible)
Stability Pact: preparation of inaugrural conference
Classified Documents (possible) EC/Russia (possible)
Right to vote and stand in municipal elections (possible)
OECD: Shipyards (possible)

In the margins:
18 April—Association Council and dinner with Cyprus

D. 19 April—Social Affairs Council
—agenda unavailable

E. 21 April—Civil Protection Council
—agenda unavailable

F. 21 April—Possible Interior Council
—agenda unavailable

G. 22 April—Industry Council
EC Commission White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment
Small and medium-sized enterprises
Council resolution on automotives
Council resolution on competitiveness in the EC textile and clothing sector
Steel—including state aid and the ECSC treaty
Commission communiction on the maritime industries

H. 25 and 26 April—Agriculture Council
Plant Variety Rights (possible)
Animal Welfare—Transport (possible)
Price Fixing
Milk Quotas
Potatoes (possible)

SOCIAL SECURITY

Incapacity Benefit

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the likely level of administrative costs for the planned incapacity benefit as a proportion for all such benefit paid.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates he makes of the proportion of recipients of incapacity benefit who are likely to be receiving occupational pension payments *(a)* between the 29th and 52nd week of incapacity and *(b)* after the 52nd week; and what is its basis for these estimates.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what intervals new claimants for incapacity benefit who pass the test of incapacity for work after 28 weeks will be re-tested.

Mr. Scott: Claimants who are terminally ill or in receipt of the highest rate care component of disability living allowance or suffering from one of the prescribed severe incapacitating disabilities will not be retested. In other cases, the adjudication officer will decide on the intervals between reviews of the case, based on advice from a doctor from the Benefits Agency medical service. The intervals will depend on the type of medical condition involved and the particular circumstances of each case.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of those who are expected to fail to satisfy the test for incapacity benefit are protected tenants for the purposes of regulation 11 of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987; and whether he will consider extending transitional protection for two years to protected tenants on the date when the Act comes into force.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available. We have no plans to introduce rules allowing people found capable of work to remain on incapacity benefit.

Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for chronic bronchitis and emphysema have been examined by special medical boards and by medical appeal tribunal since the scheme was introduced; and in how many and what percentage of cases medical appeal tribunals have upheld the appeal.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available in the format requested. As at 20 March 1994, about 20,000 claims have been considered under the medical criteria by a specially qualified adjudicating medical practitioner. Some 2,960 appeals have been referred to a further adjudicating medical authority and 385 subsequent appeals have been referred to medical appeal tribunals. Of the nine cases where the MAT result is known, three, 33 per cent. have been upheld. The information is based on a 100 per cent. count and is subject to amendment.

Invalidity Benefit

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people entitled to claim invalidity benefit in each region.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. The available information is in the table:

Invalidity Benefit recipients on 4 April 1992 by Region

Region	*Invalidity benefit recipients*
Northern England	137,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	137,000
East Midlands	80,000
East Anglia	31,000
South East England—Greater London	109,000
South East England—excluding Greater London	134,000
South Western	78,000
West Midlands	120,000
North Western England	247,000
Scotland	200,000
Wales	159,000
Overseas	8,000
Total—Great Britain	1,439,000

Note: Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain at 4 April 1992, the latest date information available, rounded to the nearest thousand. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in receipt of invalidity benefit have occupational pensions; and what is his source of information on this.

Mr. Scott: About 40 per cent. of invalidity benefit recipients were in receipt of occupational pensions in 1990 and 1991.

The information is drawn from the 1990 and 1992 family expenditure surveys and is subject to significant margins of error.

Community Care Grant

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what categories of persons constitute *(a)* high and *(b)* medium property for community care grant purposes.

Mr. Scott: The guidance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State issues on priorities for social fund community care grants is set out in the social fund guide —a copy of which is in the Library. The priority groups included in that list are in no particular order.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have asked the Child Support Agency for a review of their assessments; and how many such applications have been refused.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 30 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of review requests received by the Child Support Agency.

To 31 January 1994, the Agency has received 16,600 requests for second tier reviews. Information is not available on the number of cases where a review has been refused because a client has failed to show adequate grounds for the request.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many section 18 and section 17 reviews of child support officers' decisions had been requested by the end of January 1994; how many of each of these had been resolved by that date; in how many of each of those the decision had been revised; and what is the average number of weeks that the outstanding reviews have been awaiting decisions in each Child Support Agency centre.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 30 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about child support reviews.

Between 5 April 1993 and 1 January 1994, there were 16,600 requests for a second tier review under Section 18 of the Child Support Act 1991, of which 5,800 were cleared. Information on the number of these in which the decision was revised is not currently available.

In the same period, the Agency processed 10,800 section 17 reviews, prompted by changes to either party's circumstances. The assessment was revised in 10,700 cases.

You also asked for the time taken to carry out a review and the length of time that outstanding reviews have been awaiting decisions. Information on clearance times is being collected, but reliable information is not yet available.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the maintenance application forms issued by the end of January, have been issued to *(a)* non-benefit claimants, *(b)* family credit claimants, *(c)* new income support claimants and *(d)* existing income support claimants; how many existing income support claimants remain to be issued with a maintenance application form; and what is the expected rate at which these cases will be taken-on before April 1996.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 31 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the issuing of maintenance application forms to benefit claimants.

Of the 755,000 maintenance application forms issued to parents with care by the Child Support Agency in the period up to 31 January 1994; 26,100 were issued to non-benefit clients; 279,000 to clients already in receipt of Income Support, 257,400 to clients making new claims for Income Support; and 193,400 to clients making claims for Family Credit.

It is estimated that approximately 380,000 existing cases where income support was in payment prior to 5 April 1993 remained to be taken on at the end of January. It is planned to complete the take on of these cases by April 1996, in line with the original schedule. The actual rate of take on will vary in relation to factors such as the volume of other cases received in the period.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many absent parents whose cases have already been taken on by the Child Support Agency are on income support; of these how many were *(a)* exempt from the £2·20 deductions made from income support in lieu of child maintenance and *(b)* subject to the £2·20 deductions; and how many of the maintenance assessments calculated using the child support formula issued by the end of January 1994 were (i) nil assessments, other than those for absent parents on income support or (ii) minimum assessments of £2·20 a week, as opposed to deductions from income support.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 31 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about absent parents claiming income support and the numbers subject to the £2·20 deduction from their benefit as a contribution to child maintenance.

During the period April 1993 to 31 January 1994, there were almost 36,500 cases where the maintenance assessment was zero. The figure includes over 32,000 cases where the absent parent was in receipt of income support. The deduction (currently £2·20) is made from income support unless the absent parent is exempt. Information on the number subject to the statutory deduction is not available. However, it has been estimated that around 50 per cent. of 32,000 are liable to pay £2·20.

You asked how many absent parents other than those on income support were paying the minimum amount of £2·20. This information is not currently available.

I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many section 6 child support applicants to date have argued that they are at risk of harm or undue distress; in how many of these cases the reasons were accepted by the Child Support Agency; how many parents with care subsequently gave the authorisation or information; how many reduced benefit directions have been issued in the first 11 months of the Child Support Agency's activity; how many of these directions have been appealed against; and how many applicants who have given authorisation have subsequently sought to withdraw it and in how many of these cases the reasons for the withdrawal have been accepted.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 31 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about clients of the Child Support Agency where the requirement to co-operate is an issue.

During the period from 5 April 1993 to 31 January 1994, the requirement to co-operate was considered in 44,600 cases. It is not known in how many cases the parent with care argued that they were at risk of harm or undue distress. However, of the 25,000 cases in which good cause not to co-operate was accepted, risk of harm or undue distress was accepted as the reason in 11,300 cases. There were 11,600 cases where further to the investigation the absent parent was identified.

You asked about reduced benefit directions. In the period up to 31 January, 320 were referred to the Benefits Agency for implementation. No information is available on the number of appeals against the reduction in benefit.

You also asked about cases where having initially agreed to name the absent parent, the parent with care subsequently withdrew authorisation. There is currently no information available on the numbers of cases where this occurs.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the table of 18 February, *Official Report*, column 1023, giving clearance times for Child Support Agency applications; and if he will give an indication of the usual time taken between, *(a)* the issue of the maintenance application form and its return, *(b)* the return of the maintenance application form and issue of the maintenance inquiry form and *(c)* issue of the maintenance inquiry form and its return.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 31 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for an update to the table showing clearance times for the maintenance application process by each Child Support Agency Centre, and a breakdown of the times between the issue and return of the application and enquiry forms.

For the period from 5 April 1993 to 31 January 1994, information is available on the percentage of cases cleared by individual Agency centres within given time bands; under 40 days, between 40 and 100 days, and in over 100 days. This information is tabulated as annex A.

A more detailed break-down in the form you requested is not available.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when information will be available on the numbers of child support accounts with arrears, the numbers of deductions of earnings orders issued by the Child Support Agency, the numbers of liability orders applied for by the agency; and what is the extent of the information on the collection and enforcement service that will be readily available at that stage.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 31 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the availability of information from the Child Support Agency on arrears, deduction from earnings orders and enforcement.

Information on deductions from earnings orders has been obtained by means of a clerical sampling exercise. This shows that to the end of February 1994, the Agency had issued deductions from earnings orders in an estimated 1,400 cases.

The Child Support Computer System is currently being upgraded to provide more information. We anticipate that further data relating to each stage of the collection and enforcement process will be progressively available during the financial year 1994-95 as a result of this upgrading process.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency the alleged absent parent has disputed paternity; how many of these cases have been resolved without reference to court; how many of these have been referred to court by the agency; how many have been heard by the court; and how many are unresolved to date.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 31 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of cases dealt with by Child Support Agency in which disputed paternity was an issue.

Between 5 April 1993 and 31 January 1994, 2,270 cases were referred for further inquiries to be made because the alleged absent parent had disputed paternity. Of these cases, 457 were resolved without reference to the courts. The Agency referred 22 cases to the courts, 13 being heard. Of these, paternity was established in 2 cases, and not established in 11. At 31 January 1994, 1,800 cases remained to be resolved.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current target for the amount of child maintenance to be collected by the Child Support Agency in 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 31 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the money recovered by the Agency.

The Agency was set a target to recover £530 million in benefit savings in the financial year 1993-94. To 31 January 1994, £250 million had been recorded as recovered. This does not represent the total amount of savings during the period as some will be scored retrospectively.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many maintenance applications had been terminated without a maintenance assessment by the end of January; what efforts are being made to ascertain the reasons for these cleared cases; and on what evidence he based his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *502*, that some were due to collusive desertions.

Mr. Burt: Between April 1993 and January 1994, there were 95,400 cases cleared without a maintenance assessment. This includes cases where the parent with care is ineligible for maintenance; where she withdraws her application to benefit before the Child Support Agency has assessed her case; and where it has been accepted that the parent with care has "good cause" for not providing details of the absent parent.

There are many reasons why a parent with care might withdraw an application before a maintenance assessment. These include being reconciled with the absent parent or starting a job. A number of these will have been withdrawn due to collusive desertion, but, by the very nature of these cases, detailed reasons for the withdrawal of applications are not known.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals have been made to child support appeal tribunals by the end of February; in how many of these cases the Child Support Agency has met its target of responding to the independent tribunal service within 18 days; how many of these appeals have been heard to date; and in how many of those the child support officer's decision has been overturned.

Mr. Burt: I am informed that the number of appeals received by the independent tribunal service to the end of 25 February is 1,134. On these appeals, the Child Support Agency has forwarded a total of 361 submissions; 164 within the 18-day target. By 25 March, 165 appeals had been heard, of which 147 had been finally decided. In 56 of the decided appeals the child support officer's decision was overturned.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will outline the compensation available to clients of the Child Support Agency who lose out financially as a result of the agency's operations; and whether compensation is avaialble for those section 6 applicants who were refused a maintenance application form before the change of policy announced on 1 November 1993.

Mr. Burt: The Department of Social Security operates non-statutory special payments arrangements under which compensation may be considered where, as a result of clear and unambiguous departmental error or unreasonable delay, actual financial loss has been suffered. Under section 6 of the Act, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may require a parent with care to make an application to the Child Support Agency, but is not required to. There is no question of departmental error, and therefore compensation, in cases where he did not choose to exercise this power.

Accommodation Benefit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will specify the length of time that records of claims for part III accommodation benefit payments, completed application and claim forms are kept *(a)* in their original form, *(b)* on microfiche or *(c)* in any other form in either the DSS Benefits Agency local office concerned, or in a central registry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 30 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the length of time that records of Part III benefit payments, completed application and claim forms are retained by the Benefits Agency (BA).

Claim forms from customers in Residential Accommodation (Part III) are treated in the same way as Income Support (IS) claim forms from other customers. Payments to customers in these circumstances are not recorded separately.

The BA policy on the destruction of documents requires all IS cases to be examined at certain times and unnecessary documents to be destroyed. This policy represents an attempt to balance the needs of customers against the administrative expense of keeping all documents indefinitely. Instructions are in place advising staff not to destroy claim forms while active enquiries into the case are ongoing. Clerical records are normally kept for a minimum of 18 months after a claim goes dormant and then destroyed.

Part III benefit payments are recorded in the same way as IS payments. Order book records are held for 3 years and girocheque copy sheets are held centrally for 12 months and then destroyed.

This procedure is relevant to all BA offices including Benefit Centres who have Remote Storage facilities. Details on IS claims are not retained on microfiche.

Child Support

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many former *(a)* income support claimants and *(b)* family credit claimants have left benefit as a result of receiving child support maintenance; and what efforts are being made to monitor this issue.

Mr. Burt: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, information will be collected as part of the long-term evaluation of child support policy.

Ministerial Replies

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his further letter of 28 February to the Under-Secretary of State concerning a constituent, reference 6/3644/70.

Mr. Scott: I replied to the hon. Member's letter yesterday.

Social Security Advisory Committee (Advice to Ministers)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what statutory requirement or other obligation is placed upon the Social Security Advisory Committee to advise Ministers of the possible legal implications of proposals referred to it by Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Under section 174 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992, the Social Security Advisory Committee is required to consider any proposals to make regulations referred to it by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to make a report to him containing recommendations with regard to the subject matter of the proposals as the committee thinks appropriate. Legal advice of proposed regulations is provided by the Department's lawyers.

Lone Parents

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures similar to those in his Department's tax model table, including the various component figures, (1) showing net weekly spending power of a lone parent with a child aged three years where *(a)* the parent is on income support, *(b)* the parent takes employment for 15 hours a week at £4 an hour and *(c)* the parent works from 16 hours a week with gross earnings of (i) £40, (ii) £50, (iii) £60, (iv) £70, (v) £80, (vi) £90, (vii) £100, (viii) £110 and (ix) £120 where travel-to-work costs are £10 a week and child care costs are (1) £25 per week, (2) £40 per week and (3) £60 per week, assuming that the new child care allowance for lone parents is in operation;

(2) showing net weekly spending power of a lone parent with children aged one and three years where the parent works more than 16 hours a week and has gross earnings of *(a)* £40, *(b)* £50, *(c)* £60, *(d)* £70, *(e)* £80, *(f)* £90, *(g)* £100, *(h)* £110 and (i) £120, where travel-to-work costs are £10 per week, and where child care costs are (i) £25, (ii) £40 and (iii) £60 per week, assuming the new child care allowance for lone parents is in operation.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 30 March 1994]:* The information requested is in the tables. The level of child care costs specified in some of the questions is significantly higher than those typically encountered at the level of earnings specified. Recent research[1] shows that the average weekly child care costs of working lone parents are £24·60 per week.

[1]"Families, work, and Benefit" (Policy Studies Institute, June 1993).

Notes:

1. Assumptions are those used for the 1994 Tax-benefit Model.
2. Tax allowances and National Insurance contributions are those in force from 1 April 1994.
3. Childcare Allowance introduced from October 1994.
4. Average rent and council Tax values are those used for the 1993 Tax-benefit Model.

Lone parent with one child aged three
(a) on income support £ per week

	£
Income support	60·15
Welfare foods	2·76
Child benefit	16·35
Rent	30·24
Rent rebate	30·24
Council tax	6·85
Council tax benefit	6·85
Net income	116·35
Net income after housing costs	79·26

(b) On income support with part time earnings £ per week

	£	£	£
Part-time earnings	60·00	60·00	60·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	0·00
National insurance	1·44	1·44	1·44
Take home pay	58·56	58·56	58·56
Income support	16·59	16·59	16·59
Welfare foods	2·76	2·76	2·76
Child benefit	16·35	16·35	16·35
Rent	30·24	30·24	30·24
Rent rebate	30·24	30·24	30·24
Council tax	6·85	6·85	6·85
Council tax benefit	6·85	6·85	6·85
Net income	131·35	131·35	131·35
Childcare costs	25·00	40·00	60·00
Travel costs	10·00	10·00	10·00
Net income after housing, childcare and travel costs	59·26	44·26	24·26

(c) Working over 16 hours per week with childcare costs of £25 per week

£ per week

	Gross earnings								
	£40·00	*£50·00*	*£60·00*	*£70·00*	*£80·00*	*£90·00*	*£100·00*	*£110·00*	*£120·00*
Tax	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·13	2·13	4·13
National insurance contributions	0·00	0·00	1·44	2·44	3·44	4·44	5·44	6·44	7·44
Take home pay	40·00	50·00	58·56	67·56	76·56	85·56	94·43	101·43	108·43
Family Credit	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	52·19	47·29
Child Benefit	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35
Rent	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24
Rent rebate	30·24	30·24	30·24	25·85	20·00	14·15	8·38	5·98	4·62
Council Tax	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85
Council Tax benefit	6·85	6·85	6·85	5·50	3·70	1·90	0·12	0·00	0·00
Net income	148·94	158·94	167·50	170·76	172·11	173·46	174·78	175·95	176·69
Child care costs	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00
Travel to Work costs	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00
Net income after Rent, Council Tax, Child care and Travel to Work costs	76·85	88·85	95·41	98·67	100·02	101·37	102·69	103·86	104·60

(c) Working over 16 hours per week with childcare costs of £40 per week

	Gross earnings								
	£40·00	*£50·00*	*£60·00*	*£70·00*	*£80·00*	*£90·00*	*£100·00*	*£110·00*	*£120·00*
Tax	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·13	2·13	4·13
National insurance contributions	0·00	0·00	1·44	2·44	3·44	4·44	5·44	6·44	7·44
Take home pay	40·00	50·00	58·56	67·56	76·56	85·56	94·43	101·43	108·43
Family Credit	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50
Child Benefit	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35
Rent	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24
Rent rebate	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·34	29·75	23·90	18·13	13·58	9·03
Council Tax	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85
Council Tax benefit	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·70	4·90	3·12	1·72	0·32
Total net income	148·94	158·94	167·50	176·50	184·86	186·21	187·53	188·58	189·63
Childcare costs	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00
Travel costs	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00
Income net of housing, childcare and travel costs	61·85	71·85	80·41	89·41	97·77	99·12	100·44	101·49	102·54

(c) Working over 16 hours per week with child care costs of £60 per week

	Gross earnings								
	£40·00	£50·00	£60·00	£70·00	£80·00	£90·00	£100·00	£110·00	£120·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·13	2·13	4·13
National insurance contributions	0·00	0·00	1·44	2·44	3·44	4·44	5·44	6·44	7·44
Take home pay	40·00	50·00	58·56	67·56	76·56	85·56	94·43	101·43	108·43
Family Credit	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50	55·50
Child Benefit	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35	16·35
Rent	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24
Rent rebate	30·24	30·24	30·24	30·24	29·75	23·90	18·13	13·58	9·03
Council Tax	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85
Council Tax benefit	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·85	6·70	4·90	3·12	1·72	0·32
Total net income	148·94	158·94	167·50	176·50	184·86	186·21	187·53	188·58	189·63
Child care costs	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00
Travel costs	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00
Income net of housing, child care and travel costs	41·85	51·85	60·41	69·41	77·77	79·12	80·44	81·49	82·54

Lone parent with two children aged 1 and 3
Earnings and benefit as at October 1994
(i) Working over 16 hours per week with child care costs of £25 per week

£ per week

	Gross earnings								
	£40·00	£50·00	£60·00	£70·00	£80·00	£90·00	£100·00	£110·00	£120·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·13	2·13	4·13
National insurance contributions	0·00	0·00	1·44	2·44	3·44	4·44	5·44	6·44	7·44
Take home pay	40·00	50·00	58·56	67·56	76·56	85·56	94·43	101·43	108·43
Family Credit	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	63·39	58·49
Child Benefit	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60
Rent	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54
Rent rebate	32·54	32·54	31·53	25·68	19·83	13·98	8·24	5·81	4·45
Council Tax	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65
Council Tax benefit	7·65	7·65	7·34	5·54	3·74	1·94	0·16	0·00	0·00
Total net income	171·49	181·49	188·73	190·08	191·43	192·78	194·10	195·23	195·97
Child care costs	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00	25·00
Travel costs	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00
Income net of housing, child care and travel costs	96·30	106·30	113·54	114·89	116·24	117·59	118·91	120·04	120·78

(ii) Working over 16 hours per week with child care costs of £40 per week

	Gross earnings								
	£40·00	£50·00	£60·00	£70·00	£80·00	£90·00	£100·00	£110·00	£120·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·13	2·13	4·13
National insurance contributions	0·00	0·00	1·44	2·44	3·44	4·44	5·44	6·44	7·44
Take home pay	40·00	50·00	58·56	67·56	76·56	85·56	94·43	101·43	108·43
Family Credit	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70
Child Benefit	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60
Rent	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54
Rent rebate	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	29·58	23·73	17·96	13·41	8·86
Council Tax	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65
Council Tax benefit	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	6·74	4·94	3·16	1·76	0·36
Total net income	171·49	181·49	190·05	199·05	204·18	205·53	206·85	207·90	208·95
Child care costs	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00	40·00
Travel costs	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00
Income net of housing, child care and travel costs	81·30	91·30	99·86	108·86	113·99	115·34	116·66	117·71	118·76

(iii) Working over 16 hours per week with childcare costs of £60 per week

£ per week

	Gross earnings								
	£40·00	£50·00	£60·00	£70·00	£80·00	£90·00	£100·00	£110·00	£120·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·13	2·13	4·13
National insurance contributions	0·00	0·00	1·44	2·44	3·44	4·44	5·44	6·44	7·44
Take home pay	40·00	50·00	58·56	67·56	76·56	85·56	94·43	101·43	108·43
Family Credit	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70	66·70
Child Benefit	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60
Rent	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54
Rent rebate	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54	29·58	23·73	17·96	13·41	8·86
Council Tax	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65
Council Tax benefit	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65	6·74	4·94	3·16	1·76	0·36

	Gross earnings								
	£40·00	£50·00	£60·00	£70·00	£80·00	£90·00	£100·00	£110·00	£120·00
Total net income	171·49	181·49	190·05	199·05	204·18	205·53	206·85	207·90	208·95
Childcare costs	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00	60·00
Travel costs	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00	10·00
Income net of housing, childcare and travel costs	61·30	71·30	79·86	88·86	93·99	95·34	96·66	97·71	98·76

TRANSPORT

Roads, South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for the latest date for which figures are available, the number of vehicles in each different category counted by his Department using the A638 between Bawtry and Doncaster, South Yorkshire, at maximum, minimum and average flows; what was the average speed of vehicles on that road; and what were the comparable figures for (i) five years and (ii) 10 years ago;

(2) if he will list for the latest date for which figures are available, the number of vehicles in each different category counted by his Department using the B6422 between its junction with the A638 and South Elmsall at maximum, minimum and average flows; what was the average speed of vehicles on that road; and what were the comparable figures for (i) five and (ii) 10 years ago;

(3) if he will list for the latest date for which figures are available the number of vehicles in each different category counted by his Department using the A635 between Marr and Hickleton in South Yorkshire at maximum, minimum and average flows; what was the average speed of vehicles on that road; and what were the comparable figures for (i) five and (ii) 10 years ago.

Mr. Key: The information requested is available only from the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what major building projects valued at over £1 million are being or have been wholly or partly financed in *(a)* Doncaster, *(b)* Barnsley, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Wakefield by his Department; and what was the cost of each project to his Department;

(2) if he will list for the latest date for which figures are available, the number of vehicles in each different category counted by his Department using the A1(M) motorway in South Yorkshire at maximum, minimum and average flows; what was the average speed of vehicles on that road; and what were the comparable figures for (i) five and (ii) 10 years ago;

(3) what was the total expenditure in *(a)* construction, *(b)* maintenance and *(c)* improvements in South Yorkshire in each year for the last 10 years, at both current and constant 1992-93 prices; and what is the planned expenditure in the years up to and including 1996-97;

(4) if he will list each scheme in South Yorkshire in his Department's current roads and motorways programme with the total cost in each year since construction commenced up to estimated completion, at both current and constant 1992-93 prices, for *(a)* junction improvements, *(b)* other improvements, *(c)* maintenance and *(d)* new construction.

Mr. Key: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

British Transport Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he received from the British Transport Police Federation, prior to, or during, the progress of the Railways Act 1993 through Parliament relating to the effect of the Act on its powers of pursuit or arrest.

Mr. Freeman: I have met representatives from the British Transport Police Federation on several occasions. The federation also responded to the Department's consultation document "The Future Status of British Transport Police". During the passage of the Bill I received representations from the federation for British Transport police constables to have jurisdiction anywhere, including for matters unconnected with railway services, and anywhere in matters relating to new operators.

British Rail (Redundancies)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff have left British Rail since January 1993 under redundancy or early retirement arrangements; and what has been the total cost of payments made to staff leaving the industry.

Mr. Freeman: Since January 1993, and up to 26 March 1994, 13,114 staff have either left, or are expected to leave British Rail at a cost of approximately £174 million in 1993 and £129 million in 1994. Over the same periods British Rail recruited 7,423 new staff.

Channel Tunel Rail Link

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) of 21 March, *Official Report,* column 2, what is the fastest practical time taken by freight wagons currently crossing the channel by train ferry, inclusive of marshalling at Dover and Calais and the total time now taken by such freight from Manchester or Liverpool to Marseille; and what percentage of that time is likely to be saved, inclusive of marshalling at Frethun and Dollands Moor, by use of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Fastest possible time: Manchester to Avignon

	Present ferry services	Via the channel tunnel
Conventional freight wagons	36 hours	32 hours
Intermodal wagons	4 to 5 days	32 hours

The Dover to Dunkerque trainferry is suitable only for conventional freight. Intermodal freight, which is expected to make up the majority of channel tunnel freight services, currently uses the Harwich to Zeebrugge lo-lo ferry.

The nearest rail terminal to Marseille scheduled to handle channel tunnel freight is Avignon.

Fatal Road Accidents

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatal accidents occurred during *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93 involving drivers under 20 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: There were 637 fatal accidents in 1991 involving drivers under 20 years of age, and 519 in 1992. Information for 1993 is not available yet.

Freight Traffic

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of freight traffic was carried by road transport and what proportion by rail transport, over the latest year for which figures are available; what were the proportions 10, 20 and 30 years ago; and what are the proportions in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* France and *(d)* Japan.

Mr. Freeman: In 1992, the most recent year for which statistics are available for Great Britain, the percentage of road and rail freight carried by road was 89 per cent. For other countries, the most recent data available are shown in the following table which also gives the figures for the earlier years requested. Reliable comparisons are not available for years prior to 1970. Freight transport by inland waterway, coastal shipping and pipeline will affect the proportions carried by road and rail—these figures are published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1993", tables 8.5 and 9.3, a copy of which is in the Library.

Proportion of freight traffic

Country	*1991*		*1982*		*1972*	
	Road	*Rail*	*Road*	*Rail*	*Road*	*Rail*
Great Britain[1]	89	11	86	14	81	19
United States of America	44	56	34	66	37	63
Germany[2]	57	43	51	49	48	52
France	68	32	61	39	51	49
Japan	91	9	86	14	72	28

[1]All goods vehicles, including those up to 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight.
[2]Former Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic with estimates as necessary.
Source: "Transport Statistics Great Britain" and "International Comparisons of Transport Statistics Part 1: Intermodal".

M62 Relief Road

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many representations he has received opposing his proposals for the M62 relief road *(a)* from residents of Bury, South and *(b)* from residents living outside Bury, South;

(2) how many representations he has received supporting his proposals for the M62 relief road *(a)* from residents of Bury, South and *(b)* from residents living outside Bury, South.

Mr. Key: Over 18,000 representations about the proposals have been received. It will be some while yet before we have recorded and analysed all of them. I shall write to my hon. Friend when this work is complete.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department is undertaking into how the effectiveness of catalytic converters can be improved to deal with the problem of cold-start emissions; and what plans he has to encourage the retrofitting of catalytic converters on cars.

Mr. Key: A new EC directive adopted on 25 March 1994—number yet to be advised—is the latest in a series amending directive 70/220/EEC on vehicle emissions, and sets more stringent emission standards for all new cars from 1 January 1997. The Department is already in discussions with the EU on even lower standards for 2000, which will be complemented by an additional low temperature emission test. The engineering solutions necessary to meet these standards are a matter for the vehicle manufacturers. On the encouragement of retrofitting catalysts, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey), *Official Report*, column *144*. Further measures requiring substantial engineering effort to develop costly retrofit packages for declining numbers of suitable vehicles would not be cost-effective.

British Rail (Pensions)

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he is making for the transfer of pension rights both to and within the proposed new joint industry scheme on the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: In order to facilitate efficient and effective pension arrangements, it is proposed that when BR staff first leave the BR pension scheme or the BR section of the new joint industry scheme, their accrued past service pension rights should be transferred to their new employer's "no less favourable section" of that scheme which will be, in all material respects, identical to the BR section.

In response to concerns that the new pension arrangements will be less secure for staff moving around the railway industry in the future, the Government have agreed that the rules of the new scheme will provide that pensionable service will be treated as continuous even on voluntary transfers between the "no less favourable" sections of participating employers, subject however to certain Inland Revenue restrictions which we cannot override, and to there being no extraordinary circumstances. We have also now agreed that the "indefeasible right" for protected persons—those in service on 5 November 1993—to remain in "no less favourable" sections of the joint industry scheme for so long as their employer remains a part of the railway industry will not be lost where they change jobs voluntarily within the industry. This will provide valuable security for staff moving voluntarily around the industry in the future.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the letter written by Mrs. Sheena Stark, principal solicitor (Scotland) to Railtrack, dated 4 March, on the subject of Mr. Peter Rayner; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future position of Mrs. Sheena Stark within Railtrack;

(3) what guidance he has given to Railtrack on dealing with public criticism.

Mr. Freeman: These are matters for the British Railways Board and Railtrack.

East Coast Main Line

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he proposes to announce the additional track charges to the east coast shadow franchise for running diesel-hauled trains north of Edinburgh and between the east coast main line and Hull and Harrogate;

(2) what amount within the track charge to the east coast shadow franchise announced by Railtrack on 15 February is attributable to the cost of running diesel-hauled trains north of Edinburgh and between the east coast main line and Hull and Harrogate.

Mr. Freeman: These are matters for Railtrack.

HEALTH

London Ambulance Service

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were employed by the ambulance service to work in stations in *(a)* London, *(b)* south-east London and *(c)* Lewisham in (i) 1985, (ii) 1990, (iii) 1992 and (iv) 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The deployment of staff to individual stations is an operational matter for the London ambulance service. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Martin Gorham, chief executive of the LAS, for details.

Immunology

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to ensure that doctors, and GPs in particular, are made aware of the importance of diagnosing antibody disorders from the earliest opportunity and making appropriate referrals to clinical immunologists.

Mr. Sackville: Postgraduate and continuing medical education for both hospital doctors and general practitioners is managed at regional level. Detailed information is therefore not available centrally on the precise educational measures in place to cover early diagnosis of antibodies disorders. However, throughout a doctor's training and education the importance of accurate diagnosis is stressed.

Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many redundant NHS hospitals in England have been disposed of in the last 12 months without the benefit of planning permission.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Some £1 billion has been realised from disposals over the last 10 years, which has been reinvested in modern health care provision.

Hartley Hospital, Colne

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the response of the NHS management executive to the concerns expressed by Pendle borough council about the maintenance and security of the Hartley hospital in Colne.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service management executive has not received a letter from the borough of Pendle about the security and maintenance of the Hartley hospital.

The borough of Pendle has confirmed that it wrote directly to the North Western regional health authority director of estates on 15 December 1993, and his reponse of 6 January gave information on the extent of security and maintenance provided at Hartley hospital.

Professions Supplementary to Medicine (Amendment) Bill

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the Professions Supplementary to Medicine (Amendment) Bill; and what is her policy on protecting the title podiatrist.

Mr. Sackville: In considering any alteration of the present position it would be essential to have consensus about the need for change.

Cornwall Healthcare Trust

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *723*, what response has been given by the National Health Service Management Executive to the request for funds for legal action by the Cornwall Heathcare trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: No response has been given yet.

Specialists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to implement her chief medical officer's report on the number of specialists.

Dr. Mawhinney: In December 1993, I announced the Government's acceptance of the recommendations in the report of the working group on specialist medical training "Hospital Doctors: Training for the Future", copies of which are available in the Library. The work needed to ensure effective implementation of the report's recommendations is under way.

Mental Health Budget

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the mental health budget for the current financial year; and what percentage of that budget is specifically allocated to dealing with children with mental health problems.

Mr. Bowis: Information is not available in the form requested. Expenditure on hospital and community units

on mentally ill people in England in 1991-92, the latest year for which information is available, was £2,085 million. In the same year expenditure on local authority social services for mentally ill people was £179·7 million.

Expenditure on mentally ill children is not available centrally.

NHS Budget

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total national health service budget of each region and each health authority in London in each year since 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

Nurse Training (Ethnic Minority Applicants)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statistics she has on the number of ethnic minority applicants applying for basic nurse training and the numbers accepted for that training plus the total number of applicants and the total number accepted.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not hold this type of data centrally. This information may be available from the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Sterilisation

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many vasectomies were performed in each of the last five years;

(2) how many female sterilisation procedures were carried out in each of the last five years;

(3) if female sterilisation and vasectomy procedures are available in all areas in the country.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the number of national health service procedures performed is shown in the table:

Year	*Vasectomies*	*Female sterilisation procedures*
1988-89	25,856	27,384
1989-90	38,507	42,023
1990-91	37,221	40,210
1991-92	35,968	42,596

There is some doubt as to the quality of the data for the year 1988-89 due to this being the first year of operation of the health episode statistics computer system. No figures are available prior to 1988-89. Figures for years 1990-91 and 1991-92—the most recent year for which figures are available—are provisional.

Circulars EL(91)63 and HSG(92)6 reminded the NHS of the need to provide a comprehensive family planning service, including male and female sterilisation.

Copies of the guidance will be placed in the Library.

Charging for Services

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the guidance and advice issued by her Department to local authorities on charging for services; in each case, what advice is given on taking attendance allowance or the care component of the disability living allowance into account when assessing a person's ability to pay; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Guidance on charging for residential accommodation in England is contained in local authority circular—LAC(92)19, as amended by LACs(93)14, (94)1, and (94)15.

An advice note on discretionary charges for non-residential adult social services was sent to English local authorities in January 1994.

Copies of the guidance and advice note are available in the Library.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what analysis her Department has made of the administrative and operating cost for local authorities collecting charges for service provision.

Mr. Bowis: None. It depends on the efficiency of the local authority concerned.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statutory provision is made for individuals to appeal against a local authority decision to charge for services; what provision is made for local authorities to publicise the right to an appeal; what consultation local authorities have to carry out before introducing charges; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Charging arrangements for local authority residential care in England are prescribed in regulations. People who are dissatisfied with the way their charge has been assessed may use the complaints procedure local authorities are required to set up under section 50 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. Community care policy guidance issued in 1990 informs local authorities that they are required to publicise their complaints procedures, in accordance with section 7B(4) of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and advises them how this might be done.

Section 17 of the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 gives local authorities a discretionary power to charge adult recipients of non-residential services. If individual service users consider that they cannot afford to pay the charge that has been set, section 17(3) gives them the right to ask the authority for a review of that charge. It is also open to users of non-residential services to use the complaints procedure referred to above.

Local authorities have been advised that when any change to the charging system for non-residential services is under consideration, it is good practice for existing users to be consulted.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice is given to social service departments about charging for services that were provided by the health service free of charge prior to the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 but are now provided by local authority departments.

Mr. Bowis: The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 did not transfer responsibility for any services from the national health service to local authorities.

Breast Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what preliminary reports she has received in respect of the areas of research into breast cancer being conducted by the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research; and when she expects the final results.

Mr. Sackville: The United Kingdom Health Departments, along with the Medical Research Council, which receives it grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the two major cancer research charities—Imperial Cancer Research Fund and Cancer Research Campaign—are currently funding four studies into breast cancer screening costing some £5 million over five years. These are examining:

- The effects of screening women annually from the age of 40;
- The effects of screening more frequently than every three years in women aged 50 and over;
- The effect of taking two, X-ray views of each breast of women screened instead of one view; and
- Alternative methods of treating some of the very small cancers detected on screening.

The trials are being co-ordinated by the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research. The UKCCCR does not produce preliminary reports on the trials.

Each of the studies will reach completion at different times, and it is expected that full results will be made available by the UKCCCR.

Each study has been recruiting patients for some time and we expect results from at least two of the studies within the next two years.

Departmental support, estimated to be some £400,000 in 1994-95, is currently planned until August 1998.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to ensure good uptake of breast screening invitations among ethnic minority groups.

Mr. Sackville: It is for health authorities to monitor uptake of breast cancer screening among specific groups, and to take action to improve uptake where it is shown to be needed.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether women who are concerned about breast cancer may self-refer to specialised units; and what research her Department has undertaken into the possible benefits of self-referral.

Mr. Sackville: Specialised cancer units receive referrals from general practitioners and from non-specialist units. It is most unlikely that they would accept a woman who refers herself. The Department has not undertaken any research into the possible benefits of self-referral.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many specialised breast cancer units there are, by region.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

It is for local health authorities in consultation with hospitals and trusts to determine the organisation of cancer services to meet the needs of the local population.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department is funding into *(a)* environmental and *(b)* social causes of breast cancer.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that the North West, North East and South West Thames and Mersey regions achieve the target for breast cancer screenings.

Mr. Sackville: The breast screening programme is achieving its national average uptake target rate of 70 per cent., including in Mersey and South West Thames regions. To address under-achieving in specific areas, health authorities are encouraged to set local targets for improvement in contracts.

Dementia

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the impact on national health service drug costs of the increasing numbers of people with dementia.

Mr. Bowis: None at present.

Ambulance Response Times

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she proposes in the recommended ambulance response times in the patients charter.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the chairman of those ambulance authorities with the lowest attainment of achieving attendance of ambulances within the response times set by the patients charter; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: There have been no formal meetings to discuss response times, although from time to time I meet ambulance service chairmen to discuss perfomance generally. I am pleased to note that the majority of ambulance services are now meeting the charter standard.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of ambulance authorities are achieving *(a)* the patients charter standard and *(b)* the Orcon standard in respect of ambulance response times; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Orcon patients charter standard requires an ambulance to arrive at the scene of an incident within 19 minutes of an emergency call in 95 per cent. of cases in rural areas, and within 14 minutes in urban areas. In 1992-93, 28 of the 34 rural authorities met the former standard and three of the nine urban authorities the latter.

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the Acts of Parliament and Consolidation Acts that affect local government which have been introduced by her Department since 1990.

Mr. Bowis: Since 1990, the Department introduced the following Acts of Parliament that affected Local Government:

—the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.
—the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Act 1992.

Cancer Specialists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cancer specialists worked in the national health service, by region, over each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information will be placed in the Library. Cancer is treated by doctors in a number of specialties. Consultants in the specialties of medical oncology, radiotherapy, haematology and general surgery all treat cancer patients. However, they are not all involved full time in the treatment of cancer, for example general surgeons and haematologists also work with other patients, while other specialties are also involved in the treatment of cancer.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much of the independent living fund transitional grant money has been spent in each local authority; how many people have received services under this money; what is the average cost of services to each individual; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Some £26·8 million was included in this year's special transitional grant to English local authorities as a consequence of changes to independent living fund arrangements. It will rise to £64·1 million next year. Authorities are free to use this money to provide such services as they consider best to meet local needs. They are not required to account for services provided from this money separately from services provided from other resources. The figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much research into the causes and treatment of Alzheimer's disease has been funded by *(a)* the Government, *(b)* the private sector and *(c)* the voluntary sector for each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The table shows the level of research into Alzheimer's disease funded by the MRC between 1988-89 and 1992-93—the latest figures available. The level of research undertaken by the private and voluntary sectors is not available centrally.

MRC expenditure on research into Alzheimer's disease

Year	*(£ million)*
1988-89	5·0
1989-90	4·0
1990-91	4·5
1991-92	4·7
1992-93	4·9

National Continence Awareness Week

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evaluation her Department is making of the effectiveness of national continence awareness week; and if the event will be repeated in 1995.

Mr. Bowis: National continence week took place from 13-19 March 1994. The campaign generated a substantial amount of media coverage with articles in the national press as well as in women's and general interest magazines. Many radio and television programmes also carried times about the week. Demand for the Department's publicity material exceeded expectations. The posters, leaflets and stickers had to be reprinted three times and nearly 2 million copies have been sent out so far. Calls to the telephone helpline funded by the Department have increased from 15 to around 300 a day. In addition, the Continence Foundation is receiving an average of 200 written requests for information a day.

The Department will continue to monitor the results of the campaign and a decision as to whether to repeat the event in 1995 will be made in the light of this.

Medical Negligence Claims

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which NHS body had *(a)* the highest and *(b)* the lowest number of medical negligence claims against it in each year since 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about the number of claims in each financial year is collected from district health authorities, in respect of their directly managed units collectively, and from national health service trusts as they became operational in 1991, 1992 and 1993. This shows national and regional trends. Because details are not supplied for individual directly managed units, most such units have progressively become trusts, and some district health authorities have merged, meaningful comparisons between NHS bodies are not possible.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the insurance and indemnity arrangements for NHS trusts in relation to medical negligence claims.

Dr. Mawhinney: Claims for clinical negligence against health care professionals employed by national health service trusts, occurring after the operational date of the trust, are met by the trust and recouped through prices. Arrangements exist for NHS trusts to fund the cost of a substantial settlement through a loan from the Department which has to be repaid, with interest, over several years if necessary. The proposed creation of a central fund in England to help NHS trusts is the subject of a consultative document issued earlier this month, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Health Reforms

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in calculating changes in the numbers of patients treated before and after the health reforms, her Department counts individual patients treated or finished consultant episodes.

Mr. Sackville: Information on in-patient activity has been collected on the basis of finished consultant episodes since 1988-89 following the recommendation of the Körner steering group. This was considered to be the most effective way of measuring workload. There has been no change in the collection of data on activity in out-patients clinics and accident and emergency departments which are based on the number of new attendances and the total number of attendances.

Death Certificates

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount paid to general practitioners for signing death certificates, and the number of death certificates signed, in each year since 1990, for each regional health authority area.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 requires general practitioners to sign death certificates. This duty does not attract a separate fee from the Department of Health.

It is not possible to distinguish between death certificates signed by general practitioners and others, such as hospital doctors and coroners. The deaths recorded for each regional health authority from 1990 to 1992 are shown in the table. Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

	Persons		
	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Northern RHA	37,480	37,970	37,072
Yorkshire RHA	41,955	42,044	40,481
Trent RHA	51,717	52,827	52,171
East Anglian RHA	22,296	22,700	22,207
North West Thames RHA	32,894	33,076	31,817
North East Thames RHA	38,574	38,997	38,006
South East Thames RHA	42,353	42,589	42,002
South West Thames RHA	32,630	33,108	32,149
Wessex RHA	34,497	34,756	34,195
Oxford RHA	22,323	22,937	22,806
South Western RHA	38,937	39,234	38,610
West Midlands RHA	56,762	56,980	56,092
Mersey RHA	27,906	28,230	27,460
North Western RHA	48,592	48,524	47,588

The figures relate to deaths registered in each calendar year, the time lag between the date of occurrence and the date of registration being usually only a day or two.

Mental Health

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answers of 16 February, *Official Report,* column *860,* and 17 March, *Official Report,* column *834,* whether data collection monitoring mental illness hospitals on the lines of that compiled for the mental health task force is being undertaken to produce figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Bowis: Data are currently being compiled for 1992-93 and should be available later this year. It is too early to start compiling data for 1993-94.

Dental Services

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he has made to the university of Liverpool school of dentistry representations regarding the timing of the response to the Bloomfield report and oral health strategy; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 22 February enclosing a letter from a lecturer at the university of Liverpool school of dentistry. I replied on 19 March.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in *(a)* England and *(b)* each regional health authority area took on new NHS patients in each year since 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* The information available is shown in the table.

Number of dentists who had additions to their register, by regional health authority area and year, 1991-93
England

Region	*Number of dentists who had additions to their register in the year*		
	1991	*1992*	*1993*
England	15,126	15,295	15,268
Northern	860	883	866
Yorkshire	1,133	1,158	1,146
Trent	1,268	1,283	1,309
East Anglia	620	619	625
North West Thames	1,509	1,511	1,515
North East Thames	1,296	1,314	1,335
South East Thames	1,406	1,392	1,394
South West Thames	1,294	1,298	1,331
Wessex	1,004	1,005	987
Oxford	859	861	851
South Western	1,223	1,248	1,237
West Midlands	1,400	1,427	1,412
Mersey	778	773	772
North Western	1,272	1,289	1,290

Note:
1. Additions to the register include instances of patients registering with a dentist after a break in attendance and instances of reinstatement of registrations that have been cancelled in error.
2. Some dentists have contracts in more than one regional health authority area. These dentists have, where appropriate, been included in the count for each regional health authority area where they are under contract, but only once in the England total.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of dentists in each family health service authority took on new NHS patients for each year since 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 24 March 1994]:* The information will be placed in the Library.

Nursing and Midwifery Staff

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the average gross weekly earnings and make-up of pay by type of pay or allowances for each of the clinical grades for nursing and midwifery staff in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Average estimated weekly gross earnings of nursing and midwifery full-time staff in 1992-93 and 1993-94

Grade	*1992-93*[1]			*1993-94*[2]		
	Total £	*Basic pay* £	*Allowances* £	*Total* £	*Basic pay* £	*Allowances* £
Clinical Grade A	186·0	151·3	34·7	188·7	153·4	35·3
Clinical Grade B	203·8	163·4	40·4	216·1	174·1	42·0
Clinical Grade C[3]	256·4	220·1	36·3	249·2	214·6	34·6
Clinical Grade D	250·3	215·0	35·3	258·6	222·2	36·4
Clinical Grade E	294·2	250·7	43·5	302·0	257·7	44·3

Grade	1992-93[1] Total £	Basic pay £	Allowances £	1993-94[2] Total £	Basic pay £	Allowances £
Clinical Grade F	340·8	294·6	46·2	349·4	302·1	47·3
Clinical Grade G	381·3	349·3	32·0	383·1	351·6	31·5
Clinical Grade H	397·9	378·8	19·1	410·4	389·4	21·0
Clinical Grade I	459·9	439·3	20·6	466·4	443·2	23·2

[1] *Source:* Earnings-related base of data March 1993 and non-medical manpower census September 1991.
[2] *Source:* Earnings-related base of data December 1993 and non-medical manpower census September 1992.
[3] Clinical grade C 1993-94 shows the average going down, this is due to a shift in enrolled nurses moving to grade D registered nurse, therefore leaving more nurses in grade C on medium to lower incremental point.

Drugs Review

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the results of the Committee on Safety of Medicines review of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are now available; and what advice to prescribers on the use, brands, or side-effects of such drugs has been given.

Mr. Sackville: The safety of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs—NSAIDs—remains under review by the Committee on Safety of Medicines. The findings and recommendations of the CSM will be made public, if appropriate, through relevant channels such as the bulletin "Current Problems in Pharmacovigilance". Advice to prescribers on the use, brands and side-effects of NSAIDs is given in the product data sheets produced by manufacturers and authorised by the Licensing Authority, and in the British national formulary which the Department of Health sends free to all doctors. Articles from the CSM relating to the safety of NSAIDs have also been published in the bulletin "Current Problems", No. 16, issued in 1986 and in the *British Medical Journal* in March and May 1986. Copies of the bulletin are available in the Library.

Free Prescriptions

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what grounds medical conditions are added to the list of conditions that entitle long-term sufferers to free prescriptions.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 21 March at column *68*.

NHS Expenditure

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure on the national health service in 1978-79; what it will be in 1994-95; and what percentage increase this represents in real terms.

Mr. Sackville: Government expenditure on the national health service will be a planned £30,669 million in 1994-95 compared with £6,273 million in 1978-79, an increase of 63·9 per cent. in real terms.

Hospital Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had concerning the self-payment by maximum or part-time hospital consultants of in-service training costs; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. The chief medical officer has convened a conference on continuing medical education to be held on 13 June which will consider the question of the funding of the training and education of hospital consultants.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the guidelines limiting the proportion of their NHS income which full-time hospital consultants may earn from private practice apply to hospital consultants employed by trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: The limits on the earnings from private practice of full-time national health service consultants apply to those whose contracts retain national terms—whether they work in trusts or for health authorities. Trusts have freedom to negotiate new terms of employment with their staff.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's estimate of the average time spent by hospital consultants employed as maximum part-timers on private practice and on national health service patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: No such estimate is made.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of their working hours maximum part-time hospital consultants are required to spend on national health service patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service hospital consultants with maximum part-time contracts under national terms of service are contractually required to devote substantially the whole of their professional time to duties in the NHS. The actual allocation of time with NHS patients is determined as part of the consultant job plan drawn up in agreement with local management.

Patients Charter

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the total annual budget, including all editorial, production and distribution costs, for "The Patient's Charter News", published by the NHS management executive;

(2) what is the total annual budget for the patient's charter unit of the NHS management executive.

Dr. Mawhinney: The 1993-94 production budget for "The Patient's Charter News" was £44,000. This excludes editorial and distribution costs since both were carried out in-house, and it is not possible to isolate these costs.

The patients charter unit is part of a branch of the department concerned with quality and consumer issues in the national health service and which has an overall budget for several units. Since the breakdown of this budget is not unit based, it is not possible to provide an accurate annual figure for the patients charter unit alone.

NHS Executives

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether regional health authorities will adopt the title "NHS Executive" before their geographical names from 1 April.

Mr. Mawhinney: No. Regional health authorities will use the names established by the National Health Service (Regional Health Authorities) Order 1994.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of the new corporate look for the NHS management executive in terms of *(a)* stationery, *(b)* publications, *(c)* signage, *(d)* livery, *(e)* logo design and *(g)* in total.

Dr. Mawhinney: The new corporate identity for the NHS executive is based very closely on the design produced four years ago for the NHS management executive. No further costs have been incurred in logo design. There are no plans for expenditure on livery or new signage on the NHS executive headquarters buildings, but existing signs will be replaced as necessary over time.

Application of the new design to NHS publications does not increase costs. The cost of designing and introducing new stationery which is being phased in as existing stocks are exhausted, will be £50,000. This will be more than offset by the very considerable savings expected from the proposals which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 21 October 1993 for streamlining central management of the NHS.

Mental Health Act 1983

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will require regional health authorities to review their recruitment of doctors for duties under section 12 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to ensure that the numbers are sufficient to respond promptly to requests for assessment under the Act.

Mr. Bowis: We carried out a survey in 1993 of regional health authorities' arrangements for approving doctors under section 12 of the Act. The results indicated that the Department's guidance was being properly implemented and the numbers of doctors approved were sufficient. The Department is also discussing with the Royal College of Psychiatrists the training given to approved doctors about their responsibilities under the Act.

University College Hospital

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much additional money has been allocated to keep University College hospital open; to whom the money will be made available; and if the expenditure will continue in future years.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1993-94 University College London Hospitals—UCLH—of which University College hospital is a part, were allocated transitional funding totalling some £10·6 million as part of a management plan for matching their capacity to current and foreseeable demand for services. This funding was made available to UCLH via its host commissioner, Camden and Islington district health authority. The amount of transition funding allocated to UCLH in 1994-95 is yet to be agreed.

Hospitals (Accident and Emergency Departments)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what increase in patient activity at Unversity College hospital accident and emergency department she expects after St. Bartholomew's accident and emergency department shuts; and what increase in bed numbers will occur.

Dr. Mawhinney: Based on studies carried out by the London ambulance service, we estimate that the closure of St. Batholomew's accident and emergency department will lead to a 16 per cent. increase in attendances—around 10,000 per year—at University College London Hospital's accident and emergency department. We anticipate that UCLH will be able to absorb this additional work load within the capacity of its existing facilities.

Staff Guidance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the consistency between paragraph 1 of the nurses', midwives and health visitors' code for professional conduct and paragraphs 8, 27 and 28 of the national health service management executive "Guidance for Staff on Relations with the Public and the Media"; which document takes precedence; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service management executive's "Guidance for staff on relations with the public and the media", EL(93)51 makes plain—paragraph 2—that it complements the United Kingdom Central Council code of professional conduct.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters she has received criticising the NHS management executive document on "Guidance for Staff on Relations with the Public and the Media".

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received five letters which, while supporting the aims of the guidance, have offered particular criticism on points of detail.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will renew the NHSME document on "Guidance for Staff on Relations with the Public and the Media" with particular reference to paragraphs 3, 8, 27 and 28.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Duncon Nichol, the then chief executive of the national health service management executive, wrote to all NHS managers on 7 September 1993 to clarify paragraph 27 of the guidance. We have no immediate plans to review the guidance.

Misconduct and Mismanagement

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances publicising misconduct or mismanagement in the NHS is a dismissible offence; and if she will make a statement on the considerations underlying the policy on the subject.

Dr. Mawhinney: Decisions about disciplinary matters are entirely for national health service employers.

The NHS management executive's "Guidance for Staff on Relations with the Public and the Media", EL(93)51, sets out the responsibilities of staff when raising issues of concern about health care matters and indicates how employers may ensure these rights and duties are met. A copy is available in the Library.

Cancelled Operations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are not admitted within a month of their second cancelled operation.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 28 march 1994]:* In the quarter ending 31 December 1993, 150 patients failed to be admitted to hospital within one month of their second cancelled operation. The total number of general and acute elective operations performed in the same period was 1,062,000.

Drugs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of state for Health what plans she has to expand the list of drugs that cause dependency and to require prescriptions to be written in full by hand.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

Dangerous drugs are controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The list of such drugs is kept constantly under review by the Home Office and the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. The provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985 include a requirement that prescriptions for certain controlled drugs be written in full by hand. This requirement applies to drugs listed in schedules 2 and 3 to the regulations.

The ACMD has made certain recommendations to tighten the controls on temazepam, including a requirement that prescriptions be written in full by hand. These are under consideration.

Sea Pollution

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the progress of the Medical Research Council's study of the effects of sea pollution on health.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

The Medical Research Council is not carrying out any studies into the effects of sea pollution on health. It is, however, always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications for research funding.

Life Expectancy and Infant Mortality

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in *(a)* life expectancy and *(b)* infant mortality in the last 10 years in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to his reply, 17 March 1994, c. 826-27]:* I regret that the table showing life expectancy and infant mortality rate for the United Kingdom, 1982-1991 in my previous reply was inconsistent with the text. A revised table based on 100,000 livebirths is as follows:

Life expectancy and infant mortality rate for the United Kingdom 1982-1991

	Life Expectancy[1]		Infant Mortality Rate[2]
Year	Males	Females	
1982	71·1	77·0	1,098·1
1983	71·4	77·2	1,019·6
1984	71·5	77·4	952·4
1985	71·7	77·5	936·4
1986	71·9	77·6	951·0
1987	72·2	77·9	912·4
1988	72·4	78·0	896·6
1989	72·7	78·3	841·6
1990	73·0	78·5	785·4
1991	73·3	78·8	735·0

[1] At birth.
[2] Per 100,000 births.
Source: Population Trends (Tables 8 and 12), for 1982-1990.
World Health Organisation Statistics volume 1992, for 1991.

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OFFICIAL REPORT

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21st March, 1994—31st March, 1994

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

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Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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